

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD GLORIFIED BY CHILDREN'S MOUTHS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 27TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

In connection with the Centenary of Sabbath Schools.

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger."—Psalm viii. 2.

THIS psalm sings of the grandeur of God as seen in creation. Who has not been impressed with the sight of the starry sky, and the moon walking in her brightness? Truly, God is great! Who can stand at night and gaze upward to yonder distant worlds without saying, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens." The psalm with equal vigour treats of the condescension of God, which is all the better seen when we have a view of his greatness and glory. It is not for us to stoop; we are so low already. We sometimes use the word condescension in reference to man; but worms were never raised so high above their meaner fellow-worms as to be capable of real condescension; that belongs to God alone. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Because of this divine condescension great honour is put upon man by God, and the psalm sings of it, telling of the exaltation of man, who in his original was made a little lower than the angels, but by God's gentleness has been made great, and crowned with glory and honour. Hence the inspired poet sings of the glory of God in man; for he never thinks of extolling man; he only means to say that God is glorious on account of the great things which he has done in and for such a poor creature as man is. So when he has said that man is made to be the viceroy of God over this earth, and is set over the works of God's hands, he concludes, not by praising man, but by reverently singing, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" Mark right well the greatness of God, stooping to the littleness of man and glorifying itself thereby,—the stupendous grandeur of the highest bowing down to the lowest, and uplifting it into a place hard by itself, and so getting to itself abundant renown.

This morning our subject is the power of God displayed in human
No. 1,545.

weakness—strength out of babes' mouths: the way he glorifies himself by using the very least, and causing them to show forth his praise to the confusion of his adversaries.

There is a glory of God to be seen in creation, but in redemption there are peculiarly bright manifestations. In creation there was no opposition. When God framed this world there was no opposing force to fight against him: "He spake, and it was done." Absolute nothingness was no hindrance to the creation "in the beginning," neither were chaos and darkness resisting forces in the after framing of the world. "Let there be light," said God, and there was light. He speaks life, and things live; no trace of rebellion is seen. It is in the sphere of moral and spiritual things that "the enemy" is met with, and here is a labour worthy of a god—to overthrow this enemy, and still the evil voice which curses the sons of men. It is in conquering the opposition of the powers of evil that God gets to himself a glory more remarkable than that which he obtains by the greatest feats of creative power.

I. So our first thought is, that **THERE IS A CONFLICT**. Our text speaks of "enemies," and of "the enemy and the avenger." We know who the enemies are. Are they not the seed of the serpent? Are they not the men of this world, the children of darkness? The enemies of God are all men who have not been renewed in the spirit of their minds; all who have not been turned "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." God has—alas that we should have to say it!—many enemies; and, above all, there is *the* enemy, that leading spirit, the "prince of the power of the air," who hath dominion over the children of disobedience, and over those apostate angels whom he seduced into mutiny, so that they revolted with him from beneath the standard of God: the devil and Satan is the enemy who contends against the cause of truth and love, which is the cause of God. He is spoken of as "the avenger" because he seeks to revenge himself on God. Through his own sin and folly he was expelled from heaven; the "son of the morning" became the prince of darkness by his own wilful deed, and he wanders up and down the universe of God, seeking to take revenge upon the just and holy Judge for the sentence which he has passed upon him. Ever there rages a tremendous battle between good and evil, between God and this avenger, and the evil powers associated with him. This battle rages from day to day, and will never cease till the Lord hath put all enemies under the feet of his glorious Son, who is manifested to destroy the works of the devil. Victory shall crown the strife between good and evil, and the cry shall be heard, "Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

This strife began,—I hesitate to conclude the sentence,—for the origin of evil is not revealed; but the first historic circumstance we know of was the revolt of the angels who kept not their first estate. How they fell we think we know; but to a large extent our notions are, as a rule, drawn rather from poetical imagination than from positive history; but we do know that the devil was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth (1 John viii. 44), and that "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell" (2 Peter ii. 4).

Satan carried the warfare into this world at the fall. Finding a happy

pair in Eden, he assumed a serpent's form and seduced them with a lie, leading them to partake of the fruit of which their God had said, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." From that fell moment the conflict has never ceased throughout the whole human family, and you find everywhere the seed of the serpent in conflict with the "seed of the woman." God leads the armies of the right and the true against the spiritual wickedness which maintains the throne of wrong and falsehood. The serpent's seed has continued to fight against the Lord Jesus and against his chosen ones, using all sorts of weapons against them: by lying and slandering, by false doctrine, by soft temptations, by cruel persecutions, by death itself, the enemies have sought to destroy the children of the living God. It is a battle royal here below, even as it was above; for we read, "There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven." The day shall come when there shall be no place found for evil upon earth; but till then the god of this world seeks to destroy the Lord Jesus Christ, and all that are in him, and we must wrestle with him until we prevail.

On God's part this conflict is mainly carried on by moral and spiritual means. He does use other means at times, and he will in the end use all the resources of nature for the overthrow of his adversaries. Remember the song of the Red Sea where God used the great deep to destroy his foes: even now I hear the jubilant voices of the maidens as they answer one another saying, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." For the most part, however, this battle is not with weapons of nature, but with weapons of grace, and as far as we have to do with it, it is never with the confused noise of warriors and garments rolled in blood; for "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," though they are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." The warfare of which we speak is the battle of good against evil, of right against wrong, of holiness against sin; in a word, of love against hate; and God uses the weapons of his truth, of his gospel, of the love of man, and especially of the sweet life and divine power of the Holy Spirit, to bring men to the feet of Jesus Christ, "whom he hath appointed heir of all things," that he might reign over them, and "reconcile them unto God, even the Father." This strife goes on every day around us and within us, and you and I are taking one side or the other in it. We are either enemies to God by nature, or we are "reconciled to God by the death of his Son"; we are under the banner of "the Avenger," or else we follow the standard of the Redeemer—one of these two. I invite you at the outset of our discourse earnestly to ask yourselves on whose side you are. "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Art thou for God and for his Christ, or art thou still at enmity with thy Maker, alienated from God by wicked works? With this fact we have opened our discourse—there is a conflict.

II. Secondly, in this conflict THE WEAPONS ARE VERY SINGULAR. What are those weapons? The text replies, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength." Bring hither yon sweet babe, and let us look into its lovely face! See that little mouth—it challenges

a kiss; and note with joy that God may use that little mouth as his conquering weapon against the devil. By men's mouths God's warfare is carried on, and all mouths that have ever spoken for him were once the mouths of "babes and sucklings." I have seen many ancient cannon upon which were moulded in bronze the words—"The last argument of kings." Yes, but the gracious arguments of the King of kings are sent home by a human mouth; these mouths are fashioned and framed on purpose to hurl against the enemy the hot shot of the gospel. Of our Lord Jesus himself we read, "He went forth conquering and to conquer," and it is written concerning him, "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations." O mouth of a little child, it seems strange that out of thee should come the great strength of God which shall silence his enemies; and yet so it shall be. "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it. Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil." It was the publication of the God-given word by human tongues which won the victory. The tongue is the glory of man's frame, and by it the glory of God is exceedingly manifested, and his foes are baffled.

It must greatly anger Satan to think that his craft is not met by craft, nor his clever devices by the wisdom of the world, but that God uses the foolishness of preaching to overthrow him. When our Lord sent out his apostles he did not commission them to assemble squadrons of soldiers, but he bade a tongue of fire sit on each one of them: he did not charge them to establish his religion by the authority of earthly princes, and seek for it the endowments of the state, but he gave them the endowment of the Holy Ghost, and the power to speak his gospel. In them was fulfilled the promise made to Ezekiel, "I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them, and they shall know that I am the Lord."

"What gifts, what miracles he gave!
And power to kill, and power to save!
Furnish'd their tongues with wondrous words,
Instead of shields, and spears, and swords.

"Thus arm'd, he sent the champions forth,
From east to west, from south to north;
'Go, and assert your Saviour's cause;
Go, spread the mystery of his cross.'"

Already the testimony of feeble men has been used as the great power of God to subdue the nations to himself. Satan's kingdom has been shaken and the empire of Jesus extended by the gracious words which have proceeded out of human mouths, mouths which once were those of sucklings. Seest thou there, fiend of hell, the armoury of God? Dost thou see, in yonder infant-class, the weapons which the Lord is preparing against thee? The child that sucks at its mother's breast is born to smite thee with his words, and ere long, when the Spirit of God shall rest upon him, he shall batter down thy high places with his proclamation of the gospel. O smiter of the human race, the youngest, weakest, feeblest of the sons of Adam shall yet tread thee under foot. God shall make use of children's mouths to vanquish and silence the enemy and the avenger.

How are these singular weapons used? These strangely soft, yet sharp, feeble, yet mighty, weapons—how are they used? They smite the enemy by *prayer*. Children pray while they are children, and, blessed be God, their little pleadings are heard in heaven. I like to remember the words of Luther when things were going very badly. He went into a room and found a number of children in prayer, and he exclaimed, "It is well, for the children are praying for us: God will be sure to hear them." And so he will, brethren: he will not let the cries of Samuels and Timothies remain unheard. Thus, from the heavenward side, the prayers uttered by children's mouths will bring prosperity to the great cause. As these children grow older it is by their mouths that they shall bombard and batter the power of the enemy from the ramparts of prayer, and so shall bring an overthrow upon evil and error, and God's word shall be triumphant. O blessed power of prayer, nothing can stand against thee! The man, the child, the babe who knows but how to pray shall certainly prevail with God, and "still the enemy and the avenger."

"Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try,"

and yet it is one of the most effectual forms of assault against the powers of darkness.

These little mouths, too, shall be used for *praise*; and that is another powerful blow against the avenger; for whenever we praise God we cast down the pride of the great enemy. Praise glorifies God, and that is what Satan cannot bear. In proportion as God is glorified he feels himself degraded, and therefore it is a blessed thing to magnify the Lord. Little children, when they are rightly taught, early praise the Messiah, and, as they grow up, with deeper voices, and fuller volume of sound, but perhaps not even then with truer heart, they praise and bless the God of their fathers. The mouths of babes and sucklings are used by God to lower the pride of his adversaries, while they cry "Hosannah!" and sing the praise of Jesus' name.

Nor is this all, for out of man's mouth God sends forth *testimony* by his Holy Spirit, and this is the sharpest blow of all. The enemy dreads nothing so much as witness-bearing to the gospel, for he knows that it pleaseth God "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Under the head of testimony I would include all sorts of speech concerning our Lord Jesus and the gospel of our salvation, whether it proceeds from the mouths of men, women, or children. The testimony of Jesus is strength, however feeble may be the voice which utters it. Whoever publishes the salvation of Jesus Christ is, with his mouth, smiting the enemy. When they that fear the Lord speak often one to another about the glory of God; when they tell again and again "the old, old story, of Jesus and his love," then is God out of human mouths stilling the enemy and the avenger.

How sweet to think, dear brethren and sisters, that we never know what one child's mouth can do! One would like to have seen little George Whitefield when first he began to prattle. Who would have thought that the mouth of such a youngster would ultimately set two nations on fire by its zealous declaration of the truth? I should like to

have seen John Wesley, when he was a little child, on the knee of that remarkable woman, "the mother of the Wesleys"—who would have thought that he would rouse the masses as he did? Out of the mouths of little George Whitefield and little John Wesley—out of those two babes' mouths—how grandly did the Lord smite the adversary! Aha! Aha! O adversary! to be overcome by behemoth or leviathan might make thee angry; but to be smitten out of infants' mouths causes thee to bite the dust in utter dishonour. Thou art sore broken, now that "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings" thou art put to shame. Mouths that pray, and praise, and publish salvation, are the Lord's pieces of ordnance, with which he defeats his adversaries in the great battle of salvation.

His Son is the Word; but these mouths supply the voices by which the word is sounded forth in the ears of men. Jesus is not made known except through his people; they are his heralds, who cry, "Behold the Lamb." This agency is "mighty through God," and so it was ordained to be, for it is according to the divine ordinance that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings strength should come. The word of God, though it be spoken by the feeblest mouth, is essential strength, a thing of majesty and might. The Hebrew has it, "*Hast thou founded strength*"; as if the very foundation of the strength of the church lay, under God, in the mouths that God moves to speak. The preaching of the gospel is at the bottom of everything: holy teachings are the battle axe and weapons of war of the gospel campaign. The Septuagint, as quoted by our Lord, translates it—"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou perfected praise." From children's mouths there will come the highest form of adoration. Praise perfected, which goes up before the Lord, does not come from cherubim and seraphim, but from human lips, which once were those of infancy. Lips that press the mother's breast are the instruments of music which yet shall be attuned to the sweetest of heaven's own songs. Glory be to his name for this! Let us bless him that he graciously chooses such poor creatures to be the noblest of his choristers above.

III. Having dwelt long enough upon this point, let us notice, in the third place, that THE WARRIORS IN THIS WARFARE ARE VERY SPECIAL. The weapons are singular, and the warriors themselves are remarkable, for the text says that God perfects his praise out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. We may read this spiritually with the warrant of Scripture; for, first, such as are like babes in spirit are God's chosen. Their character cannot be better described than by calling them "new-born babes who desire the unadulterated milk of the word." Hear ye, dear brethren, your Master's own words as he speaks in the eleventh chapter of the gospel according to Matthew: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Childlike men and women, simple-hearted, honest, trustful, loving spirits are the chosen of God. Those who are so very wise, and know such a great deal, that they feel bound to cavil, pick holes, and raise idle questions—these are not God's elect. He does not choose the wise, but the foolish things; those who do not know, nor pretend to know, but take their instruction from the Divine Teacher. As to

mere knowledge which puffs up so many, there are some things which believers do not wish to know, some difficulties which they do not desire removed; they are glad to have ample room and verge enough for faith, and though this causes wise people to despise them, they care little for that, since their names are written in heaven, and it is out of their mouths, weaklings as they are, that God has ordained strength. Nay, more than this, not only are such the Lord's chosen, but such are his witnesses. I want to call attention to that, because in that 25th verse of the 11th of Matthew our Lord was speaking to his apostles. He had been sending them out to preach; and the evangelist records, "*At that time* Jesus answered and said"; that is to say, at the very time when he sent out these special servants of his who were in the judgment of scribes and Pharisees nothing better than poor babes: he thanked God because they were of a kind which he delights to use: he thanked God that he had not committed the gospel revelation to the wise and to the noble, but unto these child-like ones who had guileless minds, and capacity for believing and nothing more. These poor men could do little else but speak when they were spoken to, and say what they were told; and that is the best qualification for a minister that I know of—for him to speak only when God speaks to him, and then utter what God has said to him and nothing more. The Father chooses just such.

See how Paul states this fact in the opening chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." See what strange champions God has ordained for his battle—the very weakest among men, babes and sucklings in their own esteem. These who are weakness itself are to go forth and contend for the truth.

Such, my brethren, are those who proclaim the triumphs of Christ in the world. Our Lord would get little honour from our race if all children's voices were hushed and all child-like spirits with them. Scribes and Pharisees never cry "Hosannah!" they are so busy binding on their phylacteries, washing their hands, and devouring widows' houses. The first to cry "Hosannah!" are the children, and the next are those who are like them. Some say, "To shout and sing is children's work;" so it is, and it is ours because we are children, too. May God make us to grow in grace till we are as little children, and are therefore ready and eager to praise our great Father. Those who are reputed to be wise men do not praise too much; they go upon the non-committal principle, and prefer criticism to gratitude. They are always criticising the weather; if it is good for the turnips it is bad for the wheat, and if dry for hay-making, it is too dry for something else. The worldly-wise man never says, "Blessed be God for this delightful season; nothing can be better; we are highly favoured." No, he thinks he shows his wisdom by finding fault; God himself cannot escape from his sage remarks; but if a man is not wise enough to be for ever grumbling,

but is so foolish as to be happy, so foolish as to believe the truth, so foolish as to trust in the most trustworthy of all beings, namely, his God—he is also the sort of man that praises God, and from such hearts God gets his chief praises. Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming again, not to ride upon an ass, or upon a colt, the foal of an ass, but to reign in glory; and when he cometh, the first to meet him and salute him will be those poor, babe-like ones, who did not boast of culture, but believed in God; who knew little, but yet knew their Lord, and longed for his appearing, sighing often, “Oh that he would come and end the strife! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” These are they who find him first, as the shepherds found him at Bethlehem, when the wise men rambled round by Jerusalem, and these are they who joy and rejoice over him, while scribes and Pharisees quarrel about him. The poor have the gospel preached to them, and the babes in spirit hear that gospel, and live.

Thus have I spoken to you concerning the warriors God has chosen. They are simple people, trustful people, unaffected people—made so by divine grace—converted into little children. They are ready to believe their God: they are not wise, or noble, or anything great in their own esteem, and yet out of their mouths God hath ordained strength, and by their witness he silences the disputers of this world, and all the wisdom of men.

IV. Now let us note, in the fourth place, that **THE QUALIFICATION OF THESE WARRIORS LIES IN THEIR WEAK SIDE.** If it lay on the strong side the text would have been written in another manner, and we should have read, “Out of the mouth of men of middle age, in the prime of life—out of the mouth of wise old men, who have grey hairs upon their head, indicative of their long experience—out of their mouths God has ordained strength”; but he takes men at their weakest and speaks of “babes,” or children who are quite young. The word must not be confined to infants, for it includes young children who are able to run about the streets. The sucklings also are older children than they would represent with us, for eastern mothers often nurse their children till they are three years of age, so that some sucklings speak distinctly. The idea is that if you take man at his least, out of his mouth God ordains strength. He regards not man as grown up and strong, but man in his greatest weakness, and out of the mouth of weak man God ordains strength. What doth this teach? I take it that whatever is weakest about man is that in which the grace of God glorifies itself most.

Man is not only a soul and spirit, but he is in part material, and hence a poor creature, composed in part of the lower elements. He is not pure spirit, like an angel, but linked on to mother earth by a body of clay, cumbrous and hampering. He is a worm, and yet an angel; half-way between dust and deity; brother to the worm and to corruption, and yet immortal. Satan is no doubt filled with scorn of man when he looks at him and measures him with himself. “Is this the creature that is to be set over all the works of God’s hands,—made of earth and water, phosphates and metals? I am nobler far than he. Can I not flash like lightning, while he must creep about the world to find himself a grave?” Yes, but herein is the glory of God’s conflict and victory. The Lord intends to overcome the prince of evil

by a poor creature like man, who is but of yesterday, and is crushed before the moth. It is glorious to my mind that the Lord should deign to embody his power in weak creatures as we are, and in that way make Satan see that the right and the true in the feeblest being is unconquerable, and that in this form God carries the war into his own territory, and defeats him. Thus the Lord puts the adversary to a perpetual reproach. He pits a child against his giant foe and overcomes him. He hurls defiance to Satan out of a babe's mouth. Go thy way, O enemy; thou art dishonoured by the victory which feebleness gains over thee.

God is glorified in man's grievous infirmity. Man is, at his best, of all creatures one of the feeblest, and there is not so very much difference between full-grown men and babes. A few years ago we could not help ourselves at all, for we were abjectly weak in our infancy, but are we much more now? How did you feel yesterday afternoon in the storm, when the thunder rolled overhead, and the lightning flashed and flamed across the sky? Did you not feel that you were helpless as a babe? Put you to sea in a storm, and you will soon learn your babyhood, I warrant you, and feel that when "rocked in the cradle of the deep" you are as powerless as a child in its mother's arms. We need not be ashamed of this, but glory in it, because the power of God doth rest upon us. The great God seems to say to Satan, "It is by these poor feeble things that I will anger thee, O haughty prince of the air! By such beings as these I will overthrow thy usurped dominion. Though they suffer, though they are tempted, yet by my grace they shall triumph over thee."

We have the power to suffer, and herein lies a great part of our qualification to do the Lord's service before his enemies. It is our Redeemer's qualification. He could not save us until he suffered, he could not redeem us until he died; not his strength, but his weakness, saved us, for he was crucified in weakness, and by that crucifixion he redeemed our souls. Think of the men and women who have glorified God on beds of sickness, bearing their pains with patience, and blessing God all the while. Think of the many on the rack and at the stake, who have there extolled the Lord their God! Methinks of all the music God ever heard there is none that can equal in intense sweetness the cries of his dear, suffering, martyred people, when every limb has been tormented by the persecutor, and yet every particle of their body, and every power of their soul has willingly yielded up itself to maintain his cause and glorify his name. True music lies not in the sound, but in the spirit of the song, and hence, I say, none can match, much less excel, the songs of the martyr host. Blessed be God that we can suffer. We should be denied a privilege if we had not been able to endure the will of God as well as to do it. Surely of all diadems, that crown which is set with rubies, the crown which adorns the martyr's brow, is the most resplendent. Yes, it is man's weak side, his suffering and his dying side, by which God has shown the enemy that men can love their God even unto death, that virtue can triumph over all selfishness, that true hearts can make sacrifices, that mortal man can defy temptation, and can, through God's grace, follow after that which is good to the uttermost of loss and pain.

Now, dear brethren, dwell on this thought, and meditate on the fact

that our power to serve God lies on our weak side. He uses not our greatness, but our littleness. You know what the learned men say is the weak part of some of us,—they put it something like this :—“ We regret the preacher’s total inability to keep abreast of the times ; his incapacity for modern thought, and his want of affection for the higher culture, which is so much the characteristic of this marvellously enlightened century.” That is our weakness. Yes, *and our strength*, and therefore we glory in it. “ I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” If all God’s servants will come to this, they will secure far more success than by the pretentious style of so-called “ culture,” which is nothing but the science of growing more weeds than usual. That which is new in theology is not true ; the gospel was of full stature at its very birth ; no man can add to it or take from it. It cannot be improved, and it only needs to be told out in the power of the Holy Ghost and it will perform wonders even as of old. Our infirmity we will glory in, for we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and if the vessel had not been of earth we might never have received the treasure. “ But,” cries one, “ surely we need wisdom to guide us ? ” I answer that “ Jesus Christ is made unto us wisdom,” and we have but to learn of him. We hear much nowadays of “ great thinkers,” but we prefer to be great believers. Deep thinking is a very shallow affair after all when the thoughts are our own ; we only get into real depths when we receive the thoughts of God. So far as I can see, these “ thinkers ” generally empty their places of worship when they preach, and the poor souls that most need comfort get none whatever. Rather than copy their example we may well prefer to sing with Paul, “ When I am weak then am I strong.” We will believe what God says, and take it as a matter of fact just as a child does. And oh ! what a sweet thing a child’s faith is ! Many a time when a dear little girl has come to join the church, and looked at me with her expressive, believing eyes, which seemed to see Jesus, I have admired and envied her pure, unquestioning confidence. Knowing nothing about those horrible doubts which are now sown like thistles everywhere, such as these have the rest of faith without its struggles.

I have desired to be a little child again, and wished that I had never heard of the existence of a quibbler. Those fine books of the broad school which came from Germany years ago, but which we now produce at home, it is a pity to have seen the binding of them. Even doctors of divinity favour us with denials of plenary inspiration, and aid in that form of undermining work : they may have all their books so long as we can keep our Bibles, and God gives us firm faith in himself. Let us but know Jesus and lean our heads on his bosom, and the learned men may speculate as they please. Oh ! when the church gets back to her simple faith in Jesus, she shall be qualified for victory ; she shall vanquish the world when she has thrown away her wooden sword of carnal reason and has taken up the true Jerusalem blade of faith in God. Then out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God will do what he never will do out of the mouths of Scribes and Pharisees and wise men. Out of the mouths of weak people, who believe what God tells them,—the mouths of weak people who have no capacity except the capacity of faith—out of these will God perfect praise and glorify himself.

V. That leads me, in finishing, to plead for a loving reverence for childhood. If the Lord uses the weak side of man, and if he is engaged to win his ultimate victory over the devil by feeble man at his feeblest, then, God bless the children! It seems to me that in the Lord's battle there is always a babe in the fore-front. The armies of olden times placed a huge champion in their van, like Goliath of Gath; but it is not so in God's army; there a babe leads the way. Pharaoh oppresses Israel, and crushes the people down till their cry goes up because of their sore bondage. God is going to deliver them. How does the work begin? Here is the opening of the campaign: "And the daughter of Pharaoh went down to the river to wash herself," and there she spied a little ark made of bulrushes, which she sent her maid to fetch, and there was a Hebrew child within it. "And behold! the babe wept." Thus was the champion of Israel introduced upon the scene; the goodly child whom his parents in faith had hidden was he by whom God would break Rahab in pieces. The still loftier story of the battle of the Lamb opens in like manner: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." "She brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger." That was the signal for the heat of the conflict: that babe led the way. The holy child Jesus is at the head of all our marches. One may well honour infancy and childhood since this is the case.

Let our subject prevent our entertaining doubts about the possibility of children's conversions: that would be insanity, and almost blasphemy. Do you not know that except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven? Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The childlike spirit is no disqualification; in some respects it is a vantage ground. Christianity is the religion of children. Other religions, as a rule, aim at older folk, and pretend to mystery. Other religions are not worth understanding, but yet they affect depth and secresy; you must be initiated, and pass through years of study before you can hope to derive any advantage from them; but the religion of Jesus Christ was meant for the poor and for the lowly. All that which is necessary for the saving of the soul can be speedily learned and understood, the Holy Spirit being the teacher. As far as the practical, saving part of Christianity is concerned it is the religion of children. If a preacher can interest a child he can interest anybody. Is it not all a mistake when we say, "Oh! he is only fit to talk to children." If he is fit to do this, he is fit to talk to apostles.

Let us heartily believe, also, in children's praises. I am sure you must do so if you are like your Lord, for he delighted in them. He would not stop the boys when they shouted "Hosannah!" The scribes sneeringly asked, "Hearest thou what these say?" Yes, he did hear it, and he said, "Out of their mouths God has perfected praise." Let the children sing, and do not despise their hymns because they are more fitted for children than for you.

Let the children sing, and thank God they do sing. Never despise them. Do not say, "Oh, they are only a parcel of boys and girls." What if they are? May they not be a better parcel than some of you? If we were half as free from guile and unbelief as boys and girls, it

would be better for us : if we could get the simple trustfulness of childhood back again it would be a great gain to character.

Let us not undervalue their praises or their service. My text supports me in the strongest appeal which I can make ; hear it yet again : " Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength." Let the children serve God, and let us put forms of service in their way. That is a sweet verse : " And Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod." The child Samuel and the Lord Jehovah. What a singular combination ! God who filleth all things, and Hannah's little boy ! God give us to see our boys and girls ministering before the Lord while they are yet in their frocks and pinafores. The linen ephod is as suitable for a child as for an ancient priest. No robe is more glorious than the garment of service, and whether it be worn by old or young, it is a right royal dress.

Last of all, let us expect victory to come to the church through little children. It may happen that God will bring the world to Christ's feet by the children. It is written, " A little child shall lead them." Who knows how many are led to Jesus by children ? This city of ours is better evangelized by our Sunday-schools than by all the rest of us put together. I don't mean to flatter Sunday-school teachers, but I must speak well of the children. When they go home they find that father is hardly dressed, he has not been to a place of worship, but he has been reading the Sunday paper ; he does not want any of your singing and preaching. Little Mary and Tommy come back, and they don't ask him anything about it, but they begin to sing, and when they have their dinner they talk about what teacher said, and perhaps they say something about the sermon, and so father gets more singing and preaching than he bargained for. When they go to bed they clasp their little hands, and pray for their father, and he is obliged to hear them : thus he gets praying as well as singing. The children are missionaries, and they enter where others cannot. The city missionary may be shut out, but father cannot shut out Tommy or Mary, and they must be let to sing or they will cry, and that is worse : so that their witness cannot be silenced. What little children are doing for London and for our great cities it is impossible for us to calculate. The darlings die, and in this they often do more than by their lives. How many hard hearts have been broken, and stubborn wills subdued, by the deathbeds of infants ! How many a mother has had her first desires for heaven kindled by the flight of her little cherub up to the bosom of Christ ! They do God's work here below in a wonderful manner. It is true, and will be truer every day, that out of the mouth of babes and sucklings the Lord has ordained strength, because of his enemies, that he might still the enemy and the avenger. God's blessing be with all of you who work among the children. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm viii. ;

Matthew xxi. 1—16 ; 1 Corinthians i. 18—31.

HYMNS FROM " OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—8, 681, 477.