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THE CHILDREN IN THE HANDS OF THE ARMINIANS.

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Prof. Charles W. Rishell, of Boston University, has written a very interesting little book on the relation of little children to Christianity and to the Christian Church.* The object he has set before him is the very laudable one of pleading for the religious education of children. In order to give force to his pleading he argues the possibility of religion in children of the tenderest years. He insists on the importance for them of religious instruction and example. He demands of the church recognition of their church membership and provision for their care and development as children of God with the same right to the privileges of God's Church as other members. As he expresses it, he pleads with the Church "to count the children in, not out."

The significance of the book is that it emanates from Arminian circles and reasons from Arminian postulates. This is its significance; and this is its weakness. There is no other system of belief of widespread influence in the churches to which it is not a commonplace and mere matter of course that children are capable of religious life from their very earliest years, and ought to be recognized from their infancy as members of Christ's Church and brought up in its fold and under its fostering care. There is no other system of belief of widespread influence in the

**The Child as God's Child.* By Rev. Charles W. Rishell, Ph. D., Professor of Historical Theology in Boston University School of Theology. New York: Eaton & Mains. Cincinnati: Jennings & Graham (1904). Small 8vo. Pp. 181.

A STUDY OF THE SYROPHENICIAN WOMAN'S CASE.

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The story of this woman is one of the most remarkable, and one of the most instructive in the life of Our Lord. It contains the most exceptional exhibit of character in his personal history, and the most sublime instance of faith in him which the sacred record contains. It furnishes some peculiar and invaluable lessons to the church of every age, and a most striking example of the need of caution and circumspection in the interpretation of Scripture; for no passage of the history of Our Lord is so completely dependent upon its historical setting. In this incident he seems to put on a new character, one which he never had put on before, and which he never exhibited afterward. It stands alone in the history of the most beautiful character ever delineated in history or in fiction. The incident assuredly is greatly misunderstood. Jesus seems, as we have said, to put on a new character; he appears to have done all that he could well have done, not only to discourage, but even to wound and insult the unhappy mother; and if his language is taken without reference to its historical setting, and without regard to the purpose which he had in view—if it is construed as directly and exclusively addressed to the woman, this conclusion seems to be warranted. His speech is positively rough; he seems to take the place, and use the language, of the scornful Jew of his day. Yet it is of all things the most certain that he had in his character not an atom of the scornful Jew—no narrowness, no bigotry, no exclusive regard for the Hebrew as distinguished from Gentile or Samaritan. His real aim and spirit in this incident cannot ever be understood or appreciated unless we study it in its historical setting, and in relation to the errors prevailing even among the faithful twelve who were then following him, which errors it was his purpose to correct. He did design to accomplish three distinct things: (1) To furnish an instance, in the most astonishing form, of the faith which his own grace

could give and sustain in a human heart under enormous trials; (2) to give an all-important lesson to his disciples; and (3) to do a miracle of healing in confirmation of the lesson, and in honor of the amazing faith which appealed to his grace.

The historical circumstances are these. He had just been driven out of Galilee as some twelve or fifteen months before he had been driven out of Judea. Up to this time the Scribes and priestly classes had opposed him, but the people had sustained him. But since it had become generally known that he would not head a rising against the Roman Power, and all thought of securing his great gifts for the deliverance of the Jewish nationality had been forced out of the public mind, the people had turned against him and sided with the priestly party. The first effect of this change was to drive him into exile. He was worn out with work and travel, and every effort to secure repose had failed. He determined to leave Galilee, and pass over the mountain barrier which separated that province of Israel from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. He thus passed from the jurisdiction of Herod and the power of the Rabbis. He was now in heathen territory. Turning northward in order to reach the great northern commercial road which passed eastward along the northern side of the Lebanon range, as he moved along through the hills and wooded valleys between the two great routes to the sea, he would find the rest that he needed. He was on his way round the northern border of Israel, traveling for the greater part of the way on heathen territory. The object of his journey was to reach the Decapolis, where he intended to remain for many weeks. The Decapolis was an association of heathen cities, with a certain territory subject to their jurisdiction, all of which cities were on the eastern side of the Jordan except one or two on the western side. The trip through the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, the journey round the northern border of Israel, and his stay in the Decapollitan cities and territory, occupied between two and three months, during which he was pursuing his great purpose of preaching and healing. He was going to do the very thing that he said he was not sent to do, if his meaning was what it is generally understood to mean—that he had no personal mission to the Gentiles. He well knew that his great system of grace was intended to embrace all those families of the earth who were to share in the blessings of Abraham.

He well knew that the Prophets had declared that Messiah was to be a "Light to the Gentiles," not less than to the Jews. He also knew that his disciples shared fully in all the narrow and bigoted prejudices of their race. He knew too that the chief field of labor of the Apostles was to be among the Gentiles. It was evidently his opinion that it was now time to begin to correct their fatal ignorance; and this was the main object of the lesson which he was now about to give them by his own mission to the Decapolis, and by his dealing with the Syro-phœnician woman. As he passed slowly northward through the heathen territory, drinking of the bright mountain springs and resting in the cottages of the people, his strength returned. He could not be altogether hid; the rumor that the Prophet of Galilee was passing through brought many to see him. Among them was the heroine of this narrative; and the opportunity was given for the first lesson to the Twelve.

When the unhappy heathen mother applied to him on the highway, and afterwards when he entered a house by the wayside, he assumed the role of the scornful Jew of his day. Every word he spoke, until the last compassionate and indignant sentence of loving acquiescence, was spoken in that character, and voiced that same narrow bigotry which he was beginning to assail and root out. He will now show them how mean and wicked such sentiments were as they were illustrated by a living example of heathen sorrow. The woman had heard of all the wondrous tenderness, as well as of the amazing power, of the Galilean Prophet, and grace had kindled in her heart the deathless spark of a living faith. Possibly she had been one of the multitude from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon and the regions round about, and had witnessed the wonderful works of compassionate healing done by the Prophet. At all events, she had learned to believe in him with all her heart. She hears of his coming over the mountain into the region of her own people, and she starts at once to meet him; and as *his other purpose* required the most extraordinary trial of her confidence, he poured his grace into her soul, until her trembling faith, unsupported by any express warrant, so far at least as she knew, glowed into the sublimest example of New Testament faith to be found in the record. She comes into the presence of Jesus as he was passing along the highway; she falls at his feet and begs him to heal her child.

His answer is unfavorable. It is directly addressed to her; it is indirectly addressed to the Twelve. But it is not vocal—it is mere silence. He answered her not a word; she passed along the road with the Twelve just behind him.

The disciples were not surprised: it was what their own feelings taught them to expect. The action was intended to raise merely the question, "Is not this the proper way to answer the request of such a person?" The woman paused confused and uncertain; but as the group passed on her faith rallied. She followed them, crying aloud and in bitter agony and with such steady persistence, that the Twelve came and besought him, saying, "Send her away, for she crieth after us." They took it for granted that she would fail: the Master's silent discount of the prayer seemed to strike in with the conclusions of their own bigotry. Besides, when he had sent out the Twelve he had commanded, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But Jesus now evidently paused—perhaps, as Geikie supposes, entered into a house by the wayside. At all events, he permitted the woman to come up with him. To her renewed and agonized petition he answers once more, voicing the prejudices of his followers: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel." Probably with a glance at his friends he appeals to them as though to say, "Such is the understanding of the matter, is it not? That is a correct sentiment, is it not?"

This construction is necessary to the vindication of Our Lord and the Holy Scriptures in general. He does not commit himself to the assertion that his personal mission was confined to the people of Israel: it was principally confined to them, but not exclusively, as he was just about to prove. Within a few minutes he was to show by a miraculous act that he was sent to do good to others besides Jews, and for the next period of nearly, if not fully, three months, to actually discharge a personal mission to Gentiles. When he used those words he was still impersonating the bigoted Jew. He cannot be supposed to repudiate either his mission to the world at large or his personal mission to the Decapoltan people. The poor woman saw something in his face, in spite of his words with their undisclosed meaning, which emboldened her faith, and she took another

step. With pathetic humility she again prays simply, "Lord, help me."

His pitying heart swelled with his generous sympathy. But the utter depravity and hardness of Jewish prejudice had not yet reached its full expression. He answers still more roughly, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." That, too, is a correct sentiment, is it not? You think she is a dog, do you not? Then came the sublime triumph of a faith without a promise—without a warrant of Scripture, known to her at least,—of a faith in the Christ himself—in the person of the glorious Prophet of Galilee: "Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." She had caught a suggestion from voice and feature which was not to be discovered in the insulting words, and which let her see plainly that he was not speaking out of his own generous heart, although she could not tell what he meant. She saw the inviting something in his face and voice, and seized her opportunity. Then raising his voice, with its tones ringing with his just indignation, with his melting pity and with his joy in such glorious faith, he exclaimed aloud, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

The rebuke of that Jewish prejudice which he condescended to impersonate was overwhelming! The first lesson to the preachers to the Gentiles was most effectively given, and deepened by his conduct for many ensuing weeks. The joy in that sorrowful Gentile home that day yielded only one instance of millions to come in the next nineteen hundred years. The outflow of that compassionate heart has never ceased. In our opinion, our Lord was never more misunderstood than when his words on this remarkable occasion are construed to repudiate his own mission to the Gentiles of Decapolis and the Gentiles of the world. This miracle, under its striking circumstances, and his own personal history for the next few months, alike refute the idea.

C. R. VAUGHAN.