

"Sunrise" Series, No. 3.

The Little Child.

J. G. B.

Bible and Tract Depot,
GARFIELD STREET,
BELFAST.

THE LITTLE CHILD.

MATT. XVIII. 1-22.

WE must receive the kingdom of God as a little child. Yes, indeed ; and the moral of that thought is very beautiful.

The Lord Jesus, the Son in flesh, has by His death atoned for the sin which brought in death. But He also, in His life and passage through the world, acted on principles which were the very opposite and contradiction of that sin. Surely He did. He did not *remove the penalty* and leave the *transgression uncondemned*. This He could not have done. By His

death He suffered the judgment, but in His life He practically and thoroughly gainsayed the sin which had incurred the judgment.

This must have been so. He could not accredit the sin while suffering its judgment. The sin was pride or creature-exaltation—man seeking to 'be as God, affecting the place, and rights, and majesty of God. The life of Jesus, in full contradiction of such sin, was that of the self-emptied Son—the subject, obedient Jesus. The station in the world which He assumed, the trade He followed, the family He was born into, the company He kept, the circumstances He lived in, all tell us this.

Again, we may say, it could not have been otherwise. But, let me

add, from the beginning God has been exercising His elect in this same lesson, humbling them while blessing them, leading them out of the original penalty or judgment into light and blessing again ; but leading them by such a way as taught them, that man should not again exalt himself. And this He has done by taking up the weak, and the foolish, and the poor, in whom to illustrate His holy principles, and by whom to carry on His gracious operations.

Noah, and the ark of gopherwood ; Abram, and the call from home and kindred to be a stranger here, without friend or inheritance ; the barren wife and the younger brother of the Book of Genesis ; the captives in the

Egyptian brick-kilns, and the infant cast out among the flags of the Egyptian river ; the rod and the uplifted hand of Moses ; the feet of the priests ; the lamps and pitchers of Gideon ; Samson with the ass's jawbone ; David with his stone and sling ; all witness this lesson, that while bringing to us and securing to us all blessing, the Lord would humble the pride of man, and throughout the wondrous story of His doings, expose the folly and the wickedness of the first departure from Him in self-exaltation.

And the elect, thus exercised and thus used of God, have rehearsed the beautiful moral of all this, and said—"Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy Name, give

glory.” Daniel did so when he declared to the king that it was not in him, but in God, to interpret dreams ; as did Joseph, also, long before. But again, I say, the life of Jesus, from first to last, was speaking this language in forms of beauty and perfection, such as have glorified God beyond all that His rights and majesty were of old gainsayed in the garden of Eden. And this is very principal in the reckoning of our souls, when we are spiritually awake to the mysteries of God.

But, I ask, has God ceased to teach this lesson? Now that we are in the Church, and on the road to the *heavenly* country, has God ceased to teach this lesson? We might rather judge that He is

teaching it with increased emphasis. And is it not so? "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," answers this. A little child is nothing in this world—a cipher in its great account—a weak thing—a foolish thing—a thing to be passed by, not worthy of being either courted or dreaded in the important game of the world's rivalries. It may have its own things, but they are toys. And so the Church. She has her own things, and peculiar things they are, but just such as must be esteemed toys or children's playthings by those who are concerned in the contentions of pride and selfishness on the earth.

Our Scripture, Matt. xviii. 1-22, gives us some of them—"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; if he repent, forgive him; if he will not repent, sue him and win him if you can; try every way; be servant to him that has injured or insulted you; get others to seek him; if all fail, simply set him aside. If you want anything, ask God about it; if you do anything, take God's principles in the doing of it." This, we may say, is the voice that is heard here. These are among the things of the Church—"a lamp despised in the hand of him that is at ease"—for how can the world value the light of such principles as these?

And yet all this is according to the stone and sling of David in

other days. It is the weak thing. "Two or three met together in My Name," says the Lord. Can anything be weaker in the judgment of man? And yet, in the judgment of the Spirit, such an assembly was doing the business of the sling and the stone, or the lamps and the pitchers. It confounds the strong, the noble, and the wise of this world. It brings to nought the things that are, though in itself nothing. "Ye see your calling," says the Apostle, looking at such an object, "how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things

of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are : that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Cor. i. 26-29).

Surely the Lord in the Church is teaching the old lesson still ; and we are to be *always* practising it, exercising ourselves in those principles which are the Church’s peculiarities, though they are but weakness and foolishness in the thoughts of men. These are to be *always* our lesson, as the Lord says to Peter in this Scripture : “ I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven.” The present dignities of the

Church are hidden in heaven. The angel of the little child beholds the Father's face there.

But how entirely has Christendom refused to learn this lesson of "the little child"! She has consented to forget that it was a poor despised Galilean, a carpenter's son, that suffered the death of the cross. Christendom—the professing world around us—treats the mystery of redemption as if it had been some great personage that made atonement. It was God Himself, the Son in flesh, Jehovah's Fellow, that did so. That is indeed true. But as touching His place in the world, or among men, it was the despised Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth in Galilee. He did not go to Calvary from king's

courts, or amid the acclamations of the world ; but He was the rejected One. The station He took in the world, as I noticed before, the trade He followed, the family He was born into, the company He kept, the circumstances He lived in, all tell us who He was—“a worm, and no man ; a reproach of men, and despised of the people” ere He went to Calvary as the Lamb of God.

But Christendom has forgotten this. It may boast of Calvary and of the Lamb of God in a certain way, but it has entirely lost sight of Nazareth and of the carpenter’s son. It links the *palace* with the *cross* : greatness in the world, wealth and ease, with the confession of Jesus and of the Gospel.

And it was in the face of such a perverted mind as this that the Apostle, through the Spirit, lifts himself up before the saints at Corinth (1 Cor. i.), for he purposes to introduce Christ crucified to them again. They were receiving again the spirit of the world—they were walking as men — and they needed that Christ crucified, *in full character*, should be introduced to their souls afresh. For in that expression, “Christ crucified,” the Apostle did not mean Christ in His *sacrifice* only, but Christ in His *humiliation* also; Christ regarded not merely as the Lamb for the altar of God, but as humbled all through, from His birth in the manger to His death on the tree. It is this full mystery

which the Apostle desires to have brought in with power on the conscience, that the spirit of the world, which was defiling the saints at Corinth, might be controlled. And it is only in that mystery, "Christ crucified," opened and applied in its full form, that "the wisdom of God and the power of God" are to be found. But in that mystery, faith is very conscious that it does come into communion with the wisdom and the power of God—a wisdom which interprets all around, and a power which separates from it all.

O, how poorly has the soul learnt this mystery of "the little child," the living practical lesson of a scorned and rejected Jesus — the world-conquering truth, that the

Son from the bosom was but a despised Galilean here, though the mind and the pen can trace the form of it without doubt or difficulty !

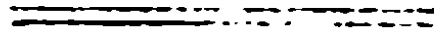
Lord, give us to know the honour of witnessing Thy rejection in this proud world !

“ The Present Testimony,” 1854.
Vol. 6, Page 366.

“ O ever homeless Stranger,
Thus dearest Friend to me,
An outcast in the manger
That Thou might'st with us be.
Bless'd Babe who lowly liest
In manger-cradle there ;
Descended from the Highest
Our sorrows all to share.
O love all thought surpassing,
That Thou should'st with us be ;
Nor yet in triumph passing
But human infancy.

Come now and view that manger :
 The Lord of glory see,
 A houseless, homeless Stranger
 In this poor world for thee.
 There see the Godhead glory
 Shine through that human vail,
 And willing hear the story
 Of love that's come to heal."

*From "The Man of Sorrows,"
 by J.N.D.*



"SUNRISE SERIES."

Now Ready—

No. 4—"HEARTS IN TUNE," BY J.N.D.
 (Hitherto unpublished).

Still on sale—

No. 1—"SUNRISE AND SUNSET," BY J.B.S.

Sixpence per dozen.