

*The Christian Watchman & Reflector* (March 29, 1860)

LETTER FROM REV. C.H. SPURGEON

Curiosities—Infant Sprinkling—Special Services in London Theatres—Lord Dungannon—The Pope an the Emperor—A Commission Personal

TO THE EDITORS OF CHRISTIAN WATCHMAN AND REFLECTOR:

In my last letter you received an ancient curiosity ; permit me now to hand you a modern one. A very excellent Episcopalian minister who labors in this neighborhood, has ventured to come forward in defence of infant sprinkling. Amidst an old-fashioned assortment of mouldy arguments, he has the honor of propounding a new one which has tickled my fancy amazingly. The good man believes that there were infants in the house of the jailer at Philippi. To prove this he makes an estimate of the constitution and general strength of the head of the family, and finding a good deal of jumping powder in him, he proves to his own satisfaction that the children in the house were decidedly young. Let the logic appear in its own chaste simplicity, as it stands in the sermon:

“Now what strengthens my impression that there may have been such infants in this jailer’s house is this: The writer informs us that whilst Paul was in the prison, the jailer ‘sprang in’ to him. By this expression I understand that he jumped down several steps at a time. Now this must have been the action of a young and lithesome man. But if he was a young man, it is most probable that his children, who were baptized, were young too.”

Here is something decidedly worthy of the noble cause which our author defends, at least it is almost absurd enough to become an armor-bearer to that gigantic error. Would not even an old man spring if he saw the prison doors opened by a miraculous earthquake? And what was there so remarkable about the spring that it should be a sure proof of youthful lithesomeness?

One would imagine, from such a fuss and argument, that the man had actually leaped over the prison instead of into the dungeon. Let us just make this remark, and then turn to something better— there are no more efficient assistants to the Baptist cause than the brethren who are ambitious to uphold Pedobaptism, and who use all diligence in fighting against the immersion of believers.

The special services in the theatres of London have been attended by very numerous crowds, who, for the most part, have conducted themselves with order and propriety. The great bulk of the hearers are not our church-going people, but in the main the company is made up of the irreligious, dissolute and ignorant. This is satisfactory, and we hope that the results will be of the most delightful character. Sometimes the preacher is accosted by a hearer in the gallery with a little smart theatrical slang, and occasionally the pit will emit its opinion of the discourse, if the speaker happens to be a rather slow coach, but these little vagaries do not disturb an earnest man, and, as for a formal, cambric-cravated gentleman, he will very likely be deterred by such inconveniences from trying his hand a second time at work for which he has no ability. I observe

at the foot of some of the bills that youths under sixteen are not admitted, unless in the charge of some grown-up person. This arrangement is doubtless intended to diminish the force of the sweet music of catcalls, whistles and shouts with which street boys are wont to favor the theatre. Last Sunday evening all the theatres now occupied for preaching were crammed to the ceiling. I select the following account as a specimen:

The Britannia Theatre, Hoxton, which is an immense building, was densely crowded. Probably three thousand persons found place within its walls, and hundreds more were excluded by the necessary closing of the doors a quarter of an hour before the time of commencing service. The vast majority of the audience were men, as an example of which we may state, that out of thirty-four persons in the front row of the pit, twenty-nine were males. Very few children were present, but there were many of the age when youth is passing into manhood. Mr. Charles Dickens and Mr. Blanchard Jerrold sat in one of the boxes, and listened attentively to the sermon. The preacher of the evening was Rev. Newman Hall, of Surrey Chapel .

Lord Dungannon, who, a little while ago, sought to prevent clergymen from preaching in Exeter Hall, on the plea that this was introducing "a sort of Spurgeonism" into the church of England, has warned the House of Lords of his intention to bring this yet more dreadful matter of theatre-preaching before Parliament. The antiquated old gentleman evidently prefers orthodox and canonical death to any irregular display of spiritual life. My Lord Dungannon ought to be drawn in state to the door of the house in an ancient chariot dragged by four iguanodons, and he should take his seat as the representative of the respectable corporation of extinct animals.

Talking of venerable absurdities, that head and chief of the order, the Pope, must be in a peculiar uncomfortable position at this season. His loving son, the Emperor of the French, is progressing very fast towards a consummation devoutly to be wished. The poor old priest will hardly have a resting-place for his consecrated toe, if affairs continue to run in the present channel. But who can tell? No man knows the mind of kings, and it may prove to be convenient to monarchs to maintain the Pope in his petty despotism, lest in' removing him they should shake themselves. If, however, the present quarrel is not soon made up, it may be hoped that the toothless malice which has been swearing prayers at the Emperor, and cursing him in benedictions, will receive its own sweet reward in abridgment of territory and contraction of power. Let the whole earth say amen.

I want you to execute a little commission for me. I observe in one of your American newspapers, an advertisement of pills which have a tendency to promote morality!!! The world in general is informed that "*one or two doses will cure, and the body and mind are better able thereafter to withstand temptation. These pills will yet be appreciated by moralists.*" Please to see that the inventor himself takes a whole box of these pills, and should they make him discontinue his lying puff, be so good as to send a wagon load down South, and oblige

Yours truly,

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