

THE TRUE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

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A SERMON
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BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom You may make princes in all the earth.”
Psalm 45:16.

THE overwhelming national calamity announced to the citizens of London at midnight by the solemn tolling of the great bell of St. Paul’s was unknown to most of us until we entered this sanctuary. It was, therefore, impossible to drape the building with the tokens of our sorrow. Nor can the preacher adapt his discourse to this most melancholy occasion. We have already prayed most earnestly for our beloved Sovereign, the widowed Queen of England—may the God of all consolation cheer her lonely heart with that divine comfort which He alone can give. With reverent sympathy we all mourn in her mourning, and weep in her weeping. We are all bereaved in her bereavement; and we wish that by some means she could really know how intense and how universal is the grief of her loyal and loving subjects who view her in this hour more as their mother than as their Queen. To God again, we commend the Royal Widow and household. O Lord, be You a present help in this their time of need!

Excuse me, brothers and sisters, if I find it imperative to address you from my selected text, and to turn your mind to subjects of another kind. My text was suggested by certain events which have transpired in our own church; the Lord having removed from us during the past week a valued elder of the church; and having, at the same time, given us a singular increase from the families of the church. I thought the two events together were a notable exposition of this verse, “Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth.”

The 45th Psalm is a sort of marriage song, proclaiming the glories of Christ, the husband; and the beauties—the God-given beauties of the church, His bride. The bride is described as attired in her garments of needlework, and clothing of worked gold, attended by her royal maidens; while the King Himself is portrayed as being doubly fair, “fairer than the children of men,” having grace poured into His lips. According to the Eastern custom, at the marriage ceremony there were many good wishes expressed, and the benediction was also pronounced upon the newly married pair, that they might become as fruitful as Isaac and Rebecca; hence the blessing of children in our text. It was the custom with great kings, when they had many sons, to allot to them different parts of their dominions; the young princes were made *satraps* over certain provinces, hence the blessing pronounced, “Whom you may make princes in all the earth.” A continuous line is promised, and perennial honor is secured. Christ is to be the spiritual parent of many sons—“He shall see His seed”—these sons are to be illustrious, and partake in the kingdom of their divine Lord, for “He shall bring many sons unto glory.”

I shall try this morning, first of all, to expound the text in *its different imports, in different periods of the church’s history*; then endeavor to *interpret it by our present experience*; and then, thirdly, *make an inquiry as to how far in our midst we have seen it proved*, that “Instead of your fathers shall be your children.”

I. First of all then, we are to interpret the text in the light of THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PAST. And we think we can bring out different shades of meaning while interpreting the promise by its fulfillment; for we may rest assured that is the safest way of reading promise and prophecy in the light of actual events.

First, let us take our stand at the end of Old Testament history, just where the New Testament begins. The church stands with her records in her hands; she turns to the first page, and reads of the proto-

martyr Abel; in following years she views the glittering names of Noah, of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob; onward to Moses and Aaron; farther on still to the time of her judges, her kings, her prophets, until she sees the roll closed by the failing hand of Malachi. She drops a tear, and she cries, "Alas, the book is closed! The fathers, where are they? The Elijahs have mounted in their fiery chariots to heaven, and the Elishas have gone down to their tombs." "Not so," says Christ, her husband, "no, not so, beloved; your roll of children has not ended; the glories of your descendants have not yet come to their close." "Instead of your fathers shall be your children." John the Baptist rises up instead of Elijah, and even excels him, for among them who had been born of women there was not a greater than John the Baptist! Then came her husband Himself, even Jesus, who was better than many sons, since He gathered up in His own person all the perfections of those mighty men who had been His types before. But, it seemed as if the Lord would supply in New Testament history, the vacuum which was caused by the departure of Old Testament saints. Have we in the Old Testament a far-seeing Ezekiel, who can read the rolls of the future by the river Chebar? Ah, then we shall have a John, who in the gloomy Isle of Patmos shall behold bright revelations of God! Have we a clear outspoken practical Daniel, who loves truth and righteousness? We shall have a James, who shall expound the law of faith which works, which proves its truthfulness by holiness! Have we an eloquent Elijah, who pours forth from his lips streams of evangelical doctrine, speaking more of Christ than all the rest? Lo, Paul the apostle, "not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles," takes his place! Have we in the Old Testament a young Josiah, who purged the temple, and had his heart perfect towards God? So have we in our history, young Timothy, whose heart is right before his God! Have we a bold and dashing Haggai, who in rough strains reproves the people for their sins? So have we a Peter, who, nothing daunted, lays to the charge of an immense multitude the murder of Jesus, the Son of David! No, even in women we have no failure; for if under the Old Testament dispensation, they sang of Sarah, the mother of the faithful, what shall we say of Mary? "Blessed among women shall she be; from henceforth all generations shall call her blessed." If they had their Rahab, as a trophy of divine grace, we have that woman which was a sinner; and if they had their Deborahs, mothers in Israel, we have Lydia, and Dorcas, and Priscilla, and of honorable women not a few! Stephen is not inferior to Abel, nor is Philip less in honor than Nathan. We say that our New Testament host of heroes is superior to that of the past, and that most manifestly, God did make the children of His church princes in all the earth, right royally in faith did they divide the nations, and sway the spirits of kingdoms, though in the world's eye they were like their Master, "despised and rejected of men." So, it seems to me, we may read this text.

We proceed a little further in history to the time when, after Christ had ascended on high, His disciples went everywhere preaching the Word; and as they went, they sought out, first of all, the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but both providence and grace conspired to compel them to preach the Word to the Gentiles also, that they might be saved. More than this, the Jews, moved with anger, opposed the truth of God; and on a certain memorable occasion, one of the apostles said to them, "Lo, we turn unto the Gentiles." A blessed turning for you and for me! Now I think I see the church weeping again and again. "Alas," she says, "the fathers have rejected me; the Pharisees in their self-righteousness, the Sadducees in their licentiousness, the Herodians in their worldliness, the mass of the people in their superstition, have despised and rejected the truth of Christ my Lord. Alas," she says, "that the olive has been despoiled of her branches! What shall I do? The natural branches have been lopped away, till the trunk stands bare and leafless." Her Master appears to her, and comfortably repeats His assurance, "Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth." "Lo," says He, "I have given you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." I think I see her tender and triumphant husband, pointing with joyous finger to the different countries that should afterwards receive the truth, glancing over Alpine ranges to the valleys of Switzerland, and beyond the pillars of Hercules, to these Isles of the Sea in which His name has so long been honored, and then expanding His hands as though He would clasp the whole, saying to her, "They who

dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Me; My enemies shall lick the dust; all kings shall bow down before Me; all generations shall call Me blessed. Have I taken Palestine from you? Lo, I have given you all the nations of men that are upon the face of the earth. Shall the Hebrew discard Me? Lo, I have given you ten thousand times ten thousand—as many as the stars of heaven for number, who shall be the spiritual seed of Abraham, who was the father of the faithful.” Verily Christ has fulfilled this promise to His church, and is fulfilling it at this very day! Ethiopia stretches out her hands in prayer, Europe rejoices in His name, Asia yields her converts, and America adores His name. We are hoping that the Jew will be ingathered with the fullness of the Gentile; but, meanwhile, the children are taking the place of the fathers, and we who were the children of the desolate, and of the barren woman, are now far more in number than those who were the children of “the married wife.”

I shall beg you to run your eyes through history a little further to the time when the apostles, one by one, yielded up their ministry, and their immediate successors followed them to their tombs. It must have been a day of great lamentation to the church of Christ, when at last John, the last of the 12 stars, gave forth no more light on earth, but was translated to shine in another firmament—in heaven above! We think we hear the news, as it spreads through all the churches that were scattered about Asia, Bithynia and Cappadocia, Africa, Spain, Italy, Gaul, and perhaps Britain itself—“John is dead!” The last spark of the apostolic fire has died out; the last of the live coals that glowed with the miraculous flame of apostolic fire has been taken with the golden tongs from off the altar of earth, and removed by seraphic wings to blaze upon the golden altar in heaven! Then, there followed grievous martyrdoms, and Polycarp, and Ignatius, and men of that order who had been the companions of the apostles; and some of whom may even have seen our Lord, departed from among the sons of men. The lions’ jaws were busy grinding the bones of the confessors! The dungeons were swollen with the captive martyrs of Christ! The blood of the church flowed in one perpetual stream of crimson, and the church might have wept and said “Alas, alas! The chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof! You have barked my fig tree; you have cut down my cedar; you have laid desolate my vineyards, and broken down my hedges. You have taken away the heroes from the battle, and the standard-bearers from the strife. My young men have fallen by the sword, and their fathers have gone into captivity. What shall the church do?” She was like Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they were not. She said, as she saw her new converts, “Call them Benoni,” even those who were born of her in what she thought to be her expiring pangs she named, “Sons of sorrow.” But her Lord said concerning those who were born unto her, “Call them Benjamin, the sons of My right hand,” for in the place of the fathers who have perished, the children shall rise up. And they did so; and there was a long succession of men as bold to dare, as clear to testify, and as holy to live, as those who had departed to their God! We do not believe in that fiction of apostolic succession by the laying on of hands of men; but we do believe in that glorious truth of apostolic succession—the laying on of the hands of *God*, when He Himself calls out one by one from the midst of mankind—men who shall grasp the standard when the standard-bearer falls—men who shall bear the great two-edged sword, and fight God’s battles when those who fought them before have gone down triumphant to their graves! The Lord supplied the lack of His church at every hour. To use that sentence which has been worn long, but is never threadbare—the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church; and so, instead of your fathers, your children arise to praise their God!

Further down in history there came the time of the church’s most awful dearth. She had sinned. Led by the princely hand of Constantine to the altar of infamous adultery, she prostituted herself to a connection with the State, and committed fornication with the kings of the earth. From that day forth the Spirit of God forsook her, and in the brightness of His splendor He shone not upon her. Her vigor died when the imperial hand was laid upon her! Whatever a royal hand may do to diseased men, it always brings the king’s evil upon the church. No ills of poverty or persecution can equal the injurious effects of State alliance upon the church of God! Her freedom is evaporated, her discipline becomes a pretense, her faults cannot be remedied, her progress in reformation is prohibited, her glory is departed. The Christian

church, when linked with the Roman power, soon declined till the truth of God became dim, and holiness was stained; then the much fine gold was changed, then the light of her sun was as the light of eventide, if not as the darkness of midnight itself; and she stood, clouds and darkness being round about her, and sorrow her portion! By the lapse of years the good died, and only the evil lived! The curse of the State had engendered priestcraft, pope-dom—and what if I say hell-dom—in all lands! The church stood and wept, and she said, “Chrysostom, where is he? His golden mouth is silent. Augustine, where is he? We can no more tell of the gospel of the grace of God; the angelic doctor has departed. Athanasius, where is he?—that rock in the midst of the billows?” And she wept, for she seemed to have no men left; no eye pitied and no arm helped her. But lo, her God spoke and said, “Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth.” And three imperial spirits, chief among the sons of men, sprung up—Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, worthy to stand side-by-side with any fathers that even the Old Testament or apostolic times could produce! They had their bright companions, who stood firmly with them, and shone like a divine constellation in the midst of the dark night of popery! God seemed to say to the church, “I will give you back apostles, I will give you back your prophets, I will send to you a new host of warriors; there shall be giants in those days, and you shall make them princes in all the earth.”

Then, to come later, and end our historical review; there came a period when the church had again, a second time, sold herself to the State, when she who should be the Lord’s chaste virgin became once more the mistress and harlot of kings. She wore her bondage readily enough until, happily for her, the princes made her yoke heavy, and her life bitter. Then came a sifting season, when the chaff and the wheat could no more abide together, when the lovers of God and His truth must break their alliance with death and their covenant with hell! There rose up in the midst of the church, a company of men who would not endure to have the Word of God altered and fashioned by princes—who saw that God’s truth was not to be molded like a nose of wax by committees, or bishops, or judges. They came forth from the mass to join those few who, like the few in Sardis, had not defiled their garments. The church wept and mourned, for she said, “Wycliffe has departed; the mighty Lollards, those shakers of the nation, have gone their way; the fathers have departed.” But God said to her, “Instead of your fathers shall be your children,” and up rose such men as Bunyan, Charnock, Howe, Goodwin, Owen, Manton, Caryl, and multitudes more of like gigantic mind! That mighty host whose names are two thousand, who left the harlot church, and came out from her impurities, were the children who worthily made up for the apostasy of the fathers! These mighty 2,000 men are heroes, whose names are fit to match with Martin Luther and with Calvin, yes, and I dare to say it, with any of the martyrs who have gone before! They stood alone. And now, it seems to me, at this day, when any say to us, “You, as a denomination, what great names can you mention? What fathers can you speak of?” We may reply, “More than any other under heaven, for we are the old apostolic church that has never yet bowed to the yoke of princes! We, known among men in all ages by various names, such as Donatists, Novatians, Paulicians, Petrobrussians, Cathari, Arnoldists, Hussites, Waldenses, Lollards, and Anabaptists have always contended for the purity of the church, and her distinctness and separation from human government! Our fathers were men accustomed to hardships, and unused to ease. They present to us, their children, an unbroken line which comes legitimately from the apostles, not through the filth of Rome, not by the manipulations of Prelates, but by the divine life, the Spirit’s anointing, the fellowship of the Son in suffering, and of the Father in truth.”

But where shall I wander? I go upon a needless errand, for what are our fathers to us unless we prove ourselves their worthy sons? Let us forego our pedigree, and see if we have present grace by which to prove the succession of which we boast. Neander has said, “There is a future for you Baptists.” Let us not be slow to ensure it! I say, let us instead of doing as many will do during the next year, instead of boasting descent from the 2,000 who came out on Bartholomew’s Day, let us pray that we may be able to glory more in our children than in our fathers! Let us say, “No, we will not think of the past to

be proud of it, but we will think of the present to labor for it, that we may show to the world that the old life is not extinct, that ours is not a roll of wonders which have all been completed and finished, but it contains the prophecy of wonders yet to come, wherein God shall show forth His mighty acts unto the sons of men." May it be so in all the churches of Christ! May it be abundantly so in our own church and denomination, to the honor and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ!

II. We have to interpret our text, secondly, in its APPLICATION TO OUR OWN CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE PRESENT TIME. "Instead of your fathers shall be your children."

It seems clear enough from the text, as well as from observation, that *the fathers must be taken from us*. Yes, it is the delight of a pastor to look upon the reverend heads of those who have served the church, some of them for more than half a century with integrity, with uprightness, and with success; but they must leave us. The hands of affection cannot retain them among us, however firmly they may make the grasp. Our earnest prayers cannot immortalize them in the land of mortality, and our greatest kindness cannot preserve their bodies from moldering back to their native dust in the land of decay. The fathers *must* go—as we look upon their snow-white heads, often the painful reflection crosses our mind—"We cannot expect to have them with us long; David must sleep with his fathers; Hezekiah, though his life is lengthened for a while, must at last yield to the inexorable decree, for 'there is no discharge in this war.'"

Now, the loss of the fathers must be to the church always painful, for we lose *the maturity of their judgment*. When, having passed through many difficulties, they begin to see their way through the ordinary trials of life; when, having tested and proved many things, they have come to hold fast that which is good, and have become meet to be instructors of babes, and guides of those who wander—just then, the eye that sees so clearly is filmed, the hand which could point so plainly is paralyzed, and the foot which so firmly in the way of wisdom totters, and the man falls to his last home. We lose, besides the maturity of their judgment, their blessed *living testimony*, just when they had begun to tell us that for 70 years they had found God's Word to be faithful and true; just when they could give their *viva voce* testimony to the faithfulness and goodness of an immutable God, their lips are silenced! They bequeath to us the legacy of their living example, and their dying witness, but we have them not alive among us as pillars in the House of our God, and witnesses for the faith. And just, too, when we thought that their *holy efforts* were almost necessary to the church's success, it usually happens that then they are taken away. Hushed is the voice which could instruct! Still is the heart that was always anxiously beating with a desire for Zion's prosperity! They are gone, and they leave a gap in our defenses; they pull down a tower from our battlements; the shields of the mighty are taken away, and the chariots are burned in the fire! They are removed from us, too, when their prayers were more than usually valuable, when the mellowness of their piety gave a blessed fragrance to their supplications. They are taken from us when their hoary heads added dignity in our eyes to their supplications, and when their righteous lives seemed to prevail with God for the fulfillment of His Word, that the effectual fervent prayer of righteous man should avail much! Yes, as I look around, as a young pastor, upon my brothers in arms, those who have stood by me these eight years in all our conflicts and our struggles, who have been with me in the wilderness of my temptation, by the bed of my sickness; my helpers in council, my assistants in labor, my comforters in trial, my ready friends in the church, and my protectors in the midst of the rioting crowd—those who for these many years have borne the burden and heat of the day—I cannot refrain from emotions of the deepest grief at the thought that the fathers must not live forever, but that one by one, as the stars set beneath the horizon line, so must they set on earth, to shine in another and better sphere—not lost, thank God, but gone before! We have this week lost one who was, I think, the first person I received into church fellowship here, he having been for many years a useful member of other Baptist churches. He served his Master well—as well as continual weakness and increasing feebleness of health would permit him. And now he is gone—who next shall follow, God only knows; but one by one, the young *may* go, but the old *must*. The young are as in a siege, where the bullet may cut them down; but

the old are as in the breach, where the attack is being made, and death is storming the ramparts. The fathers must depart! We dwell no longer on that, lest we indulge in dreary apprehensions as to our church's future, though that were folly and sin, for in looking back on the past, we have seen such a marvelous succession in the ministry, and also in all the offices of the church, that we cannot but thank God that He does still walk among the golden candlesticks, and trims the lamps!

But let us turn to the pleasing reflection, "Instead of your fathers shall be your children." When the fathers die, God shall find other men who, trained while their fathers yet lived, shall be ready and ripe to take their places. Very often we hear the question, "If such-and-such a minister should die, who could occupy his pulpit? What would be the use of such-and-such a building, if So-and-So were taken to his rest?" Ah, you know not what you ask, nor what you say—"Instead of the fathers shall be the children." Men of faith are followed by men of faith! They, who trust God, when they die, shall be succeeded by others who shall walk in the same divine life, and shall see the same promises fulfilled! The love which burned in the heart of one, when quenched there by death, shall burn in the breast of another! The hope that gleamed from one's joyous eyes shall soon gleam from the eyes of another whom God has raised up to be his successor! The work shall not stop for lack of a workman; supplication shall not cease for lack of righteous men to pray; the offering of praise shall not be stopped from the absence of grateful hearts to offer joyous songs. God shall be pleased to raise up one after another, according as it is written, "Moses My servant is dead, but behold, Joshua shall go before you." What a blessed thing it is, that in this church we have seen the promise fulfilled in olden times; and we can look round upon our denomination, and other churches can do the same, and remember families that have been connected with our struggles and our strifes from the very earliest periods of history. If you look down the hand-book of Baptist ministers, you will see there, names which have appeared for these last three or four centuries! And if you could turn to the church-rolls of some of our different churches, you would see that there are certain family names which constantly recur—not written now and then, but in one direct line, as though the God of Abraham were the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and the God of all the families, even to the last generation! I pray that such a succession as this may fall upon many families here, and that as you have known the Lord, so your house may never lack a man to stand and to do service in the temple before the Lord God of Israel!

III. But I come to the last point, which is the most important—that is, TO MAKE AN INQUIRY AS TO THE MATTER OF FACT, HOW FAR THIS TEXT HAS BEEN TRUE IN OUR EXPERIENCE AS A CHURCH.

We will put this matter in the form of questions. How many are there here today, of the usual worshippers, in our midst whose parents were in Christ, and who are themselves in Christ, too? When I was thinking over this subject in my study, my eyes in vision glanced over the pews, and I thought of the different families. I could remember one or two, perhaps, where there are children arrived at years of maturity who were yet unconverted. But for the most part, I think, there is hardly an exception to the rule in this place—that where there are parents who serve God, there are some children who serve Him also. If it were right, we might glance to the right hand, and to the left, and we might say, "There is a household yonder, where one, two, three, four, five, six, seven fear the Lord. The father and the mother are walking in the faith, and their children going on pilgrimage with them." We might turn to another family, and say, "There are two who have arrived at years of maturity, who have made a profession of their faith in Christ, and are walking in their parents' footsteps. And their parents hope that as the others grow up, it will be to call the Redeemer blessed." I might look down below, and look with joy, too, upon many families! With some of you God has dealt very graciously, for He has brought all your children in. With others He has begun to do His gracious work; He has brought one or two of your household. And though there are some few solemn and sad exceptions, yet, blessed be God, these are few, very few indeed! Here we have seen that "the promise is to us and to our descendants, even to as many as the Lord our

God shall call.” Here we have had the words of Paul and Silas richly and abundantly fulfilled—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.”

Besides this, to go a little further, how many are there in this church who have been raised up by God to fill similar positions in the church to those which their forefathers had? I hope there will always be a succession unto God in the eldership and in the deaconship; and what if I would be egotistical enough to say so, in the ministry, too? I would to God there might be in every single position in this church, as soon as one dies, another, allied and descended from the departed to take his place! That, too, has been fulfilled in several instances in our midst. In the church of God at large it is really surprising to see how constantly the mantle of Elijah falls upon Elisha! If you read through the list of our ministers, you will see certain names like Angus, Pearce, and Fuller which run right on. Some of us can look back to four or five generations in which our parents have always been preachers of the Word. It is the happiness of one here present to know, that while he himself and his beloved brother preach the Word, his father and his grandfather, too, are uttering the same gospel that is preached here today! And so has it been with many a household. We are not solitary instances. There are very many such, where there has been a succession, a positive succession—not grace running *in* the blood, but grace running *side-by-side* with the blood, so that instead of the fathers, the children have been raised up who have been illustrious in the church, and distinguished in the world, as kings and priests unto our God!

We have asked two questions, and some of us have had great pleasure in answering them; but a pang has rent the heart of some others. We must enlarge upon that, not to increase the pang, but that God may graciously remove it. Are there not sons and daughters here, descended from holy men and women, who today are careless? Your mother’s God is *not* your God! She dropped her holy tears upon your infant forehead, and devoted you from the very breast to God. She prayed for you. She is now a saint of God in heaven, and you are on your way to being an heir of wrath in hell! Perhaps you are remembering now, some hymn which was a favorite with her, which you saw this very morning in the hymn-book; and the Psalm that was read, you remember its solemn reading at her grave, and you have remembered *her*, but you have not remembered her God! She is not the mother of saints, in your case, but the mother of a careless soul who knows the truth and cares not for it, who hears the invitation of the gospel, and wantonly and wickedly rejects it. Young men and women! Would you bring down your parents’ gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? You can do it speedily by open iniquities; you can do it gradually by a silent careless rejection of Christ Jesus. Some of you have yourselves grown old, your parents are to you traditions of the past, they have long since moldered in the grave; but you are still ungodly. You took not up the standard when your father’s arm failed to hold it—not you! You stood not in the ranks of God’s mighties when your parent fell—not you! You are today only a *hearer*, and not a *doer* of the Word—listening to the outward sound, but not receiving the inward sense. O soul! What will you do when you shall leave your body, and stand before your God? What will you do when, looking upward from the awful gulf, you see your mother, your father, glorified? Oh, there will be weeping, there will be weeping at the judgment seat of Christ! There will be sorrow beyond all sorrow in that valley of decision, when the multitude shall be gathered together, to be torn in two forever! Oh, it will be doleful, it will be doleful, when we part to meet no more! No more the kiss of affection, or even the tie of relationship. Shut up in heaven shall you be, you beatified spirits. Shut up in hell shall *you* be, you impenitent, if you come to the judgment seat of God. This is the more sorrowful because it relates to some of you—you who are here this morning—some of you who are always sitting in these seats! You come as God’s people come, and hear as they hear, but are not blessed as they are!

Lastly, it may be I speak to some who have strayed in here this morning accidentally, who are even worse than this. And so, man, you have lived to curse your God! What was that oath this morning before you left your house—an oath in which your mother’s Savior was blasphemed? And you have grown up, and you ill-use your wife for desiring to worship your father’s God! You were baptized of old in your father’s prayers, and immersed in your mother’s affectionate yearnings. When she brought you forth,

and first looked upon your infant form, she blessed God that she was the mother of a man-child, in the hope that he might be devoted unto God from his youth up. Alas, poor mother! It would be better for him that he had never been born! When your father heard the tidings of your birth, he said, "Let him serve his God, and my heart is glad." He had no thoughts of begetting you to be a fiend in hell, or a slave of the devil! And yet, stranger, would it be too hard to say that is what you are this morning? "No," you say, "not *quite* a blasphemer." Well, an infidel. And what is an infidel but a blasphemer who has not courage to say what he thinks in his heart? And so you doubt the Deity of that precious Savior on whom your mother's soul reposed? And so you despise that religion which was her comfort in her last expiring hour? And so, I say, you are an enemy to that God in whose eternal bosom your own sire rests forever! Well, shall it always be so? Angel of destiny! Shall it always be so? Shall the wax of human life cool, and shall the doom be sealed forever? No, angel of mercy! Intervene, and now, oh, NOW reverse the man's condition! Turn his heart to flesh! Melt the adamant in the precious blood of Jesus, and make it soft! "There is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared." Come unto Him! Come unto Him! He will receive you still! "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." May the Spirit of God find you this morning! May He prick you in the heart! May He make you feel and tremble!—more than that—may He make you fly to Christ, the City of our Refuge! May He compel you to put your trust in the atonement which He made for many! May you now find in Him a Savior, "able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God through Him!" Let every parent say, "Amen!"

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