(literally the **fire which is eternal**), which here first occurs, is more fully expressed in Mark, vv. 43, 44 ff.

10.] Hitherto our text has been lel with that of Mark ix.; from this, Matthew stands alone.

The warning against contempt of these little ones must not be taken as only implying that special care must be taken not to scandalize them, nor indeed as relating exclusively, or even principally, to children. We must remember with what the discourse began — a contention who should be greatest among them: and the **little ones** are those who are the furthest from these ‘greatest,’ the humble and new-born babes of the spiritual kingdom. And despise must be understood of that kind of contempt which ambition for superiority would induce for those who are by weakness or humility incapacitated for such a strife. There is no doubt that *children are included* in the word **little ones**, as they are always classed with the humble and simple-minded, and their character held up for our imitation. The *little children* in the outward state of the Church are in fact the only disciples who are sure to be that in reality, which their Baptism has put upon them, and so exactly answer to the wider meaning here conveyed by the term; and those who would in afterlife enter into the kingdom must turn back, and become as these little children — as they were when they had just received  
the new life in Baptism. The whole discourse is in deep and constant reference to the *covenant with infants*, which was to be made and ratified by an ordinance, in the Kingdom of Heaven, just as then.

On the reason assigned in the latter part of this verse, there have been many opinions ; some of which (e.g. that given Webster and Wilkinson, ‘**angels**, their *spirits* after death :’ a meaning which the word never bore, and one respecting which our Lord would not have spoken in the present tense, with **always**) have been broached merely to evade the plain sense of the words, which is—that *to individuals* (whether invariably, or under what circumstances of minor detail, we are not informed) *certain angels are allotted as their especial attendants and guardians.* We know elsewhere from the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament (Ps. xxxiv. 7; xci. 11: Heb. i. 14 al.), that the angels do *minister about the children of God:* and what should forbid that in this service, a *prescribed order* and *appointed duty* should regulate their ministrations ? Nay, is it not certain by analogy that such would be the case? But this saying of our Lord assures us that such *is* the case, and that those angels whose honour is high before God are entrusted with the charge of the humble and meek,—the children in age and the children in grace.

The phrase **I say unto you,** as in Luke xv. 7, 10, is an introduction to a revelation of some previously unknown fact in the spiritual world.

Stier has some very beautiful remarks on the guardian angels, and on the present general neglect of the doctrine of angelic tutelage, which has been doubtless a reaction from the idolatrous angel-worship of the Church of Rome (see Acts xii, 15: Daniel xii. 1: in the former case we have an individual, in the latter a national guardianship).

**behold the face, &c.** i.e. are in high honour before God; not perhaps *especially* so, but the meaning may be, ‘for they have angelic guardians, who always,’ &c. See Tobit xii. 15.

11.] The angels are the servante and messengers of the Son of Man; and they therefore (**for &c.**) are appointed to wait on these little ones whom He came to save; and who, in their utter helplessness, are especially examples of *that which was lost.* ‘Here,’ remarks Stier, ‘is Jacob’s ladder planted before our eyes: beneath are the little ones;— then their angels ;— then the Son of Man in heaven, in whom alone man is exalted above the angels, Who, as the Great Angel of the Covenant, cometh from the Presence and Bosom of the Father;— and above Him again (ver. 14) the Father Himself, and