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Organ of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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PERTINENT QUERIES.

A correspondent desires to know whether baptism was practiced among the Jews before John the Baptist, and if there are any references given in the Old Testament to baptism.

That the Jews practiced the rite known as baptism previous to the appearance of John, is very generally held by scholars, for various reasons. One is that when the Baptist commenced to baptize, his opponents, as far as known, though they asked for his authority to do so, never pressed him for an explanation of the meaning of the ceremony, which they certainly would have done, had baptism in water been unknown to them, or an innovation with which they were not familiar. It is admitted by all, we believe, that proselytes to the Jewish faith were, in the early centuries, baptized, but some hold that the Jews borrowed the ceremony from the Christians. This supposition, however, cannot be admitted, in view of the Jewish antagonism to everything of Christian origin. The only plausible explanation of the baptism of proselytes is that it is of pre-Christian origin. The fact is that the symbolical purification in water is found in Egyptian, Persian and Hindu systems of religion, long before the Christian era, and the inference is that the framers of these religions, all had it from a common source, and if we were able to follow it up historically, we would most assuredly find this common origin in the religion of the first progenitors of the human family, as revealed to them by God, their heavenly Father.

One of the most curious baptismal practices on record among pagans is that of the ancient Scandinavians. Among them a new born infant was brought to the father who had authority to decide whether it was to live or die. If he wanted it to be reared, water was poured over the infant, and it was given a name. Several references to this custom are found in Icelandic literature. By this ceremony the child was given, figuratively speaking, a new life. It was born again. Before the water had been poured over the infant, it was not considered a crime to let it perish, but after the ceremony, to expose it to death was murder. There can be no doubt that similar importance was attached to water baptism among the nations from which the Scandinavians came. It is easy to see in this rite a feeble reflection of the doctrine of regeneration by baptism for the remission of sins, which must have been known at the time when man communed freely with God. And if the pagan nations, through the channels of tradition, retained baptism among their religious observances, as an inheritance from the first ages, it is not reasonable to suppose that the Jews, with their clearer light had lost all knowledge of it. It is more reasonable to look upon their baptism of proselytes as one of their most ancient observances, although such baptisms are not formally prescribed in the Mosaic law.

As to references in the Old Testament to baptism, Michaels considers Gen. xxi: 2, as the earliest. There, Jacob, who is about to enter a new life and build an altar to the living God, commands all his household and all with him to put away their idols, to cleanse themselves and to change their garments, as a necessary preparation. That this "cleansing" was a symbolical purification in water is highly probable, as anything less than that would hardly have been important enough to record. Then from the New Testament it is known that Israel were "baptized" during their passage through the Red Sea. By the law (Ex. 29: 4) it was prescribed that Aaron and his sons were to be "washed" at the entrance of the Sanctuary. Water, as a symbol of purification, is often referred to by the Prophets. For instance, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." These and others may be figurative expressions, but they would have no meaning whatever unless the rite of purification by water had been known among the people to whom the Prophets spoke.

The same correspondent asks: "Did Christ, when preaching to the spirits in prison, teach such men as Job, Samuel and others the law of baptism?" That is a very singular question. As there is no report on record of the sermon or sermons preached by the Savior to departed spirits, there is nothing to refer to by way of proof to establish any theory concerning the details of His teachings. The Apostle Peter speaks of Christ's preaching to "the spirits in prison," and says they were "disobedient in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." (1 Peter iii. 18-20). He states further that "the gospel was preached also to them that are dead." (iv. 6).

But the spiritual ministry of the Savior during the time His body lay in

the tomb, if limited to the "disobedient," would not include Job and Samuel, who were obedient and faithful in their day and generation, and no doubt complied with the commandments which were given to them. It is quite probable, too, that they understood the law and rite of baptism, although that is not mentioned in the sacred history that has come down to our time.

The further question is asked: "What pamphlets or tracts of Orson Pratt's were condemned by President Young?" The remarks of President Brigham Young in reference to some inaccuracies in "The Seer, in The Great First Cause, and in some other pamphlets," were not condemnatory of either of them in their entirety. But of some philosophical theories of that eminent writer and faithful servant of God, Orson Pratt, the President said they were "No guide for the Latter-day Saints." The personal views of authors are not to be taken as the utterances of the Church. The authorized written standards are the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. Great liberty of speech and of publication has been permitted to the Elders and members of the Church, but for their effusions the Church must not be held responsible. Nor should any of them be condemned as a whole because of real or fancied mistakes that may appear therein. They should be taken for what they are and wherein they expound and explain revealed truth they are valuable and to be commended.

Here are other questions which we are requested to answer: "What does it take to constitute a son of perdition? Why was Cain's offering rejected? At the creation of spirits, what all spirits created equally intelligent?"

"A son of perdition" is one who has obtained light, knowledge and power to attain to the highest degree of glory, "and has wilfully sinned against that light and power and turned altogether away therefrom, denying the Christ, consenting to His death, or shedding innocent blood after receiving the new and everlasting covenant and the holy anointing, thus sinning against the Holy Ghost, which is unpardonable." Lucifer, "the son of the morning" who rebelled in heaven and was cast down, was called Perdition; those who are overcome by him after partaking of "the power of the world to come" cannot be renewed to repentance, and without repentance there is no forgiveness. None will be finally lost whom it is possible to redeem. Those who are not salvable go with the devil and his angels, and are called "Sons of Perdition," as the redeemed are called "Sons of God." (See Doc. and Cov., Sec. 76, v. 23-49; also Sec. 132, v. 27.)

Cain's offering was rejected because it was not offered in righteousness nor of faith. He was influenced, too, by the Evil One, and did not follow the counsel of God. His sacrifice was not a lamb without blemish, typifying the Redeemer and His atonement, as was Abel's. He coveted his brother's flock, and it was the spirit by which Cain was actuated that vitiated his offering, for "he loved Satan more than God." (See Pearl of Great Price, pp. 20-22.)

The spirits which existed with the Father before the world was, were all intelligent and innocent "in the beginning." But they varied in degrees of intelligence. Therefore, some were chosen before they were born in the flesh, to occupy positions for which they were fitted, and which were necessary to accomplish the Divine purposes, concerning the inhabitants of the earth and their final redemption in different degrees of glory. Variety is seen in all the material creations of God, from a mighty sun to a twinkling asteroid, from a world to a worm, from a gigantic tree to a modest flower, from a stalwart man to a microscopic insect. In the spiritual world this variety will also be found. (See Pearl of Great Price, p. 61-2.)

If the Latter-day Saints will make themselves familiar with the standard works of the Church, they will learn for themselves many plain and precious truths that are not known to the world, and about which there need be no doubt, because they have been revealed from heaven and are the word of the Lord. It is well to depend on that which is made certain, instead of indulging in speculations as to matters which cannot be proven. There are many disputes over little things which are of no particular benefit when they are decided, and we advise our friends, young and old, to avoid wasting time and breath over imaginary contradictions in doctrine, and discussions of subjects that are without profit, and that add nothing to the sum of useful knowledge either secular or religious. What is written is for our learning, that the people of God may be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

TO KNOW IS TO LOVE.

In the account of the mobbing of "Mormon" Elders in the southern part of Hungary it is stated that the minister of the interior has prohibited further propaganda by the Saints, as being contrary to the well being of the state. This is the general impression in places where the Gospel is proclaimed for the first time. Even enlightened people are apt to see in it a menace, before they understand that the effects of it were to ennoble, enlighten and liberate those brought under its influence. The Jewish authorities saw in the teachings of the Nazarene a danger to their state, not realizing that the acceptance of them would have been political as well as spiritual salvation. Rome took the same view of Christianity, to its own cost. "Mormonism" has been looked upon with suspicion in our own day, in the same way and for the same reasons. It is feared where it is not known. People are very much like the disciples in the wave-tossed boat on the sea of Galilee, who cried out for fear before they recognized the Master in the apparition that approached them in the stormy night. Time changes this, as the Gospel and its standard bearers become known in the world.

A very notable illustration of this truth may be drawn from the Southern States of our own Republic. There J. Standing, W. S. Berry and J. H. Gibbs laid down their lives as martyrs for

the Gospel. There John Morgan had narrow escapes from meeting a similar fate, and numerous Elders have been roughly handled by fanatical mobs. But today the "Mormon" Elders are commencing to become known and appreciated in that beautiful section of our country. The people are beginning to understand that that which ignorance and superstition painted as a terrible specter, is really their best friend.

We have before us the Chattanooga, Tenn., News of November 24th. That paper devotes an entire page to the Southern mission, under the following headlines in large letters across the page: "What the Church of Latter-day Saints does for Chattanooga." The paper views this chiefly from a financial and business point of view, but incidentally the moral qualities of the Elders are receiving most cordial recognition.

In the introduction, the Chattanooga News says the "Mormons" are "noted among all with whom they deal as a straight-forward, honest and upright class of citizens, well educated and courteous to everybody." And this is corroborated by the testimonies of leading business men.

Mr. S. E. Howell, city passenger agent for the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis and Western and Atlantic roads, is quoted as follows:

"The 'Mormon' business is a good thing for Chattanooga. While I cannot now estimate just how much their railroad business will amount to in a year, I would roughly guess at about \$30,000. The Elders generally come in parties from fifteen to twenty-five, and, coming and going, the railroads will handle on an average of twenty-five people a month. They are all well educated, intelligent class of men and during the fifteen years I have been dealing with them, I have found them all gentlemen."

Mr. J. W. Scott, of a prominent Chattanooga clothing firm, said:

"I have been dealing with them about twelve years myself and find them among our best and most satisfactory customers. For the past eight or ten years they have bought nearly all their supplies of all kinds here in Chattanooga and they are well liked by all the merchants. Besides buying for themselves while here, the supplies are sent to them from this city during their stay in the Southern fields."

Mr. George Bradt, a publisher and printer, had this to say:

"The Southern mission expends with my firm annually about \$1,000 to \$2,000 for all kinds of printing and are among the best patrons we have. I have never met a finer lot of gentlemen in my life, either socially or in a business way."

Mr. Cooke, of another publishing company, spoke in a similar tone, and Mr. Hanna, manager of the Rossmore hotel, said:

"The Elders generally come in parties of fifteen, twenty, and sixty at a time. Of course they are coming and going all the time, and we will average probably about twenty-five of them a month. They generally stay with us about three days, which in the course of a year will amount to about \$1,500 to \$1,700. During their stay in the city they generally visit the mountain and other places, have their pictures taken in groups, etc. I have never had a nicer or more gentlemanly class of guests in my hotel, in all my experience as a hotel keeper."

Such are the testimonies of leading business men with whom "Mormon" Elders come in contact in every part of the world. People in new fields should take notice of what is said about them by truthful witnesses in fields where they have been long established. For kind treatment of the ambassadors of Jesus will bring both temporal and eternal blessings. Hungary has for years struggled to obtain political liberty, but unless she is prepared to grant her people religious liberty, political freedom cannot be maintained even if established. Religious toleration is the foundation of civil liberty. Without this solid foundation the superstructure, if erected, will fall when the storm comes.

KRUGER'S MISSION.

The visit of Mr. Kruger to France reminds one, in many particulars, of the famous trip of Kossuth to this country in 1852. The Hungarian patriot, too, was received with evidences of the greatest enthusiasm. He was recognized by Congress, and his tour from city to city was one grand ovation. But the end of it all was that he left the country disappointed and with no definite results as to the real object of his mission.

Kruger now is about to leave France, and he is turning his eyes toward Berlin. It seems, however, that there is no encouragement held out to him in that direction. Germany's attitude is one of friendliness toward Great Britain, and no demonstrations will be permitted in that country, which may endanger these relations. The Boer president has no advantages to offer as an inducement for friendly interference in behalf of his people, and governments do not move now-a-days merely for the vindication of principles. Never was public sentiment more aroused than at the time Armenian "Christians" were massacred in great numbers by the Kurds, but the governments remained inactive, although a military demonstration against Turkey would have been a comparatively small undertaking.

Nevertheless, the proposition of the London Statist, that Great Britain commence negotiations with the Boer commanders, deserves careful consideration. A policy of Weyferism in South Africa can only embitter the people, and cause further trouble. And if this policy should be commenced while Kruger is making his European tour, his presence would in all probability be the occasion of an outburst of anti-British sentiment even in conservative quarters, and it is difficult to foresee what the effects would be. If Great Britain has conquered the South African republics, she can afford to show that magnanimity and benevolence which become a mighty empire and which are sure to lead to conciliation and peace in the shortest and most direct way.

Fast day tomorrow!

General Buller to Lord Roberts: "You know how it is yourself, now."

Doctors as well as others have skeletons in their closets, but they like 'em. Mushroom culture is said to have become a great fad of late. And a good

deal of what passes for culture is but a mushroom growth.

General Dewet's capture is said to be imminent. He who shall make it will be eminent.

It may be possible to do telegraphy without wires but it isn't possible to do politics that way.

What a barrel of money old man Kruger could make if he would only go on the lecture platform!

When a Territory has a population of nearly 400,000 it is entitled to statehood. And Oklahoma has such a population.

And now the French senate has passed resolutions of sympathy for Mr. Kruger. Isn't this piling Pelion on Ossa so far as England is concerned?

There would be no question of preserving China's integrity if China had always preserved her own integrity in dealing with the powers.

It seems that it was a warship that induced Turkey to order a warship built in the United States. And thus it is that the Porte saves its face but loses its money.

Mrs. Lease, once of Kansas fame, has returned to that State for the purpose of securing a divorce from her husband. She wants an absolute title to freedom instead of a mere Lease.

The Abbot, the fastest trotter in the world, sold yesterday at auction for \$28,500. It is a good price but does not approach some prices paid by the late Robert Bonner for horses. For Maud S. he paid \$40,000, and for others larger prices still.

For years New York has been trying to find out where "Boss" Croker gets his income. In England they don't care where it comes from but they put it at \$100,000, and assess an income tax to him. Here is a case where our English cousins are more practical than we.

Oscar Wilde, once famous in two continents as a poet, then infamous throughout the world, is dead. He was a strange and meteoric career, and at one time it looked as though he might take a seat among the immortal singers. But he fell, fell to the lowest depths of infamy. He had a truly artistic and esthetic nature, but was utterly lacking in morals.

The theological classes of the Sunday schools in the Salt Lake Stake are invited by Supt. Griggs and his assistants to attend the Stake conference on Saturday and Sunday, December 8th and 9th. The teachers of those classes and one of each ward Sunday school superintendency are also requested to attend the Stake conference.

The Dewey arch is going South, to Charleston, where it will be set up in the Cotton States exposition next year. The arch is a most beautiful creation of a very flimsy character, and for that reason no sentiment can attach to it. To haul it around the country is only to cheapen it. That which is to be regretted is that the arch was not erected in marble and then it would have been a permanent adornment of America's greatest city and a perpetual tribute to Dewey's great victory.

Every year the game wardens of Colorado make a great hue and cry about the invasion of their State by Indians from Utah. This year was no exception. But when an investigation was made it was found that the alarm was false. It would never do to have it said that these game wardens had raised their hue and cry that they might hear themselves yell, and so to avoid this charge it is now said that "some Utah Mormons" are killing the deer. It is an easy way to get out of a disagreeable situation, but it is a most despicable one. These Colorado game wardens could do their own State and the country at large no greater service than to go into voluntary exile or into the State insane asylum.

FROM THE RELIGIOUS PRESS.

New York Churchman.

Bishop Potter's dignified and nobly powerful protest addressed to the mayor of New York against conditions which threaten the moral health not of any one section, but of the whole body of the city, speaks for itself. We print it elsewhere, and the only word that we have to say about it here is gratitude for its publication. It is a most timely and valuable contribution to the church to voice public sentiment in this vital matter of civic concern, and that the church should have responded to the expectation of all who are striving for righteousness among us. He speaks in the name of the social life of the church, illustrating admirably what our academic theorists have contended that the churchman is the truest statesman, and that in the coordination of church and state lies the safety of democracy.

New York Christian Intelligencer.

The tendency of the pulpit of today, is toward what is euphemistically termed practical as opposed to doctrinal preaching. Perchance there was at one time undue attention to doctrine, a too great solicitude for intellectual soundness of belief, but this was a less serious evil than the seeking to build right conduct apart from an intelligent founding of it on revealed truth. The crowning peculiarity of Christianity is not the excellence and superiority of its ethics, the telling men to be good and do good, but the conferring on them the power to be and to do what God requires.

New York Independent.

In any case in which marriage is justifiably dissolved, whether for unfaithfulness, desertion, intolerable cruelty, or any other cause which makes it impossible for the parties to live together in marriage, the same reason which makes it proper that any other persons should marry makes it proper that the innocent party should marry. We do not say the guilty party, though there may be exceptions; but one who has proved himself unworthy of marriage, who has been unfaithful to his vows, should, as a rule, be no more allowed to marry than one who is a tramp or an epileptic, or insane, or a jailbird. For such a person the vows of marriage have been proved a mockery; an innocent person should be protected against him.

New York Outlook.

It will perhaps be asked whether, if a woman is married to a cruel, drunken, or a worthless husband, who ought and should be abandoned, she is to be abandoned by her husband without support, she is to have no remedy. Certainly she ought to have a remedy. Provision should be made in all such

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cases, as is made in New York State, for an appeal to the courts and a legal separation; and where there is just cause for such separation, the care and custody of the children should be given to the complainant; and where the complainant is the wife, and the man has no means to support her, he should be put under bonds by the court to furnish her support.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS.

The December number of the Journal of Suggestive Therapeutics is devoted to the uncanny subject of "materialization of spooks and phantoms." That such topics still can form the subject of public discussion does not say much for the advance of the present beyond the past stage of ignorance and superstition.—Times-Herald Building, Chicago.

The Christmas number of Harper's New Monthly Magazine is in every respect a good number. It opens with a translation of Erik Bog's "The Pilgrimage of Truth," one of the best productions of that Danish author. It is beautifully illustrated by Howard Pyle. The remainder of the list of contents is as follows: "Above All Heights," a poem, Marion Wilcox; "Parents," E. S. Martin; "By-and-By," a poem, John Vance Cheney; "Enter a Dragon," a story, Thomas Hardy; "Bethlehem," a poem, Ruth McNary Stuart; "The Fulfilling of the Law," a story, Robert Howard Russell; "Love-Letters," part II, Victor Hugo; "Bernhardt and Coquelin," Henry Fouquier; "A Garden of Childhood," Sarah S. Stilwell; "Shaw's Folly," a story, Thomas Bailey Aldrich; "To a Cynic," a poem, May Brown Lewis; "Victor Hugo as an Artist," Benjamin-Constant; "The Monkey," a story, Mary E. Wilkins; "The Discovery of Ophiur," Dr. Carl Peters; "In Memoriam," a poem, Nina Frances Lazard; "An Anachronism in Courtship," a story, Alfred Hodder; "Motives," a poem, William Hamilton Hayne; "Eleanor," a novel, part XII, (conclusion), Mrs. Humphry Ward; "Editor's Easy Chair," William Dean Howells; "Editor's Study," The Editor; "Editor's Drawer," introductory story by Anne Warrington Witherspoon—Harper and Brothers, New York.

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