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## THE COLLEGE AND THE CHURCH.

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BY the college is not meant a preparatory school, such as the American academy, or the English public school; nor is the term used to denote a professional school such as the American theological seminary. The college is an institution devoted to general culture. It does not aim to make scholars, or teachers, or jurists, or physicians, or ministers of the gospel merely. Its objective point is the perfection of manhood. Its field lies between that of the preparatory school on the one hand, and of the professional school on the other.

The church needs an educated membership, as well as an educated ministry. In order to the highest prosperity, her members should be intelligent and cultured, the more highly the better; the accomplished jurists, physicians, statesmen, editors, authors, and teachers of the world should be in her, and not only should they be men of high culture, but also men of intelligent, earnest, consistent godliness. If the godliness of the church is a cultured godliness, and the culture of the world a godly culture, the means to the highest ends will have been secured. If the contrary, the church will be compelled to carry great weight, and to overcome many obstacles. At present there is a disposition to divorce what is known as culture from godliness. The time was when the educational institutions of the United States were in the hands of Christian men, and their work was carried forward in the interest of the church and Christianity. Now, the tendency in some quarters is to put them into other and far different hands, and carry forward their work in the interest of mere intellectual culture. Something of the same kind is seen everywhere. To resist this tendency is a present duty. The harmonizing of the culture of the world with Christianity—of thorough scholarship, great power, and refined taste with eminent godliness—is a much needed work just now. The church of the next age will be just what the young men and women of the present make it; and it is certainly a prime duty of the hour to prepare them for this high service. Of this work, a very important part must be performed by the college.

It is the design of this article to define the work which the church requires of the college.

## THE PRODIGAL SON.—(LUKE XV. 11-32.)

BY REV. J. A. GRIER.

THE ordinary theory respecting this beautiful portion of the Master's teachings, is that it represents the course of sin in the unconverted person; his conviction; his conversion; his penitential coming to God; God's reception of him—these things, together with the attendant circumstances respecting the elder brother. There are many excellent applications of this theory possible, and by long use it has become greatly endeared to the popular Christian heart. There are, however, good reasons to question the validity of the interpretation; the principal of which is, that thereby our Saviour is made to teach that God is equally a Father toward the unrepentant, unconverted sinner, who leaves His home, and the penitent, converted son who gladly returns to His arms. This is simply to say that the transfer from the sinful, refractory condition of unregenerateness to a state of grace, does not bring with it any change in the position of God toward us. He was a father when the prodigal went away, and still and only a father when the same sinner returned from his sins. This is simply to give this Scripture over to those who hold that God is always the same toward sinners, and that all there is in salvation, at this point, is the change of feeling and experience in the sinner. God does not occupy any new relation to us, nor—really we to Him—there has only been a transformation of the sinner's character by repentance and faith, but no essentially new position taken with respect to God, nor by God in respect to the man. There seems to be no avoiding this conclusion, if we say that the terms "father" and "son," as used in the early part of the parable, have the same meaning as the same terms in the latter part of the parable, after the prodigal has been cordially received by his father; and there is no good reason for any difference in interpretation.

Now, we understand that by the new birth and by adoption we become children of God, and, of course, that God becomes our Father. Only by the spirit of adoption are we able to say "Abba, Father." Previous to regeneration we are "children of the devil," and bear no filial relation to God; so that in case the prodigal was unconverted when he went away from home, it would be exceedingly improper and false to represent him as occupying the relation of a son to one who is evidently put to represent God.

In view of these things it seems necessary to seek some other interpretation for the parable, than the one usually adopted. I therefore, propose the following, viz: That the parable of the Prodigal Son is designed to show the erring course of backsliding children of grace; their continuance in sonship of grace during the period of wandering; and their reception by their heavenly Father when they return to Him. I will offer some reasons in support of this view:

1. The *original* relation between the parties is that of father and son. "A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father,

give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." The fact is plainly announced that before the prodigal's expedition to the far country, he was loved and treated as a son; and that he regarded the one who so treated him as his father. This is not part of the incidental costume and drapery of the parable. It is the original fact in the case; the very starting point of all that is to follow, and the one essential feature, which, in all the course of the parable, is kept in view. Now it will be admitted, without proof in this place, that the original condition of the sinner is not that of sonship. It is condemnation and wrath. Sonship is a gracious position. Hence it is plain that the Saviour designed not to teach anything about the unregenerate sinner, but something respecting one who had so far progressed in a new life as to be called a son.

2. The *ultimate* relation between the parties is that of father and son. Nothing more, for that is the highest possible earthly relation. Nothing less, for after restoration to each other's companionship, it could not be that the relation should be less than at the beginning, and especially less than during all the period of wandering. The father (v. 23.), calls him his "son;" "for this my son was dead and is alive again." There seems no doubt that precisely as the prodigal went away—a son, is he received upon his return—a son.

3. The *sustained* relation during the period of absence, is that of father and son. This would seem to follow from the fact that the original and ultimate relations are the same. To some, however, who doubt the invincibility of grace, the conclusion would not be apparent. Notice, therefore, the evidence which the parable affords: (a) There is no indication of a change of relation; the prodigal evidently regards the relationship as unchanged. So we read: "He said, how many hired servants of *my father's* have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger. I will arise and go to *my father.*" He believes that person is still the same towards him as when he deserted him. Of course a prodigal's personal testimony upon such a point is not, in itself, of very much value. Multitudes of the legitimate successors of this boy to riotous living, harlots, swine and husks, would give contradictory testimony upon this point; but it is to be remembered that the Great Teacher Himself put these words into the prodigal's lips *as expressive of truth*, whether the ordinary erring child of God can consciously endorse them or not. There is no evidence of any such overwhelming revolutionizing of the prodigal's nature as occurs in regeneration. There is an evident design to teach that the forces then and there present in his soul had alone operated. There is no introduction of supernatural power; there is not even the new presentation of truth to his mind; whatever change of conduct occurred, came about by the operation of forces present when he ran away. Hence, with perfect propriety, he may be represented as regarding the father whom he deserted as still his father. Nor is there anything in the conviction and penitence of the prodigal which may not and does not occur in the experience of many who, like him, leave for a time their allegiance to God. (b) The father regarded him as still his son. "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him" (v. 20). A little later he ex-

pressly called him his "son" (v. 24). The conduct attributed to his father, and his own language, are sufficient to settle the conclusion that during all the young man's wanderings the same heart of love had been sending out its affections toward him as of old. There had been no destruction of ties whatever. (c) The Speaker of the parable, Himself recognized the unbroken continuance of the relation, for he says "When he was yet a great way off, *his father* saw him (v. 20). (d) The actions of the prodigal during the period of debate in the swine-field, and his determination to return, are characteristic of penitent children of God. His reflections are based upon a previous knowledge of his father's house. Nor is it knowledge by report or theory; but the *knowledge of experience*. He had lived in the midst of the same plenty to which his heart reverted, and to which he desired to return. This is something no unconverted sinner can appropriate to himself. He knows nothing by experience of the pleasures of the Father's house. The resolution to return and to make request for a servant's place is such conduct as only one perfectly well acquainted with the order of the household, whose stores he desires, would exhibit. The humility involved is, of course, characteristic of all who desire divine favor, whether they come as penitent children or for the first time as sinners. (e) The phraseology of the Speaker Himself, with regard to the rise of the prodigal's penitence, points in the same direction, "And when he came to himself." The evident meaning is "when he came back to the same condition in which he had been at a previous time;" that is, a condition of lively interest in the affairs of his father's house, and one of active love toward himself and his household. The evidence seems to show that all the time of his absence the prodigal was still a son.

4. The father's induction of his son into precisely the same place he occupied before he went away. The son returned with the intention of asking to be put into a hired servant's place. The cordial and affectionate reception he received from his father seems to have put the servant's place out of his mind, and to have convinced him that better things were in store for him; that he might be fully restored to all his former privileges. So when he made his confession he did not supplement it with his intended request, but only acknowledged his sin, as a son; and as a son the father received him. The best robe was put upon him; a ring was placed on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and a feast of rejoicing over the restoration was given; all of which signified that he was now regarded in precisely the same light as before his sinful expedition.

5. The opinions of the servant and of the elder brother. Both speak of him as a son. The servant said, "Thy brother is come." The elder brother said, "But as soon as this, thy son was come, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." Of course these are but expressions of opinion, but they show what was the uniform opinion of the household, viz., that the wandering of the prodigal did not destroy his sonship. They are also of importance as showing how the phraseology of the parable is a consistent whole, and how the idea of *sonship* is held out in all its parts. From what has been brought to

view, there seems little room for doubting that the prime intention in this passage is to teach that a child of God may stray away from Him; but that he is yet a child—that relationship is not lost; and that he will ultimately return and be cordially received by his Father.

There are some advantages in this general interpretation over that which is commonly adopted. 1. It seems to be entirely consistent with itself and with the whole phraseology of the passage. I do not see that anything else will give any proper meaning to the constantly recurring ideas of sonship and fatherhood. 2. It tends to establish the doctrine that there is no *natural* relationship of father and son between God and sinners. It is one of grace; and when once established, never ceases to exist. This is the perseverance of the saints. 3. It removes the parable from the hands of the Universalists and other heterodox religionists, who hold to the notion that there is no need of a renewal of the nature of the man in order to friendly relations with God; but that since He is *always* a Father, all that is needed in the sinner is that he bethink and bestir himself, and so return to God. There is no necessity for any new birth, in the evangelical sense of that term. There seems no room for doubt that the loose application of the passage to the *original* turning of sinners to God has been to give it into their hands. It must be admitted that *sonship by nature* is taught in the parable, unless we adopt a different interpretation from that ordinarily given.

There are some difficulties in the way of the exposition proposed. I will mention a few of the more prominent. 1. The connection commonly thought to exist between this parable and those of the "Lost sheep" and the "Lost coin" immediately preceding. It is said that, in a general way, these represent salvation as coming by the sovereign love and care of the Redeemer—sinners are sought out; while on the other hand the prodigal is the representation of the rise of salvation in the sinner's soul—the sovereign power being left out of view. My opinion is that the preceding parables show how the Son of man, who came to seek and save that which was lost, searches out and saves simple-hearted but very precious sinners; while the prodigal shows how these same saved sinners wander away from God, and how the principle of grace implanted by salvation yet prevails to bring them back. This is a point, however, which depends on the interpretation of the parables. 2. A more formidable difficulty is in the application of the idea of death to the wanderer. "This my son was dead and is alive again." Death, as applied to moral character in the Scriptures, indicates an absence of the gracious principle of spiritual life. If it does so here, then there is no ground for the interpretation offered. It seems to be used here rather with the idea of separation. We sometimes speak of men being dead to their families, who are by some means, perhaps criminal expiation, separated from their families. The word "lost" is used in precisely this sense—he was lost only to his family; so it would seem he was dead to his family. Besides, the parable is couched in the phraseology of ordinary human life. It would not have been true to say, "My son was dead," or "Thy brother was dead," using the words in the literal sense of *physical* dis-

solution; evidently they were used in the sense of separation from his family. 3. A third difficulty is the elder brother with the surly conduct. It is plain that if the younger son represents a wandering child of God, the elder son also represents a child of God. Space will not permit the discussion of the elder brother. But it may be said that surliness of conduct, jealousies among Christians over spiritual emoluments, is not unknown. Indeed, sometimes there seems to be vexation over the return of some notable backslider to the ways of righteousness.

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## THE "CHARITY" OF SECRET ORDERS COMPARED WITH THE CHARITY OF THE GOSPEL.

BY REV. N. E. BROWN.

THE topic contains a comparison. It is a comparative question. Two things are to be compared; hence we must know what both are, then we can compare, and decide whether they are alike, or whether they differ, and how much, and in what respects. We have on the one hand the "charity" of secret orders; on the other hand the charity of the Gospel. We here take the word *charity* in its accepted meaning at the present time. "That disposition of heart which inclines men to think well of their fellowmen, and do them good." "Liberality to the poor or to benevolent institutions."

There is no necessity of proving that these orders lay claim to the exercises of charity, any more than there is need to prove that the wind is in the habit of blowing! The wind blows in our *faces*, and so does the other. The only question we need to consider is this: *Is their boasted charity the same as that of the gospel?*

It is the purpose of this article to show that they are radically different. 1. *The benevolence of these orders lacks the very essence of Christian benevolence.* We must examine the foundation. If on a rock, it will stand; if on the sand, it must fall. The law of Christian benevolence is, that we do good to those who have no claims upon us on the ground that they have been, or may be, a benefit to us. We may be led to do good to an individual from different motives. We may help an individual in distress in return for something he has done for us, or because we *expect* him to do something for us, or because we have entered into an arrangement to help one another in difficulty; *or on the other hand*, we may help him in distress without such an arrangement, and expecting no return. Which of these is the "benevolence" of these orders, and which the charity of the gospel? We find gospel charity described in Luke vi. 32-36, "If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be