

THIRD DAY.

Conference was resumed in the Tabernacle, at 10 a. m., Tuesday, October 6th; President Joseph F. Smith presiding.

The congregation sang the hymn:

Our God, we raise to Thee
Thanks for Thy blessings free
We here enjoy;
In this far western land,
A true and chosen band,
Led hither by Thy hand,
We sing for joy.

Elder Joseph R. Shepherd offered the invocation.

The congregation sang the hymn:

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE.

The hand of God in all things—God not responsible for sin—Not all things are according to His will—Prayer not of the lips—The foreknowledge of God not a determining cause—Are we on the Lord's side?

In a revelation given to Joseph, the Prophet, in 1831, the Lord said:

"In nothing doth man offend God or against none is His wrath kindled save those who confess not His hand in all things, and obey not His commandments. Behold this is according to the law and the prophets. * * * I, the Lord, have spoken it, and the Spirit beareth record. Amen." (Doc. and Cov. 59:21.)

I take it that the confession there-in declared to be essential to a God-

fearing life is not a confession in words alone, but genuine acknowledgment of the hand of God as manifest in the lives and actions of men. There is a very general tendency today to relegate God to the background in human affairs, to consider that He has no voice in our doings and in this course the Lord hath declared Himself and thus makes plain to us that His anger is aroused against those unfilial children of His who forget Him; for the man who forgets the living God turns to idolatry, and having once known God and turned away from Him he is worse than the heathen who has never known other gods than those of wood and stone. I believe in my heart that many of us are prone to lead relatively Godless lives. I speak of the human family, not of this people distinctively. Many of us, children of God, forget our Father, forget what He has done for us, what He is doing for us; forget how truly we depend upon Him for all that we have and all that we are; and those who do so are great offenders in the eyes of the Lord. For He doth hate ingratitude and He doth hate pride that lifts man in his own estimation and causes him to look around upon the things that God hath given and say to himself, as said the Babylonian king, "All these things have I made; all this wealth have I gathered; all these great buildings have I erected;" and be it remembered the Lord smote him in His anger

and reduced him to the level of a beast in his capacities and faculties.

The Lord's hand is in our lives; if we will but feel for it, in the darkness, we can grasp it and be lifted thereby. Nevertheless, the Lord will permit those to deny Him who choose so to do. For to such end was the decree in the great council of the angels and the Gods, when the proffered services of Lucifer, a son of the morning, were rejected, and the offer of the well beloved Son was accepted, that man should be free—free to choose the path that shall bring him back into the presence of His Father, clothed with glory, because of His victory over sin, with immortality through the redeeming sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, and with eternal life as the supreme gift of God, or he may choose the path that will lead him into the company, there to abide forever, of the devil and his angels. Among our human weaknesses we must reckon the tendency, manifest in some degree, perhaps, in the lives of most of us, to place the blame for our misdeeds on somebody else. When our conscience pricks us and we begin to realize in a small measure our weaknesses, imperfections and shortcomings, we are very prone to excuse ourselves by citing what others are doing, what others have done; and it is only when the Spirit of God convicteth us of sin that we feel to take the blame upon ourselves and cry out in our hearts as did the penitent, pentecostal multitude, "What shall we do to be saved?"

The Scripture I have quoted is to be interpreted in the light of reason, common sense, if you please. There are some who interpret it selfishly and in a wholly unwarranted manner. Some go so far as

to say that the hand of God being in all things, God Himself is responsible for all that is, and for all that takes place. I have heard it taught by advocates of a frivolous theology that whatever is, is in accordance with the will of God, that all we see is as He would have it be. My whole soul revolts against any such conception as that. I cannot believe that it is God's will that men shall be as they are in sin. I cannot believe that it is according to the will of God that vice walks our streets and stalks through the land; that dishonesty, and drunkenness, and the spirit of murder are rampant in the land. Do not hold God accountable for such things; do not acknowledge His hand in the sense of placing the blame upon Him, but acknowledge His hand in the free agency that is thus given to men and in His power to eventually bring good out of all this evil. The warring nations are severally voicing prayers to God, prayers for what? For the right? No, for triumph, for the success of their arms, whether they be fighting on the side of right or on the side of wrong. Someone has suggested, with what I may call sacrilegious humor, that it would be better perchance if the nations would confess their idolatry and each one of them pray to his own god. It would be more convenient, said a grim humorist recently, for each nation to have the exclusive attention and services of some deity. Thus one of them might pray to Baal, and another to Ashtoreth, and another to Moloch, and yet another to Dagon, and so to all the gods that men have made for themselves. We are striving not only in a national capacity, but in the capacity of individuals, for triumph rather than for truth, for

selfish success, rather than for the vindication of the right and for the furtherance of righteousness. Is it God who leads men to contend with one another? Is it God who leads nations to fight with one another? It is when the Spirit of God is withdrawn from men that they fight. It is when the Lord hath hidden His face from the nations that they go to war. Yet out of it all He can cause to rise the principles of truth. As the crystal forms in the brine, He can cause the principles of righteousness to crystallize out from the gory magma which is presented to us by this terrible conflict.

We, as a people, profess to be a prayerful people. I ask you severally, and you may answer to your own conscience individually, do you pray or do you content yourself with saying your prayers? There is a vital difference between the two processes. Many of us are taught to say prayers and have not learned how to pray. What inconsistency is there, what glaring inconsistency, in the man who kneels and says: "Our Father, which art in heaven," and then proclaims that he is the offspring of the brute and not the child of God; that God is no personage but an influence, an essence, an immaterial nothing—there can't be an immaterial something—and then address that conception of his as "Father." Oh, what sacrilege in the man who is profane of heart and who drags the name of God in the mire of his foul, blasphemous oath, and then says, "Hallowed be Thy name!" What of us who pray, "Thy kingdom come," and then, through the operation of political machinery and through our partisan plans and designs, seek to establish and to maintain power whose chief purpose is that of oppression and

denial of the rights that were vindicated in the great battle of Michael and his hosts against Satan and his followers.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," say some, and then they go out to thwart the will of God and to hinder His purposes and to put obstacles in the way of progress.

"Give us this day our daily bread," is said as a prayer, but cannot be truly prayed by the man who is storing up for his own distant future by taking the bread out of the mouths of the present hungry. We are not taught to pray, Give me my daily bread only, but, Give us, all Thy children, the sustenance that we require.

"And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," or "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us," and rise from our knees, as some do, to go out to seize a brother by the neck and say, "Pay me that which thou owest; I demand it." The unforgiving soul who thus prays convicts himself of hypocrisy and of sacrilege.

"Lead us not into temptation," or as some render it, "Leave us not in temptation," and then go as fast as we can into the very place where we know temptation is strongest: we want to be tempted.

"Deliver us from evil," when we love the haunts of evil more than the abode of righteousness.

"For Thine is the kingdom," when we deny our Lord any and all influence or participation in the affairs of these earthly kingdoms and principalities and powers which man has established, and ascribe to Him the glory when we are taking all the credit to ourselves, and seal the

whole with a great Amen, which is but a blasphemy.

I am afraid you will think I am making a severe arraignment. I want to assure you, my brethren and sisters, I don't apply these remarks to any one of you, not one—unless you think I do. I don't mean any man who honestly, soberly, sincerely does not feel that these remarks are applicable to him.

The infinite foreknowledge of God has made known to Him and does make known to Him the end from the beginning; but there are some of us so short-sighted, so weak of mind, so unfitted or unwilling to analyze the proposition, that we have come to hold and to teach that the foreknowledge of God determines what shall take place. How absurd is such an inference, how utterly unwarranted is such a conclusion, that because God in His wisdom sees and knows ahead what will take place among nations and men, under given conditions, which conditions He can also foresee, that knowledge of His determines that such things should be. Let us make a concrete example: The college professor instructs his students, explains to them, demonstrates to them by blackboard and chart, and perhaps by apparatus upon the table, makes plain to them the operation of the laws that are under consideration and study; not only that, he will help individually the student who reaches after him, who comes to him in the proper spirit and asks for help; and that teacher foresees the outcome. After he has studied his students well, he says, "I know that that young man is going to fail; I know that disappointment will come to him; sorrow will come to his parents; I am positive that he is going to do himself discredit."

The teacher foresees it and does all that he reasonably and consistently can to avert it. Do you dare affirm that that teacher's foresight determines that student's failure? On the other hand he sees one who is devoted, earnest, and able, and he says, "That young man will grow to be a master in his chosen profession; he is leaving nothing undone that ought to be done; he is not studying pages, but subjects; I can foresee for him a great future." Does that foresight determine the young man's success? Or consider the case of an earnest, thoughtful and loving father in mortality who watches with great concern the erring ways, let us say, for the purpose of example, of a wayward son. He warns him, he prays with him, he ministers unto him, he sets him a good example and yet he can see, though the vision of the future is a cloud of sorrow upon his soul, that this young man is going to destruction; aye, he can see the prison doors opening for him, and shudders at the thought of what is imminent in that young boy's life. That father would give anything he possesses to avert what he sees coming. Can we be consistent in saying that because he has thus studied his son, learned his nature, and thus knows what is approaching, that his knowledge determines that that son shall sin? Were that so, it would be better that we teach parents not to study their children, not to know anything about them—let them go their way and take their course, because our knowledge will determine what they shall do and be. If I examine the barometer, the hygrometer and other instruments of precision that have been constructed for the purpose of revealing atmospheric conditions, and if by the ap-

plication of the laws of meteorology I am able to say, "there will be a rain within a few hours; a great windstorm will break upon us soon; we shall have snow before morning;" can you say that I cause the rain, that I summon the wind, or that I am the giver of the snow? If this be true, ignorance is not only bliss, but much to be preferred, for practical reasons. God's foreknowledge showed Him exactly what our first parents would do under given conditions, but He did not cause them to fall; He did not cause them to disobey; He gave them their freedom and their agency to do as they chose to do and take the consequences of their choice. Let us be men and be willing to take the blame for our evil acts, if we have chosen the evil.

In the same way many of us blame Satan for a great deal for which he is not responsible—poor devil. If Satan and his hosts were bound today and no longer able to work personally upon the earth, evil would go on for a long time, because he has very able representatives in the flesh. When I traveled in distant Russia, years ago, I learned of a peculiar conception among the moujiks, or peasants, in that land. They say that there is a household sprite, an unseen little imp that dwells in every house and that is always trying to cause trouble; and if a girl, through carelessness, drops a dish and breaks it, the mother shakes her head and says, "That was the sprite." If the man forgets himself and gets drunk, and in his drunkenness wreaks barbarity, they say, "Ah, poor fellow; he is under the influence of the sprite; he could not help it;" and so for every little detail of life they find an excuse and blame that little unseen

imp for their own acts of evil or carelessness.

This is a practical religion of ours, my brethren, a very real religion. There is nothing of the fanciful and theoretical about it. Let us learn to analyze our own souls and see to it that we are striving to work righteousness. A remark that is credited to the great Lincoln, and one which, whether made by him or not, is wholly worthy of the man, is perhaps profitable for consideration here. When asked, during the great conflict in which brother was arrayed against brother, whether he felt in his heart that the Lord was on his side, he answered, "I don't know, and as a matter of fact, that does not concern me; what I want to know is, am I on the Lord's side?" It is a great deal better for us, a far loftier conception, I take it, to consider that we are on God's side than to worry ourselves as to whether He is on our side. In your dealings, my brother, in your barter and your trade, be on the Lord's side; do as He would have you do under those conditions. As a people we profess to be on the Lord's side. It is for us to make good that profession, to live up to it, to avail ourselves of the influences that are at work for our good, and the powers that are operating for the salvation of men. Remember that this help is extended by the Lord in all reason—not capriciously and not when it is undeserved and unappreciated; for thus He declared Himself, as you will find recorded in the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

"For I, the Lord, cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. Nevertheless he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven; and

he that repents not, from him shall be taken away even the light which he hath received; for my spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of hosts." I pray that we may not forfeit the influences of that Spirit, but that we may be open to its influences, be guided by its power and eventually come back into the presence of the Father, and the Mother, who are waiting to welcome their children on their return from this earth school in which we are now pupils and students. God grant it in the name of the Master, Amen.

"The Penitent," a soprano solo, was sung by Mrs. Ivy E. Crandall.

PREST. SEYMOUR B. YOUNG.

(Of the First Council of Seventy.)

I am very much honored, this morning, in the privilege of standing before you, my brethren and sisters, for a few minutes, to occupy your valuable time, and I desire that you will give me the benefit of your faith and prayers while I am thus engaged.

It is written in the scriptures that angels were heard singing "Glory to God on high, peace on earth, and good will to men." It was about the hour of the birth of the Child of Promise, that was to be the Savior of the world, who was to introduce conditions that would lead to the salvation of the human family. The subject of the redemption of mankind was about to be introduced, the set time had come. We have an account of a prophecy uttered on this continent, by Samuel, the Lamanite, who stated to those with whom he associated, a small number of people who accepted the teachings of

the Gospel truths of the Nephite prophets, that there would come a time when a sign would be given, and this sign should be a prophetic evidence of the coming of the Lord. This sign was, there would be no darkness between two days, there would be a day, and a night, and a day when there would be no darkness. The enemies of the members of the little church forbade the people who belonged thereto uttering this prophecy, or expressing their belief in its fulfillment, and finally threatened that if they again uttered their belief, in this sacred prediction that death should be the penalty and destruction would come upon the Church. The Nephite prophet, as recorded in III Nephi, sought a secret place and knelt in prayer to God to learn if He might look for the fulfillment of that prophecy, and the deliverance of his people. The Lord Himself spoke unto him in an audible voice and said, "Lift up your head and be of good cheer, for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world." The history records that on that very night as the sun went down, there was no darkness, the light was bright and did not fade away, and the prediction was fulfilled, to the discomforture of the enemies of the Church, and to the joy of those who believed in the fulfillment.

Far away, across the ocean, in the land of Palestine, in the town of Bethlehem, the child Jesus was born, and wise men, we are told, came to do homage unto Him. They had followed a star that had beckoned them, or inspired them we might have said, to follow; it certainly was an inspiration to them. When these wise men had come to