

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN*

By Rev. J. W. McMillan, M.A.

The greatest in the kingdom of heaven, v. 1. The greatest in finance is the clever business man, who can buy the most railroads, steamships, mines, houses, lands. The greatest in worldly society is the one who can dress finest, say the wittiest and gayest things, and give the grandest parties. The greatest in the school, as many judge, is the boy who can stay top of his class and win all the first prizes. But in the kingdom of heaven it is quite different. There the greatest is the humblest, the gentlest, the kindest, the least thoughtful of self, the most thoughtful of others. That is why it is called the kingdom of heaven.

Except ye be converted, v. 3. Instead of "be converted" the Rev. Ver. has "turn." Both these words refer to the change of heart required, if we would enter the kingdom of God. "Be converted" points to the Holy Spirit's part in bringing about this change. Our Lord said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again" (see John 3:3, 5, 7). Divine power alone can accomplish the new birth. "Turn" directs attention to our part. It is as if we had been walking in the wrong direction, and must face the other way to reach our destination. A wrong notion sometimes held is, that we are to remain passive, waiting for the Holy Spirit to do His work in us. But the man with the withered hand was commanded to stretch it forth while it was yet helpless. It was in the act of obedience that the new strength came. So Jesus bids us "turn"; and it is ours to obey, in the confident assurance that the Spirit of God will impart to us the enabling power.

Become as little children, v. 3. On an old fresco in Florence is depicted a long procession of wayfarers ascending to a platform in the centre, on which stands the gate of heaven. The procession is formed of full-grown men and women, but no sooner do they place their feet upon the platform that supports the gate, than they become of very small stature, and pass through its portals as little children. Even so must proud men and vain women forget all about their imagined greatness, and become as conscious of their own weakness, as humble and loving in their hearts and as confident of the power of their heavenly Father, as a little child feels in the presence of an earthly parent, if they are to enter the kingdom of God.

Humble himself, v. 4. There is a spurious humility, which parades itself in tone and manner. "I have no humility to brag about," said one. Candidus, the skillful Egyptian architect, in building a watch tower for the king, covered it over with lime and mortar, and then wrote on the top of that the name of the king in letters of gold, thus pretending to honor his sovereign, but knowing that in time the rain would wash away the mortar and leave exposed to future generations his own name in the hard rock. Humility is not pretending to put God first and write His name in letters of gold, while really seeking our own interests; it can exist only where in deed and in truth the Christian seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Whoso...cause...little ones...stumble Rev. Ver. v. 6. A father attempted to climb a perilous hill, purposely choosing a time when his children were at play, that they might not be led into danger by attempting to follow him. He was nearing the

most precipitous part when a little voice behind shouted, "Father, take the safest path, for I am coming behind you." With trembling footsteps he hurried back, just in time to rescue his child from danger. The little ones are always following. They are close at our heels. It is a frightful responsibility to lead them through thoughtless conduct into moral danger. Warn unto that man—

Despise not...little ones, v. 10. A certain king demanded of the Spartans fifty of their children as hostages. "We would prefer," they replied, "to give you fifty of our most distinguished men." In the children they saw the warriors and statesmen of the future. It is the children of today who are to make the world of tomorrow a better and a happier place to live in. Any help or encouragement we can give them will be amply repaid. Many a man has owed his success or greatness to the kind assistance or counsel of some older friend at the start. What joy will be ours if we give such timely aid? We shall share the triumph and gladness of all the achievements that follow.

One of them be gone astray, v. 12. Horace Mann, in opening a reformatory institution for boys, remarked that if only one boy were saved it would pay for all the cost and labor of establishing such an institution. Afterwards a gentleman rallied Mr. Mann upon his statement, saying, "Did you not color that a little, when you said that all expense and labor would be repaid, if it only saved one boy?" "Not if it was my boy," was the reply. And yet every wayward lad is some mother's boy, and therefore has a claim to be sought as earnestly as anyone whom we personally know and love; and in God's eyes all are equally precious. He makes no difference between high and low, rich and poor, young or old. Every child in His great family is dear to the heavenly Father.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

By Rev. James Ross, D.D.

Their Angels—Jewish writers elaborated a vast hierarchy of angels, in which every scrap of information regarding them in the Scriptures is greatly expanded. They mediate between God and man, and intercede for those on earth. They carry up men's prayers to the throne, and there an angel set over the prayers weaves them into a crown for the Most High. They write down also all the deeds of men before the face of the Lord. One angel has been set over each of the elements, and every nation has a special angel or prince over it. God determines everything, and then sends an angel to execute His will. Every man has his angel of destiny, who brings about all the good or evil that he experiences. And every man has also one or more guardian angels. A pious Jew, compelled to go into an unclean place, asked his accompanying angels to wait until he came out again. Besides the angel who constantly attended him, others are sometimes appointed as temporary companions to assist or preserve him in a definite work. If a Jew forsake the community of his fathers in its hour of need, his guardian angels lay their hands on his head, saying, "May he have no share in the salvation of the community!"

Opportunities are never advertised in the Lost and Found column.

If you expect your prayers to be answered, you must back them up with a reasonable amount of hustle.

It is best to use the bountiful harvest to the glory of God. He gives them.

We refuse to do one of our greatest duties when we refuse to pray.

We neglect one of our greatest privileges when we neglect to pray.

SPARKS FROM OTHER ANVILS.

Lutheran Observer:—Prayer, and worship in general, is not taken with sufficient seriousness. The dignity and privilege of drawing near to God in His appointed way is not realized, and the result is the irreverence that so often mars the public worship in God's house,—and worship is worship, whatever the service, whether in the church itself, the Sunday-school, or any other meeting for that purpose. Irreverence may be an American trait, but it is none the less one to be deplored. Beginning at the fountain head, in the nursery, in the home, and reaching out to the church itself, let there be the effort to meet the fault and to conquer it.

Herald and Presbyter:—Spring is advancing. It has some temporary set-backs in the way of cold and storms, and frost and snow, but each day is hastening the consummation of the glories of summer and the harvest. So Christian life has its struggles and difficulties, but to each true child of God is coming the completeness of the perfect life of heaven.

Southwestern Presbyterian:—Unity and union are entirely different things. Where there is unity there should be union. Not to seek it will be sin. Where there is union without unity, the product is evil and only evil. The binding together of discordant elements will only emphasize the disagreement.

Maritime Baptist:—The minister needs helpers. No man is so great and strong as not to need the inspiration and encouragement which the hearty sympathy and co-operation of his brethren can give.

How gratefully Paul recalls the help that came to him through Aquila and Prisca and many others who co-operated with him in the gospel! And if Paul felt the need and appreciated the value of helpers the same is certainly true of the ministers of our own day. There can scarcely be anything so disheartening to the pastor as to feel that he is praying and working alone, with no one to sympathize heartily with his aims or second his efforts, and on the other hand there can scarcely be anything more inspiring for the minister than to know that there are men and women around him full of prayerful sympathy for him and eager to join hands with him in the work.

Southwestern Presbyterian:—How large a proportion of popular skepticism is mere echo! People incapable of thinking out anything for themselves that is profound or that deals with first principles, catch up the expressions of others whose notions suit so admirably their own predisposition, and go about the world pretending that they are wise and intelligent and thoughtful, whereas they are in the baldest sense "agnostics," "understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." Pin them down to formal statement or proof, and they are usually found incapable of either.

GOD'S WILL.

"Oh, don't let us always be a-talking about bearin' His will, and sufferin' His will. Let's talk about enjoyin' His will. When the baby is pin'n away and sickly, an' dyin', that be His will, perhaps; but that be His will, too, when the baby be a great big thumpin' boy, and thrives uncommon. It be God's will perhaps—if it be'n our carelessness—when the house burnt down, and we cease with our lives. But it be the Lord's will, too, all the days that we come and go, and find all safe and sound. The Father's will isn't that we should be out in a far country perishin' with hunger. His will is the best robe and the fatted calf; the comin' home, and the bein' merry. 'My meditation of Him shall be sweet.' You may say what you like about sufferin' the Lord's will; I shall talk about enjoyin' it, and delightin' in it."—Daniel Quorn.

*S.S. Lesson I. Matthew 18: 1-14. Commit to memory vs. 2, 3. Read Mark 9: 14-50; 10: 13-16. Golden Text—It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.—Matthew 18:14.