

## DISCOURSE

BY

ELDER ORSON PRATT,

DELIVERED IN THE

Twentieth Ward Meeting House,  
Sunday evening, September  
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REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

THERE are a few words in one of the prayers uttered by our Saviour which it may be well enough to refer to as a foundation for a few remarks. The words, in substance, are something like this—"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on the earth as it is done in heaven." Whether I shall dwell on the subject embraced in these few items any very great length of time, I do not know. I have already exerted myself, this afternoon, in the New Tabernacle, where I am obliged to speak very loudly; and it is quite exhausting to both body and mind to speak for any length of time and sufficiently loud to make all the people hear in that large building. I hope, however, that I shall be strengthened by your prayers and faith, and that I may be able, in my communications this evening, to speak by the inspiration and voice of the Holy Spirit, without which my speaking and your hearing will be in vain.

The few words I have referred to in the prayer of our Saviour are taught in all Christian nations; and I presume that there are no denominations which profess Christianity but what, more or less, use these words, both in public and private, at least, so far as my knowledge extends, I have heard this prayer uttered by a great many different Christian denominations.

What is the full meaning of the words—"Our Father in heaven?" We are taught to address the Lord by this title—"Our Father who art in heaven." Some, perhaps, think that this title is merely honorary, and that there is not connected with it that relationship which exists between father and children here in this life; but that he is merely a father in the same sense that many of those holding high offices, as well as aged persons who are addressed as "father," to whom, although we are not particularly related to them, we give this title as a title of honor, believing that their age and the qualifications which they may have entitled them to this mark of respect. I do not think, however, that our Saviour, in teaching his disciples, regarded the words to which I have referred as a mere title of honor, but that he meant to convey the idea that a certain relationship existed between that Being who dwells in the heavens, called God, and the children of men here on the earth, and that the relationship which we bear to him is that of children—sons and daughters, and that his relationship to us is that of a Father. We all know that the Latter-day Saints, since the rise of this church, have had some information on this subject that the world of Christendom have not fully understood. We have been taught by revelation concerning this relationship of Father and children; and we have learned by revelation that we existed with that personage whom we are called upon to address as Father, before this world was made. We have been taught this, and we believe it with all our hearts if we are truly Latter-day Saints. It is not a matter of speculative doctrine with us; it is not a mere opinion that our elders have taught us, or that we have picked up by our reflections, but it is a doctrine that has emanated from God, by direct revelation from the heavens, that we not only existed with him before this world was made, but that we also existed in the relationship of children and father; and that he actually was our Father, just as much as these aged or middle-aged brethren who sit upon these seats, who have families, are the fathers of their children. How do you feel in relation to your children? Have you not a tender feeling, a feeling of affection and love, such as no other being can have towards these children? Certainly you have. You understand these emotions, for you have experienced them; they are joyful feelings, feelings that you delight in, and it makes you glad when you look upon your sons and daughters and

realize that they are the offspring which God has given you—your own sons and your own daughters. You feel a peculiar anxiety for the welfare of these children, and they feel a peculiar affection for you as a father, and oftentimes address you by that endearing title, and especially when you return home in the evening after having been absent during the day; and you delight to have them do so, and they delight to have the privilege, and the relationship that exists between you is stronger than death, and many of you, if not all, would peril your own lives, and lay down your lives to rescue your children from any danger.

Well, the same kind of heavenly feeling that we have here on the earth; in the relationship of parents and children, existed before the foundation of this world was laid, between our Father who is in heaven and his sons and daughters there, and to a far greater extent than what it exists here. All of these heavenly emotions and affections which we have here in this life are only given to us in measure, for the good of those who bear these relationships; but there is not that same intensity of feeling existing on the part of parents and children here, although it is stronger than death, that would exist in personages that had more knowledge and understanding, for they are capable of feeling parental affection and emotion to a far greater extent than children of mortality can.

How enduring, then, must have been this feeling among all the family anterior to the creation of this earth! God was there with them; they could behold his face, and they had a long acquaintance with him; we cannot tell how long, for this is not revealed, but the probability is that we had an acquaintance of thousands of years with our father in heaven; and during all that time we beheld the light and glory of heaven, the light and glory of the countenance of our Father, and we dwelt in a celestial kingdom, for our Father dwells there, and he begat us, and consequently, unless he banished us and sent us away from his presence, we dwelt in the same kingdom, and were acquainted with all the brightness of the heavenly mansions, palaces and cities, and greatness and glory of that celestial world. We were the sons and daughters of God, and were prepared to perform and accomplish many great and important works that were entrusted to us, so far as we had gained experience.

Our Elder Brother was there, we were well acquainted with him, even Jesus Christ, the oldest of the family; and we no doubt conversed with him from time to time, and he probably informed us of a great many things that would take place when the new creation should be prepared for us, when we should take bodies, and should become fallen beings, and when he should offer up an atonement by which we might be redeemed and restored from the fall. All these things, I have no doubt, were conversed over; and we had a great many conversations in regard to the future; and I presume that in those days many promises were made to us: in fact the Scriptures inform us to this end. We read in Paul's epistle to Titus, if I recollect right, these words—"In hope of eternal life, which God, that can not lie, promised before the world began." Here, then, is a promise made before the world began. To persons who do not believe in our pre-existence this passage would be altogether without meaning. The question might be asked at once—If we did not exist before the world began to whom was this promise made? Who had the promise of eternal life before the world was made? The Lord gave these promises to his children. On what conditions? On condition of their fulfilling the law which should be given to them, when they should come forth to this world and receive their bodies. It was said in substance as follows:—"Laws will be given to you then, and if you keep those laws, I promise you eternal life." And these promises were no doubt recorded, for we are told, that "all things are written by the Father," and I have no doubt that these ancient records, made before the world began, contain the promises that were made to the sons and daughters of the Almighty before they became fallen and mortal beings.

We have forgotten our relationship by coming here; we have for-

gotten those things which we once understood, and enjoyed in the presence of God; we have forgotten how the celestial world looks, and how the cities and habitations we formerly dwelt in look; we have forgotten how the angels look, and how our Father, his Son and the heavenly host appeared; we have forgotten all this, but has God forgotten in relation to these things? Oh no. Has he not still the same affection for his own offspring, though we are fallen, and though we are cast out from his presence, though we are filled with sorrow, and mourning, and many imperfections, and have to endure afflictions? Yes; the Lord has not forgotten, he comprehends all this, and his bowels of compassion are drawn out towards his sons and daughters. Therefore, there is no wonder that Jesus should speak to his disciples and his followers, and tell them to address that Being who is in the heavens by the endearing title of Father—"Our Father who art in heaven." It is pleasing to God, and it is pleasing to us to be able to do so. But we will pass on.

After having spoken of these relationships, let us go on to another very important thing contained in this prayer of our Saviour. He taught his disciples to pray that his kingdom might come. This item is contained in the prayer of our Saviour as laid down in the Evangelists; but when Jesus appeared to the ancient Nephites on this continent, and taught them this same prayer, he left out the little sentence—"Thy kingdom come," and it is not in the prayer as given in the Book of Mormon. You will recollect that when Jesus taught this prayer to his disciples in Palestine his kingdom had not then come, had not then been fully organized on the earth; the other Comforter had not yet been given; the endowments had not then been bestowed and the organization was not full and complete, neither were the blessings full and complete. But he commanded them to commence their proclamation, after his death and sufferings, beginning at Jerusalem, and from there it should go forth to all the nations of the earth; hence it was with great propriety that he taught them, in those days, to pray—"Thy kingdom come." But after his kingdom had come, and had been fully established and organized, with apostles and all its necessary officers, and after the Holy Ghost had been given, and after the great endowments were poured out, and the Comforter had come; after all these things we find him appearing to the ancient Nephites, and in teaching them this prayer, this sentence was left out, and I think with great propriety, for, the kingdom having already come, it was not necessary for them to pray—"Thy kingdom come." Now, an impostor, if it had been possible for such a person to have framed the Book of Mormon, in copying the Lord's prayer, would not have been apt to leave any part of it out, and this one small fact is an additional proof of the divinity of that book. A thing that had already been accomplished was not necessary to be prayed for by the ancient Nephites. But we will pass on still further.

"Thy will be done on the earth as it is done in heaven." This is the substance of the words; perhaps I have not quoted them exactly. This is a very important item in the prayer of our Saviour, and one upon which mankind should reflect, as it embraces a vast variety of practice and conduct among the children of men. "Thy will be done on the earth as it is done in heaven." It is true that we do not fully understand, any further than what is revealed, how the will of God is done in the heavens, but I think that we can draw conclusions in relation to this matter from what is revealed. I think that we can find out, by a little reflection, some of the great principles that govern the inhabitants of heaven. We may as well ask a few questions in relation to the society that is organized in heaven, and see how far we can find out in relation to their conduct and doings. In the first place, God is there with them, and he is their great King and lawgiver, and he governs and controls all the inhabitants who dwell in the heavens. But upon what principle does he control them? I answer, he gives his laws and they are obeyed by every individual there; or if there should be a rebellion there that rebellion would be checked, as it was before the world was made, by casting out from the celestial kingdom, or from the heavens, all personages engaged in that rebellion; leaving only that portion that would be perfectly obedient to the laws which govern there. Do you suppose that they are divided in regard to political matters in heaven? Do you think that they assemble in their caucus meetings and select certain persons to do this, that and the other, and then vote the democrat and republican ticket for these individuals, and that those who get the highest vote act in the offices to which they are elected? Is that the way they do the will of God in heaven? No. How is it then? If votes be called they are cast unanimously, not one dissenting voice, not one dissenting vote. Is that consistent with such a government as is organized here in this great republic. Yes. We have a most splendid government; there is no necessity in our government for any divisions whatever: divisions are no part of the government. Of course, mankind are very imperfect, and it was expected by those who framed the constitution that, because of these imperfections, there would be majorities and minorities, that some would vote in one way, and some in another, and the constitution was so framed as to protect the minorities from being trodden down under the feet of the ma-

jorities, that the voice of the people could only rule within the constitution. That is the nature of our government; it was framed suited to the imperfections of the children of men.

But now, supposing that these imperfections did not exist, and that all the people of the American Union should be perfectly united when they selected and voted for a candidate for President of the United States, and another one for Vice President, would there be anything wrong in this unity? Supposing they should meet together in all their elections, from one end of the country to the other, and should have no quarrellings, no divisions, but should all be perfectly united upon these men; and let it be supposed they were good men and worthy of the utmost confidence of the people, would there be any infringement of the constitution by the people being thus united? Not in the least. Would it be inconsistent with the form of the American government for this union to exist? Not in the least degree. But the government has provided for the imperfections of the people, and for contentions and quarrellings, and for jars, disunion, and fighting; and they have also made provisions that the majority, so far as the election of officers is concerned, should have their desires gratified. But then after these officers are elected they have no right, power or authority, so far as the constitutional laws of the land are concerned, to oppress the minority; the minority is protected, though they be but a very small portion of the people, in the same degree as the majority if they comply with the laws of the land. Hence, for instance, there is a small majority of the people of these United States who believe, as a religious doctrine, in sprinkling water upon the face of infant children; but however small the minority who believe in this, the majority can not prevent them observing that practice. The great mass of the people may consider it criminal and abominable in the sight of God, inconsistent with the Scriptures, and as something very offensive in the sight of God, but can they alter it? No. Why not? Because the constitution intervenes, and the voice of the people cannot rule so as to alter that matter without a violation of the great fundamental principles of the government. Hence this small minority are protected in that abominable practice, if it be abominable.

There may be another very small minority of the people who believe in something else. For instance, we will name the Shaking Quakers. There are but a very few of them in the United States; and they believe that they are children of the resurrection, and that they are living in the resurrection, and they believe that in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage. Hence when a man with a family joins the Shakers, they immediately separate the man and his wife; the wife taking her position among the females, and the husband his among the males; and they live apart, if they carry out the principles of the Shaker faith. Here then is a religion which they profess to prove from the Bible, which separates men and their wives and breaks up families; but the great majority of the people of the United States cannot handle it, why? Because it is a religious idea of a small portion of the people, and they, although so small a minority, must be protected in it; and they cannot be prevented from practising their religion by the voice of the majority of the people. They also believe in dancing on the Sabbath day, as part of their sacred worship. I have many a time, when a boy, attended their meetings: I lived about three miles from one of their principal villages, and used to go out of curiosity to see them dance in their meeting house, the males all on one side of the house, dancing back and forth, as a solemn sacred worship. Instead of having instruments of music, a few individuals would sing for them, keeping time by a continued movement of the hands. On the other side of the house the sisters dance in the same way. They keep this up every Sabbath as a part of their religious worship, and they pretend to prove this dancing from the Scriptures, which somewhere declare that the old men and the young men and maidens shall go forth in the dance. Can the people of the United States, though some thirty-nine or forty millions majority, put a stop to this thing? They cannot, without infringing upon the principles of their government. It is said that the voice of the majority of the people shall rule; but they cannot put a stop to the peculiar religious practices I have been describing, without a violation of the constitution. Hence our government has been formed to protect the minorities as well as the majorities, that all may be protected in their mode of worship, in their religious belief and in the practice of whatever they profess to consider Scriptural doctrine.

But supposing that they all believed one way, supposing that all the people of the United States were Methodists, would it not be consistent with the great principles of our government for all the people to be united, of one heart and of one mind? Would it be any infringement? Not in the least. Supposing that all the people were democrats, and there were no other political party, would that be inconsistent with the great principles of our constitution? Not in the least. The genius of our government can be carried out though all the people embrace one religion; and though all of them should be united in their political affairs still the constitution is broad enough to take them in, and it would be carried out in a more perfect manner than with the divisions which now exist; for they are no part of the American government; they are only the results of the imperfections of men. The American government is intended to establish union among the children of men, if they will have it, in all things, both political and religious.

It is very curious to me to read some of the articles in papers, published at a dis-

ance. Say they—"The Mormons must be compelled to yield to the voice of the people." Why must we? Does the constitution compel us to do it? Not at all. We have the right to dissent from the voice of the people, and we have the right to do different from the voice of the people. "But," say they, "we have forty millions of people against you; you are only a little handful of some one or two hundred thousand, and we shall see whether this forty millions are going to rule, or whether the one or two hundred thousand are going to rule." One or two hundred thousand have just as much right to their way of worship without interference on the part of the forty millions of people, so long as they do not infringe upon the constitution of the country, as the forty millions would have to their mode of worship, even if they were all of one religious faith.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." I asked the question—"Are there any divisions up in yonder heavens?" Not at all, they are all united in politics. Are they all united in religious principles? Yes; they all worship the same God; they all believe in the institutions which that God has devised; and I presume that if you could hunt over the whole of that celestial world, where we once dwelt, from one end of it to the other, and enquire for a dissenting voice, or a dissenting person, a dissenting politician or a dissenting religionist, you could not find such a person in all that country. They are all united in doing the will of the great King, in obeying his ordinances and institutions, in worshipping in his temple, in singing their songs, or whatever is appointed, or is necessary for them to do, they are all united. No quarrelling, no dissensions; no husbands and wives finding fault one with another; no fathers to fret and scold and stew about their children; no children disobedient to parents, but all perfectly united. What a happy state of society they have in that world! Have they divisions in regard to property matters and affairs? I think not. I think you will find that it is a kind of joint company, and that all the people are really entitled to all the blessings and benefits of the whole celestial kingdom. Are there riches there, they are for the good of the whole. Do they have gold and silver? Yes. No doubt some of their cities are paved with gold. Have they any precious stones, jewels, and beautiful things there, to adorn their persons, habitations, palaces and cities? I have no doubt but that they have an abundance of them; for God is the author of all these things, and can make the gold, silver, jewels and precious stones, and whatever is necessary to be made out of the elements to beautify and adorn a city for the habitation of celestial beings. All these things are for the benefit of the whole family, but yet there may be certain parts or portions of the property in this celestial kingdom over which this one will take charge, and another part or portion over which that one will take charge, and a third portion over which a third man or class of individuals will take charge; but notwithstanding that this jurisdiction is meted out here and there, yet all the property under these various individuals is intended for the benefit, happiness, beauty and adornment of the whole. That is the way they are united there, in regard to property matters. There is an abundance of scripture to prove this; this is not merely imagination, or some idea that we have formed up in our own minds, independently of revelation; we have not formed a fanciful theory about the beauty, glory, riches and eternal excellency of those celestial mansions, I say we have abundance of Scripture to prove it. For instance, we are taught that Jesus has everything that the Father has. "All mine are thine, and thine are mine," having reference to worlds, kingdoms, greatness, glory, &c. All these things that belong to the Father belong to the Son. In what respect? As a joint heir with the Father. We find also that all the sons and daughters of the Almighty that will be entitled to a place in the celestial kingdom, are to be made joint heirs with Jesus Christ; and he is down with his Father on his throne, and is an heir of all things, and, in connection with the Father, he enjoys all these things; so, if we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, we shall be one with them in the benefits derived from all this heavenly property. Thus will be fulfilled another prayer that was uttered by our Savior just prior to his crucifixion—"Father, I pray not for these alone which thou hast given me out of the world, but I pray for all them that shall believe on me through their words, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they may be one even as we are one." Hence, when they all get into the celestial kingdom, there will be no quarrellings over property, no one to say—"This is mine," "this particular portion is mine, and that particular portion yonder is yours." But there are other things, which the Lord has conferred upon certain individuals which will be exclusively their blessing. For instance, God has given wives and children to his saints here in this life; now in the resurrection, if they have been married for eternity, according to the mind and will of God, these wives and children will belong to the individuals to whom they were given, and will belong to their special departments; as to the riches, wisdom, knowledge, power and glory each one will enjoy a fulness according to his capacity, yet these individuals, who are given to the servants of God, will be theirs for all eternity, and they will belong to no other persons, and yet they will all be joint heirs to the inheritance that God has in reserve for the faithful.

This is what must be brought about here on the earth. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." What a great change this will produce! But it can not now be done, in perfection, under the present circumstances and conditions of the people. The civil laws of the country are so framed that it can not be done. In the first place