

# A GOSPEL WITHIN THE GOSPEL.

AN EXPOSITION OF LUKE XV. 11-32.

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(Continued from page 202.)

## PART II.—REpentance.

This part of the history opens with the significant words, "*When he came to himself.*" But what a long-continued persistence in his apostacy had gone before! How many expedients he had tried to save himself from this resort! The voice within had begun to plead with him when first he began to be in want; but he was not then willing to listen. In his own evil and foolish way he sought relief. He drew closer his connection with those among whom he had gone to dwell: he sought their help—"he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country." The false help only brought him into a lower deep of want and misery, adding to them the degradation of a vile servitude. Not until he fell to the point of utter destitution, and had been left in cold neglect, to perish, did he go that better way into himself, and begin to commune with his own heart. Here we discern

### THE BEGINNING OF REPENTANCE.

For now, the long-neglected, and overpowered voice within makes itself heard—"When he came to himself, he said. How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger." He speaks of the Father as "my father," and the remembrance of him, and of his home, come back to his soul. No doubt, he had with a heartless and sinful selfishness forsaken that home. But now, when busy memory recalls to mind the peace and plenty of that dwelling, in contrast to the want and degradation of the land of famine, with a wistful longing his heart inclines homewards. There is enough there, and to spare, he thinks:

and yet "I perish with hunger." He thinks on what he was, and is. There is a deep meaning in that significant I—and I perish; I a son, the son of such a father. It is a backward glance over all his past life; and, by a remembrance not yet dead within him, he realizes his position as an apostate son. Previous to this he had been out of himself, deceived and deluded by sin, with no knowledge of himself in the simple truth of his condition and relations. But now, when he came to himself, he saw what he might have been, what he ought to be, and what he was. He now knew that he was a son, though an apostate son. The awakened remembrance of his father, and of home, and the significant utterance of his heart wrung forth by the extremity of his misery, and I, his son, perish with hunger—were the indications of a return to that self-knowledge which lies at the basis of true repentance.

But reader, have you attained to this self-knowledge? Have you ever, in council with you own heart sought to know your true condition? Have you ever thus come to yourself? How long many are in doing this! With the most perverse ingenuity, they invent expedients to save themselves from the necessity of this resort. They give themselves no time to reflect. They fill up every precious hour with one or another vanity. They cultivate a close and yet closer connection with the world! They widen the circle of their companionships; they plunge madly into the vortex of worldly business and pleasure—all to save them from themselves, to drown that voice within which cannot make itself heard amid the turmoil,—all to prevent their being left