

A GOSPEL WITHIN THE GOSPEL.

AN EXPOSITION OF LUKE XV. 11-32.

By Rev. William McKenzie, Ramsay, C.W.

PART I.—SIN AND MISERY.

In this parable of our Lord, so simple, touching, so artless, when regarded as a chapter of human life, and yet so profound, and full of meaning, when regarded as a revelation of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, all of us should be able to find a place. It is a history of the sinner in his sin, in his repentance, and in his reception back again into the favour of God. We are, *all of us*, reproduced here; either as we have ever been, or, as we are hoping and endeavouring to be, or, as we have become by God's grace.

"And He said, A certain man had two sons." In this significant beginning of the parable we have the indication of a blessed truth. In one sense, God is the Father of all His intelligent creatures; but, in a very special sense, God is the Father of men. They are His sons. In the beginning they were were begotten in His likeness, for "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them." Moreover, God is, and remains the Father of men, even in their apostacy from Him. They are His sons, His children, still; though they have become "rebellious children." He deals with them even then as a Father; His paternal love and grace extending to the very vilest sinner. This blessed truth pervades the whole parable.

In this first portion of the parable we have a history of the sinner in his sin and misery. "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."

By this figure of a grown-up son, who

will be a young man before his time, and cannot endure to wait until his father dies for his inheritance, our Lord exhibits to us the root and origin of all sin. This request sounding so like a demand, denotes the entire alienation of the heart from all the love and duty of a son. This son breaks loose from his father. The bond of filial love is utterly broken. He feels the father's presence a restraint upon his freedom. His will is to be entirely independent, to have his own way. Estranged in heart, he can no longer tolerate the fellowship of his righteous father, whose authority had heretofore constrained him to an unwilling obedience, and so he confronts him with his selfish demand—"Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." Here we have

SIN IN ITS ORIGIN.

In this extinction of the filial sentiment in the heart, in this severance of the bond of love, the foundation of all true duty and obedience, we have the secret root and origin of all sin, far more exceeding sinful in this its first beginning, and hidden principle, than in any after manifestation.

But it might be asked here, had the son not a right to prefer such a request? Had he not at least a legal right? He only sought the portion of goods that fell to him. No; not then. He could stand on no right.—These goods were not his. The father, as long as he lived, might have retained them, for they belonged to him. And, involuntarily, the son paid a tribute to this truth when he prefaced his demand with the words of petition, "Father, give me my