

directly before Him, to read a lesson to adults on the true character and spirit of all the subjects of His kingdom. The very fact that none can receive the kingdom but as a little child conclusively settles the fact of infant membership. Indeed, the force of this sentence of our Master cannot be adequately felt on the ordinary interpretation—viz., that the adult subjects of the kingdom resemble infants only in natural gentleness, humbleness, harmlessness and teachableness—indeed, some such natural animal characteristics as are found in doves and lambs. It is only when infants are regarded as real subjects of the kingdom—truly redeemed by the mediation of Christ from the ruin of the fall—as restored by the second man, the Lord from heaven, from all the damage sustained from the first man's sin, and made heirs of a more glorious paradise than was lost in Eden—as receiving the abundance of grace, and of the free gift, the gift of righteousness, that they may reign in life by one Jesus Christ—that the full appropriateness of their being exhibited as models, types, illustrations and pictures of the true subjects of the heavenly kingdom, is manifest. The manner of their entrance into the kingdom is, moreover, beautifully illustrative of the entrance of adults. Here all is of grace, and seen to be of grace—they are mere recipients—there is no room for self-elation. God alone is exalted, and man is seen to owe all to God's free favour. Merit and self have no place. "They die, for Adam sinned; they live, for Jesus died."

There is an incident recorded in the 18th chapter of Matthew, and also in Mark, 9th chapter, 36, 37, and in Luke, 9th chapter, 46, 47, 48, which has often been confounded with the scene described in our text. But the time, circumstances, occasion and design of our Lord's teachings, recorded in those passages, is entirely different from what is here recorded. There, the occasion was a strife among the disciples as to which should be greatest in the kingdom. A little child, who probably could walk, was placed by Jesus in the midst. He was made a parable or type. It was not he that was the primary matter, but something that was to be taught through him to the disciples. The child-like character of all disciples is, therefore, the prominent and pervading theme in this passage. But by no means to the exclusion of the literal children, as in the kingdom, and precious and dear to the King, and to be received in His name, which He will reckon equivalent to receiving Himself.

At the 5th verse of the 18th chapter of Matthew it is written—"And whoso shall receive this little child in my name receiveth me." The Saviour has answered the question proposed to Him in verse 1st, and has answered it in such a way as to put the real primary meaning within the reach of each. He now takes up another thread of thought, that has an intimate and interesting connection with what He had been saying. Whoever appreciates child-like lowliness, when he meets it in others, appreciates Christ and Christianity—whosoever shall receive into his home and into his heart *one such little child*, even *one such, whether literally or only morally, a little child*. Our Saviour had reference, no doubt, to both phases of childhood. That He refers to literal childhood may be inferred from Luke ix. 48—"And He said unto them, whosoever shall receive this little child in my name, receiveth me." Let it not seem strange that the two references should be combined or blended, as it is evident they are from the next verse. There is a point at which the realities referred to coalesce—a point at which the literal child is as dear to the heart of God as the spiritual child, and dear because of the ingenuous lowliness and moral loveliness of childhood. In my name—literally, upon my name—upon the ground or because of my name—that is, in consideration of me—out of respect or regard for me. To receive a child, then, literal or spiritual, in Christ's name, is to receive him for Christ's sake. He, says our Saviour, who thus receives a little child, receives me. He welcomes me. His act comes over, morally, to me, and terminates on me. See Matthew, xxv. 40.

VII. *How Jesus received and blessed the infants, "And He laid his hands on them."*—He laid His hands on their heads, and blessed them. He did not merely bless the grown-up persons who were like them. He blessed the little ones themselves.