

SECOND DAY

MORNING SESSION

Meeting opened at 10 o'clock a. m., Saturday, October 6, 1923. President Heber J. Grant presided.

The opening hymn was sung by the choir and congregation, "Guide us, O thou great Jehovah."

Prayer was offered by Elder George E. Browning, president of the Weber stake of Zion.

A sacred solo was sung by Mrs. J. E. Ellsworth, "Come, ye blessed of my Father."

ELDER STEPHEN L. RICHARDS

I feel very humble, my brethren and sisters, as I respond to the call of the President to occupy this position for a short time. I earnestly pray that I may have aid and assistance from our Father, in the hope that I may be able to say something under his inspiration that will be of some value to us in our great work.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF JOSEPH SMITH.

I am sure that we have all been impressed with the thought that we cannot celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the memorable event which brought to us the great volume of Scripture which lies largely at the basis of our work, without contemplating the achievements of the Lord's prophet, Joseph Smith. I do not desire to be extravagant or to go beyond the bounds of plain, safe statement of truth, when I say that no other man who has lived since the time of the Redeemer, has made such a contribution to the philosophy, the enlarged conception, and the righteousness of civilization and the world, as did the Prophet Joseph Smith. That, perhaps was to be expected, since it was through his instrumentality that the gospel of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth. I do not claim that the Prophet Joseph Smith brought to us new things, or original ideas in great abundance because he restored rather than originated the conceptions of life, which constitute the theology of the holy gospel. What he did also, was to interpret and construe the gospel so that it touches all the affairs of life, and weaves itself into the fabric and tissue of all life and civilization.

A REMARKABLE CONCEPTION OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

Among the large contributions which Joseph Smith made was that remarkable conception of civil government which he gave to the world, for it was he who emphasized, if he did not first teach,

the doctrine that all governments are instituted of God for the benefit of men; and it was he who first plainly declared—assuming that some attention had been given to the same thought before—that the Constitution of the great land in which we live came from the inspiration of God through men who were raised up for the purpose of establishing it as an instrument of government. I have always been grateful for these conceptions of government and I have felt in recent years that until the great ideas of government which he promulgated among this nation find their place more securely and firmly in the minds and hearts of the citizenship of this country, America will never achieve her great destiny and will never be what she was intended to be, the beacon light of liberty and freedom and civil righteousness to all the world.

My attention has recently been directed, by my colleague, Brother Richard R. Lyman, to a book which is off the press but a few months, in which the author, Mr. Clarence True Wilson, sets forth rather more clearly than I have ever seen it stated before, the conception of government which has been taught in this Church for nearly a hundred years. The author points out that for more than thirty years he has studied all the works which have been written upon the Constitution of this country, the influences which brought it about, and the influences exercised upon its framers, which culminated in the form and plan of government which find expression in that great document. He says that never in all his research has he discovered a single author who attributes the Constitution to the influence of the Bible and God. He points out that some contend that influences derived from the Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Greek, and the Roman attempts at Republican government found their expression in this great document.

INFLUENCE OF THE BIBLE ON THE CONSTITUTION.

He says that most commentaries on the Constitution pay homage to the influence of the common law of England and the English experiment in free government, but in no works on this great document does he find a single expression which indicates that it was the Holy Bible, the scriptures of the Lord, which furnished the foundation for this great instrument of government, and yet, says he, the Bible is the only book with which all the framers of the Constitution were intimately familiar. It was the book which they had read from their childhood to their maturity. It was the book from which they learned their spelling; it was the book from which they learned their English, it was their chief literature; and he asks this question: "Is it not reasonable, natural and logical, to draw the inference that it was the influence of the Scriptures of the Lord which permeated the hearts and the minds of those patriotic men in the formulation of the greatest instrument, which Gladstone says, ever fell from the pen of man?" Time will not permit to make anything like an analy-

tical comparison between the fundamental institutions of our government, as they were established in the Constitution, and the Hebrew government which was established under the hand of God, and which prevailed for so many centuries under his divine guidance. It might be said, however, in a moment, that there is not a single fundamental institution of this country, ordained and established under the Constitution, that does not have something like a counterpart in the Israelitish form of government which prevailed prior to the time of the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I SHALL MENTION BUT A FEW ITEMS

There has been no king in this country. Do you know that Washington was upon several occasions requested, almost demanded, to assume the role of king, for that was the form of government which was best known to those who established this one. He persistently declined, and the makers of our Constitution saw the wisdom of his action. They recognized too that kings and the so-called divine right of kings, were not compatible with the great spirit of liberty and democracy which was to underly the structure of our government. Does it not seem somewhat significant that in the Israelitish form of government, for a period of four hundred and seventy years, there were no kings to rule in Israel, in spite of the repeated demands of the people for a king, that they might be like other nations. They were told that God was their king, and, that no king should rule them so long as they subscribed to the great principles of truth and righteousness which the Lord had laid down for them to follow.

Then, too, in the Israelitish form of government there were no class distinctions. It is true that there was the order of the Priesthood, and that the priesthood exercised righteous authority over the people, but class distinctions were absolutely forbidden.

The twelve tribes were united together for governmental purposes, and so our thirteen colonies were united.

I wish I had the time to show how the ten commandments have lain at the basis and foundation of substantially all our penal law. There is not one of them which has not been in some way or other enacted into the laws of the States of the Union.

So might be pointed out, if time would permit, a large list and line of comparisons which establish a very close relation between the government which predominated during the time that the children of Israel were governed by their judges, and the government established here. I wonder how many know that in that form of government which prevailed in olden times, there were three departments which are comparable to our three departments of government, namely, the legislative, the executive and the judicial. Perhaps it is not generally understood that the judiciary held supremacy in the old time as in reality it holds supremacy now. For while the three departments of government are usually said to be co-ordinate, every student of our

institutions knows that it is the Supreme court of the United States which has the last word to say with reference to the interpretation of law and its enforcibility in this country. Time will not permit further detail, but there is abundant evidence to warrant the conclusion that the fathers drew liberally on their knowledge of, and training in, the Hebrew scripture, in building the democracy of the New World.

HOW THE PRINCIPLES OF THIS GOVERNMENT CAN ENDURE.

Now, brethren and sisters, I state these points of comparison and draw your attention to these things for this purpose—we all love this country, we love America, we want the principles of government which we espouse to endure. I ask this question: Will these principles of government endure? Is the Constitution safe for the future, and for the generations to come?

I answer the question in this way, that the Constitution and the sacred principles which it unfolds in the form of government, will endure if the people of America will subscribe to and defend and uphold the fundamental principles of religious righteousness upon which it is built, and not otherwise. Righteousness, in its last analysis, is a religious term. God is the author of righteousness. The framers of laws have, to a large extent, recognized that doctrine. The gospel is the compilation, the aggregation of all principles of righteousness, and into the form of government which we uphold and support there has been woven the principles of individual and community righteousness which are underlain by truth which emanates from God himself. You can't have a good government without good people, and goodness is a religious term. Much as many of our philosophers would contend that it is to be defined in terms only of ethics, and of social convention and understanding, I maintain that all true morality is supported by and finds its basis in religion, and we cannot hope in this country of ours to sustain the great Constitution—and you know that that is a matter of much concern now—unless we adopt into our lives those principles of civic righteousness and of morality and of truth which underly it. I wish that could be said to the whole people. I am just as thoroughly convinced that there is a dependence upon our Father in heaven for the carrying forward of the great principles of government, which we espouse in this nation, as I am that our own work depends upon his provident and his protection and his guidance.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THIS GOVERNMENT A PART OF THE GOSPEL.

Indeed I regard these great principles of government as a part of the blessed gospel that God has given to his children, and so we must sustain them. To us is committed the obligation and the opportunity of maintaining these great principles of righteousness in their undiluted truth and beauty. We must conserve them, we must

preserve them for the generations to come. America must not fall from the standards of truth and righteousness that underly the structure of her government.

So, I say to you that Joseph Smith has made the greatest contribution toward proper conception of civic government that has ever been given by any man in all these years of history. We are indebted to him, so are all our fellow citizens though they know it not.

Do we love America? Why! We worship the sacred principles upon which America and her government stand. There are no truer Americans, there are no Americans who have a broader, more comprehensive view of the righteousness of government, than do the Latter-day Saints, and I make the statement with deliberation, knowing that it is true.

God bless us that we may keep these sacred principles inviolate, sustain the government, engender respect for law, and uphold the mighty Constitution, that lies at the basis of all our institutions. We could repeat with propriety the prayer of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Kirtland temple, which prayer, he said, was given by revelation from God:

"Have mercy, O Lord, upon all the nations of the earth; have mercy upon the rulers of our land; may the principles, which were so honorably and nobly defended, namely, the Constitution of our land, by our fathers, be established forever."—Doc. & Cov. 109:54.

ELDER JAMES E. TALMAGE

Wherever I go among the Latter-day Saints, as my duty calls me, meeting them in the various wards and stakes and in the missions, I find them imbued with a spirit of deep earnestness, hopefulness, confidence, trust and faith, mingled with concern and serious thought. They are happy; nevertheless, their happiness is more than levity, for in their rejoicing there is thoughtfulness and deep interest as to their present and future.

We rejoice that the work of God is progressing, that through the ages "one unceasing purpose runs"; that all that is past has been in preparation for that that now is, and is for that which is to come; that there was a beginning, even as there shall be an end, to this particular phase of the Lord's purposes concerning his children.

THE PURPOSE IN THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

The earth was created primarily for the carrying out of the divine purposes respecting man. The astronomer regards it as one of the stellar units; the geologist looks upon it as the field for his investigation; but beyond such conceptions we regard it as one of the many spheres created with definite purpose, in which the destiny of the human race is the chief element and was the principal concern of the