

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

CONFERENCE NOTICE.

The Sixty-sixth Semi-annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will convene in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, on Friday morning, October 4th, 1895, at 10 o'clock a.m. A cordial invitation is given to the officers and members of the Church to be present.

WILFORD WOODRUFF,

GEORGE Q. CANNON,

JOSEPH F. SMITH,

First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

AN OLD CONTROVERSY.

A cotemporary published in Minneapolis, in the interest of the Lutheran church in this country, devotes a couple of columns to the famous letter of Cyprian on the subject of infant baptism and draws the conclusion, that from this letter it is indisputable that the belief of the Lutheran church in this point is in perfect accordance with the doctrine of the ancient Christian martyr church.

The subject is somewhat antiquated. Well informed Protestant students of ecclesiastical history now generally admit the futility of any endeavor to establish divine authority for the practice of infant baptism. If it was taught by the early fathers at all, it was in such a way that from their extant writings it cannot be proven. But as occasionally the contention is made that the so-called early fathers prove the rite to be of apostolic origin, and as Cyprian in particular is relied upon for this statement, it may not be out of place to give the matter a moment's consideration.

Cecilius Cypranicus, born in Africa was a prominent rhetorician converted to Christianity about 246 after Christ. During the Decian persecution he was forced to withdraw into concealment. He was a close student of Tertullian, and in much of his teachings but echoes the doctrines of that father. His chief celebrity dates from the hour of his martyrdom. He was called to the office of a teacher before he had learnt the principles of Christianity thoroughly, and the subsequent persecutions left him but little leisure for theological research, wherefore Augustine, without scruple, controverts his decisions on important questions. But the chief fact to remember in connection with the question of the authority of this father is this, that it is only a part of what he himself tells about the members of the church with which he was connected is true, their corruption was such that little credence can be attached to what they unanimously decide to be right or wrong.

In the year 253 a council was held

at Carthage, Africa, where sixty-six bishops were present. Among the questions discussed was whether infant baptism ought to be deferred until the eighth day, after the pattern of circumcision, and the decision was unanimous not to defer it, because "we ought not to deny any human being, as soon as born, the mercy of God." From this position Cyprian triumphantly concludes that infant sprinkling was the universal practice of the church at the time of Cyprian and that the rite has apostolic sanction.

It is easy to see that never was logic so misapplied. That the churches in Africa, two and a half centuries after Christ, among other errors also had fallen into the one of considering baptism a Christian form of circumcision is indeed indisputable; but the testimony of Tertullian on this point is conclusive, even without the council of Carthage; for his vehement denunciation of the practice and the principles on which it rested proves that they were comparatively new at that time and not among the teachings handed down from the Apostles of our Lord. His argument that the children born under the covenant are "holy" is unanswered to this day by the followers of other African bishops.

Lutheran theologians especially should be careful when building arguments on the expressions of the early fathers, because their opponents certainly have the better end of the argument as soon as that mode of reasoning is turned against them. In the controversy about the Lord's supper, in which Luther's followers have taken such a decided view, the whole array of early ecclesiastical writers goes against them. The Alexandrian Clement says the wine in the Sacrament allegorizes the blood. This is Calvinism. Tertullian tells Marcon: "The bread taken and distributed to the disciples, Christ made His own body, saying, 'This is My body,'" which seems to be pure Catholic transubstantiation. However, he adds, "That is, the figure of my body," which again seems to be Calvinism. Cyprian's doctrine on this point is this: "We have the image of the sacrifice of Christ in the bread and wine," and he contends that in the Sacrament both wine and water must be used, on the queer ground that if we partake of wine only, the body of Christ would be without us; if of water only, we would be without Christ, while the water and wine typify a union of Christ to His Church. Now, if it is possible to comprehend the meaning of his argument on this point, he may claim to be authority on other doctrines.

The fact is that many of those who argue for infant sprinkling eagerly seize the early fathers as authority where they perceive an agreement, but discard them in other points, and no theologians are more inconsistent in this regard than our Lutheran friends. How much better in matters of this kind to rely on the revealed word of God and the guidance of that Spirit whose office it is to reveal the truth. Were this the practice of Christians,

there would be unity in faith and in worship.

THE WET.

There are three great things to be thankful for in connection with this storm.

One is for the storm itself, which is worth a hundred times more than it will cost, and which is of incalculable benefit to farmers, stockmen, rubber-goods dealers, coal men and sprinkling cart drivers.

The second is that the equinoctial storm only comes twice a year, and that we need therefore look for no other visitation from it until about the end of next March.

The third is that since there are such things as equinoctial storms, there is nothing like having them come along on time, so that forewarned people can get ready for them and be able to display that rare quality of sense which is exemplified in the ability to "get in out of the wet."

It will be remembered by nearly all old settlers that the so-called equinoctial storm hereabout generally delays its coming till Conference. Especially in the days when country visitors used to come to town in their wagons, prepared to live and sleep in them or out of doors until they got back home again, the Conference storm was as regular and inevitable and irrevocable a part of the semi-annual journey to this city as ever equinoctial gale was to the navigator upon the high seas. Since the days of the railroad, when visitors could more readily get back and forth, the weather has had no occasion to be so capricious as in times before—there was no such reward as in the old-time discomfort and the drenchings administered to the luckless sojourners within our gates.

For all these things let us be truly thankful—for the storm itself, for its arrival on time, and for the promise of good weather for the approaching Conference.

NONE OF THE WORK IN VAIN.

A common observation of Elders in the missionary field preaching the Gospel is the general indifference presented by so many professing Christians to the necessity of conforming to those rules which the Lord has indicated as leading in the road to salvation. There appears to be a popular impression that mere mental assent to the leading idea of Christianity, without active application of all its principles in detail to human conduct, is all that is required to secure salvation in the hereafter; hence oftentimes individual Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who proclaim the real and applied Christianity note events of a discouraging nature in the comparatively few that listen to their testimony and give heed to the Gospel message. In the aggregate, however, the results of Gospel teachings in the various nations of a most encouraging character, and evince a remarkable progress towards the great consummation of the Lord's purposes in these times, referred to in prophecy as the latter days, when the fullness of the Gentiles shall be ushered in and the