

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

CONFERENCE NOTICE.

The Sixty-fifth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will convene in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, at 10 o'clock, on Friday morning, April 5th, 1895.

The officers and members of the Church generally are cordially invited to attend the meetings of the Conference.

WILFORD WOODRUFF,
GEORGE Q. CANNON,
JOSEPH F. SMITH.

Special Conferences Appointments.

Thursday, 4th—Relief Society Conference, Assembly Hall. Meetings commencing at 10 a. m., 2 p. m. and 7 p. m.

Sunday, 7th—German meeting, Assembly Hall, 5 p. m.

Sunday, 7th—Sunday School Union, Tabernacle, 7 p. m.

INFANT BAPTISM.

One of the most important controversies among theologians is that concerning the proper subjects and mode of baptism. In the eastern church infants are immersed in water, while the Roman and the great divisions of the Protestant churches sprinkle them, and the Baptists and others immerse those who profess conversion and faith in the Redeemer. The controversy can be traced with certainty as far back as to the age of Tertullian and Cyprian, almost to the days of the first Christian churches, but its force was renewed as a natural consequence of the prevalence of Protestantism. The Roman Catholics maintained the power of the church to introduce changes in the cult, and to them any alteration in the sacred rite introduced by authority was perfectly legitimate. The reformers, however, insisted upon the "written word" as the only authority in matters referring to faith and practice. With singular inconsistency they refused to apply this rule to baptism, retaining infant sprinkling as one inheritance from Rome and thus the controversy was revived in all its fury.

Put on their defense, Protestant divines first maintained that Christ had authorized the baptism of infants, and that the word in the New Testament translated "baptize" means sprinkle as well as immerse. Researches into ecclesiastical history and philological facts bearing on the matter practically silenced this line of argument. It was established historically that the first Christian author, Tertul-

lian, who mentions infant baptism refers to it as an innovation that should be suppressed and that its origin is Africa, at a time when Christianity was decaying, as evidenced by the conditions of the churches with which Cyprian was connected. It was also proven philologically that sprinkling is no "mode" of baptism at all but an action entirely different—a substitute for baptism of comparatively recent origin. On these points all students of the subject, whose opinions are entitled to notice, practically agree.

The reason why Protestants still continue their unscriptural practice is worthy of consideration. The view adopted—one which is also generally conceded by the defenders of New Testament baptism—is that the ordinance is not essential to salvation, and that consequently it is immaterial whether the command is literally obeyed or not. Against this position the Baptists are powerless, and their remarkable victory on historical and philological grounds is of no avail because of a fatal error in their conception of the significance of the Christian rite.

Those interested in the subject will probably be aware that infant sprinkling is not original with the Roman church. Religious meanings were attached to various kinds of purification, washings and sprinklings among Jews and pagan nations. The following extracts from reliable authors, made by a friend of the News, refer to infant sprinkling in paganism:

It is noticeable that a kind of baptism is practiced in Tibet, Mongolia. It is usual to sprinkle children with consecrated water on the third or tenth day after birth. This is called Khrus-sol. The priest consecrates the water by reciting some formula, while candles are burning. He then sprinkles or dips the child three times, blessing it, and gives it a name.—*Buddhism, etc.*, p. 356, 357, *New York*, 1889.

Lydia Maria Child thus describes infant sprinkling among the Hindoos: "Water is supposed to cleanse the soul and guard from evil. When a child is born, priests sprinkle it, and the dwelling, and the inmates of the house bathe. They do this from an idea that it keeps off evil spirits.—*The Progress of Religious Ideas*, New York, 1855, p. 124, Vol. 1.

Dr. Konrad Maurer in *Über die Wasserweihe des Germanischen Heidenthum*, says: The ceremonies connected with heathen baptism were adopted by the Christian church. The laying at the breast was a recognition of the child on the mother's part, and the granting of the right of baptism was a recognition on the part of the father. This was the chief significance of that ceremony, although it would seem, from the Hávamal, a very ancient heathen poem in the Elder Edda, that spiritual blessings were also secured to the infant by the sprinkling. Baptism made the child an heir both among the heathen and the old Teutonic Christians, and the fact that among both it had so many things in common that it took place soon after the birth of the child, and was connected with the naming of it; that there were god-fathers and god-mothers, etc., makes the question an exceedingly interesting one. According to the ancient laws of the Germans, Visigoths and Anglo-Saxons the rite of

baptism was to be performed within the ninth day after the birth of the child.—*Quoted in the Nation*, Sept. 22, 1881.

The ancient Roman law (heathen) made it obligatory that girls should be sprinkled on the eighth day after their birth, but the boys on the ninth.—*Marquardt, Das Privatleben der Römer*, Vol. I, p. 81.

Nur is it strange that we should find traces of the holy ordinance among the heathen nations. The fact is that religion emanated from the teachings of the Almighty to His children on earth. In the beginning it was pure. Baptism in its true form and nature was among the doctrines taught. When apostasy and degeneration set in the truth was partially lost and error prevailed. Baptism became infant sprinkling in heathendom. But what is more significant in this connection is that the history of the rite was repeated after Christ. The ordinance instituted by Him gradually became infant sprinkling in modern Christendom. The same forces were at work; the results were nearly identical. This ought to induce the Christian world earnestly to consider the danger of drifting into paganism unless Almighty God reveals His truth from heaven anew, as the Latter-day Saints firmly believe He has done, for the regeneration of the world.

THIS IS WHAT WE WANT.

A correspondent who writes from Morgan, Utah, and signs himself, "A Friend to Utah and Her People," makes a few suggestions to the Constitutional Convention which we most heartily endorse. Here they are:

Editor Deseret News:

Although our county is small, yet we have a wish or two that we would like to express to the Convention through your valuable paper.

We believe we have some of the best men in the Convention there in Utah. With that understanding it is only right to look for an old-time, patriotic, short and to-the-point document—not weighed down with law codes so that if neighbors wish to swap jack knives they will have to consult an attorney.

Life is too short for this Convention to attempt to reform the world; but it can look after Utah and her people; leave out the extras. We hope the delegates will be conservative and careful and not provide for extravagance either in salaried officers or in taxation—let taxation be left as little as possible.

Let the people have full representation. Let the Constitution be a friend to the poor and a guide to the rich, so that all classes can point to it with pride and honor.

May it be so that our children will grow up and call its framers blessed.

BOTH DISGRACED.

"The state of affairs is a disgrace to New Orleans! The killings seem to have been coldblooded murders." Thus exclaimed Colorado's leading newspaper on Wednesday morning, with reference to the labor riots and massacre of negroes in the Crescent city; and then it followed with a statement that for the credit of the state Louisiana should take prompt steps to suppress the troubles and to visit condign