

there, progress, except in the direction in which they would lead, was evidently impossible. As a man cannot, by any effort of his own, transcend his own idea, so all the greatness that ever these disciples could attain to, must be measured by the kingdom to which they belonged. They might be great in the measure of their own thoughts and the direction in which they led, but if these went out only to the world, and the things of it, they could only be great in that world, and could not, for that reason, have part or lot in the kingdom of Heaven, which was not of this world. If, therefore, they would be great in the kingdom of Heaven—if, indeed, they would enter it at all—they must turn from such thoughts, and in that sense be converted. They must leave off thinking of greatness as they see it in this world, and feel after something other and different than that which they had hitherto been thinking of, if they would enter or be great in the kingdom of Heaven. The words of our Saviour are emphatic: "Except ye be converted, * * * ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

Granting, then, the necessity of conversion in respect of thought and feeling, as well as outward conduct, we might ask—as, perchance, these disciples of old did, or would have done, if the Saviour had not, by his answer, precluded the need of it—the nature and the form of the change that was required in order to obtain admission as well as greatness in the kingdom of Heaven. This constitutes the second thing necessary to the admission and greatness in the kingdom of Heaven:

2. *That we must be so converted as to "become as little children."*

Now observe, the Saviour does not say to them that they must become little children—that is not in the power of any one to accomplish. They cannot, when old or matured, become again young. The old may adopt the habits and the dress, as well as the language of youth, and then the sense of incongruity

becomes so great that we feel not only the folly but the wickedness of such a course. The Saviour cannot mean that the grown man or woman, in any formal sense, is to become a little child. He who is the author of all wisdom could not teach such folly. We are not to become children, but to be as children. It is true, in a very significant sense, we can never be other than we are; that to attempt to be another is a misdemeanour and a crime in the sight of all true law and right-thinking, and that even a bare imitation carries with it a germ of reproach that requires only to be developed to become a forgery and a crime. We exhort the young to follow the example of the old, but we do not mean that they are to ape their conduct or mimic their way or manner. We never think of them as other than young, but that the example of the old, in a given case, is to be the guide or model upon which they are to shape their own. In like manner we conceive that the exhortation before us just means that in all our wisdom and manhood, the little child is the model upon which these are to be shaped; the plan upon which the palace is to be built; the model after which the grander dimensions of the man is to be formed and wrought out. And the nearer the construction approaches the model or plan, it is by that much the more perfect; so that the nearer we are in all the comparable features of our manhood to that of the little child, the greater will we be in the kingdom of Heaven.

The field thus opened up to us is a wide one. But we are not left to wander at will over the whole subject. The Saviour confines our attention to one of the cardinal virtues of the Christian character, that of humanity: "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven."

Now it will be observed, that in respect of the humility of the child, it is not self-conscious. It knows not that it is humble. It practices no humility.