

**THE VOICE OF THE GOOD
SHEPHERD TO HIS LOST SHEEP:
BEING A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION
OF THE FORMER PART OF THE
PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON**

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The Voice of the Good Shepherd to His Lost Sheep: Being a Practical Exposition of the Former Part of the Parable of the Prodigal Son by R. G. Swayne

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being a Practical Exposition of the former part of the
Parable of the Prodigal Son

BY THE REV. R. G. SWAYNE, M.A.

RECTOR OF ST. EDMUND'S, SALISBURY

*"Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and
seek them out." — EZEK. xxxiv. 11*



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PREFACE

THIS little Book is really a series of Lent Sermons, written, of course, not to be read, but to be preached. The writer was afterwards strongly urged to print them; and, although no one can be so conscious as himself that they lack almost all the essential qualifications for publication, he has consented to do so, on the single ground which had been pressed upon him, that, by God's blessing, they might do further work for Christ.

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THE PRODIGAL A BELOVED SON.

THERE are tens of thousands, professing and calling themselves Christians, who have no real knowledge of this most precious Parable.

And yet, perhaps, it is in some respects the best known of all Christ ever spoke. The very title, taken from the headings of our English Bible, by which we call it, is a sort of household word. Comparatively few who are fathers or mothers know not, by sad experience, what a Prodigal Son is. This touching story is often *delineated* by the artist; and even as little children we were familiar with the chief incidents of the tale. There never was told a more *moving*

tale—one that keeps nearer to the heart, though so simple. I have seen the big tears roll down the cheeks of the strong man on the bed of sickness, as he has listened, it may be, for the first time, or, at least, the first time for many a long year, to that wondrous narrative of the old father *running* to meet his poor, enfeebled, way-worn child.

But what I mean is, that however well acquainted we may be with all this, it is yet possible,—nay, more than possible,—to miss the deep and most blessed truths which underlie it all. For, as I shall hope to show you hereafter, this Parable is indeed a very Gospel within a Gospel. The very essence of the Gospel is wrapped within it, like the precious pearl within the shell. If you were to ask me where you might find in the whole Bible the love of God for us sinners most surely, most winningly, most condescendingly declared, I should naturally answer, without hesitation, “In the Parable of the Prodigal Son,” explained and interpreted as the Christian is elsewhere taught to explain and interpret it. And not only so, but, what is