

DISCOURSE

BY
ELDER ORSON PRATT,
DELIVERED

In the 16th Ward Assembly Rooms,
Salt Lake City, Sunday After-
noon, March 14th, 1875.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

I WILL read a few paragraphs which you will find recorded in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, commencing near the middle of the second paragraph of a revelation given December 27th, 1832.

In that he comprehended all things, that he might be in truth, and through all things, the light of truth, which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made. And the earth also, and the power thereof; even the earth upon which you stand.

And the light which now shineth, which giveth you light; is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space. The light which is in all things; which giveth life to all things; which is the law by which all things are governed: even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

We will now pass on to the ninth paragraph of this same revelation, given through Joseph Smith the prophet;

All kingdoms have a law given; and there are many kingdoms; for there is no space in the which there is no kingdom; and there is no kingdom in which there is no space, either a greater or lesser kingdom. And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also and conditions.

All beings who abide not in those conditions are not justified; for intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; wisdom receiveth wisdom; truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy; and claimeth her own; justice continueth its course, and claimeth its own; judgment goeth before the face of him who sitteth upon the throne, and governeth and executeth all things; he comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things, and in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things; and all things are by him, and of him, even God, for ever and ever.

And again, verily I say unto you, he hath given a law unto all things by which they move in their times and their seasons; and their courses are fixed; even the courses of the heavens and the earth, which comprehend the earth and all the planets; and they give light to each other in their times and in their seasons, in their minutes, in their hours, in their days, in their weeks, in their months, in their years: all these are one year with God, but not with man.

The earth rolls upon her wings, and the sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night, and the stars also giveth their light, as they roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the power of God. Unto what shall I liken these kingdoms, that ye may understand? Behold, all these are kingdoms, and any man who hath seen any or the least of these, hath seen God moving in his majesty and power. I say unto you, he hath seen him; nevertheless, he who came unto his own was not comprehended. The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not; nevertheless, the day shall come when you shall comprehend even God; being quickened in him and by him. Then shall ye know that ye have seen me, that I am, that I am the true light that is in you, and that you are in me, otherwise ye could not abound.

Behold, I will liken these kingdoms unto a man having a field, and he sent forth his servants into the field to dig in the field; and he said unto the first, go ye and labor in the field; and in the first hour I will come unto you, and ye shall behold the joy of my countenance; and he said unto the second, go ye also into the field, and in the second hour I will visit you with the joy of my countenance; and also unto the third, saying, I will visit you; and unto the fourth, and so on unto the twelfth.

And the lord of the field went unto the first in the first hour, and tarried with him all that hour, and he was made glad with the light of the countenance of his lord; and then he withdrew from the first that he might visit the second also, and the third, and the fourth, and so on unto the twelfth; and thus they all received the light of the countenance of their lord; every man in his hour, and in his time, and in his season; beginning at the first, and so on unto the last, and from the last unto the first, and from the first unto the last; every man in his own order, until his hour was finished, even according as his lord had commanded him, that his lord might be glorified in him, and he in him, that they all might be glorified.

Therefore, unto this parable will I liken all these kingdoms, and the inhabitants thereof; every kingdom in its hour, and in its time, and in its season; even according to the decree which God hath made.

And again, verily I say unto you, my friends, I leave these sayings with you, to ponder in your hearts with this commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall call upon me while I am near; draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you: seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask and ye shall receive; knock and it shall be opened unto you; whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name it shall be given unto you, that is expedient for you; and if ye ask anything that is not expedient for you, it shall turn unto your condemnation.

Behold, that which you hear is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness—in the wilderness, because you cannot see him—my voice, because my voice is spirit; my spirit is truth; truth abideth and hath no end; and if it be in you it shall abound.

And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you, and that body which is filled with light compre-

hendeth all things. Therefore sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will.

I have read these sayings from a revelation given a little over forty-two years ago, to that youth, called Joseph Smith, a farmer's boy. Do they sound like the ravings of a madman? Do they sound like something that was invented or composed by the wisdom of man, or do they sound like the truth? Joseph Smith was not a learned man, he had to work for his living when he was a lad; and when God called him and gave these revelations through him he had not studied any more than the generality of the young men who now sit in this congregation, and probably not near as much. Yet these words were given to him, and they contain information and knowledge far beyond that which you will find recorded in the writings of the learned, information, expressed so simply that a common mind can, in some degree, grasp it, and yet so sublime and so great that when we come to investigate its depths, it requires greater powers and greater understanding than what man naturally possesses.

We are told, in the part of the first paragraph that I read, that God is in the sun of our firmament, that he is the light of the sun, and that he is the power of the sun by which it was made. We are also told that he is in the moon, and that he is the light of that heavenly luminary, and the power by which it also was made. We are also told that God is in the stars, those worlds so distant from ours, those great centres around which, no doubt, millions on millions of opaque bodies revolve as our planets revolve around our central body, the sun; that he is in those stars, that he is their light, and the power by which they are governed; or, to come home directly to our earth, he is in the earth, and is the power and light and glory that is attached to the elements of our globe.

This would seem to exhibit before us the nature of that Being whom we worship. We worship him because of his glory, greatness, goodness, justice, mercy, knowledge, and wisdom. We worship him, because he has the power to govern and control the universe, and because he has commanded us so to do. He is a personage; and we are told that in the beginning man was created in his image. We are also told that we are his sons and his daughters, that we were begotten by him, before the foundation of this world; that we are his offspring, as much so as the little children in this room are the offspring of their parents. Seeing then, that he is a personage and that we are in his image, we can form some idea of the general outlines and resemblance of that personage, but can we form an idea of the intelligence that he possesses? We have but a very limited idea of that. He comprehends all things, all things are before him, all things are round about him, and he is the great and supreme Governor of all the works of his hands.

We are told that that same light which shines from the sun, from the moon, and from the stars, is the same light that quickens the understandings of the children of men. But who is there in this congregation, or upon the face of the earth, that can tell how that light operates in quickening the understandings of men? It is the same light by which you are enabled to see each other, and surrounding nature. The light that proceeds forth from all these heavenly luminaries, with very great velocity, is the same light that quickens the understanding. Do you know how that is done? I do not; yet this is what God has revealed. He is the light that is in all things. Do you or I comprehend how that light is connected with all things? No. These are lessons which we have got to learn in the future, when we ascend in that scale of knowledge and intelligence now possessed by celestial beings. How long it will be before we comprehend these things I know not. How our capacities may hereafter be enlarged, I know not; how they will be developed and quickened so as to comprehend all these great truths and principles, I know not; but we are told in this revelation that the light that quickens the understandings of the children of men, and that lighteth all things is one and the same and that it is also the life

of all things. What are we to understand by this? Have we life? Yes, we certainly have. Where did we obtain this life? When was it created or made? There is a revelation upon this subject which says that intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created, neither indeed can be. Is it then eternal? Yes. Then this light that shines is eternal in its nature is it? Yes, because it is the same light that gives life to all things. Did our spirits, that have power to think and to reason, have life before the foundation of the world? Yes. And what gave them this life? The elements, composing our spirits were eternal; they were never created, neither indeed can be; they existed from all eternity, and were, at a certain period, combined or organized in the form of our spirits; and hence the pre-existence of man before the world was made.

This same light which gives us life, and without which we could not abound, proceeds forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space. Can we get away from it? No; for it fills all the intermediate spaces between world and world, between one system and another, and between universe and universe; "and there is no space in which there is no kingdom, and there is no kingdom in which there is no space;" hence, this being the case, all eternity, as far as your minds can possibly stretch, is filled with kingdoms, and with this power of God, this light which is the life of all things, and the law by which all things are governed.

Perhaps you may ask me why I dwell on this mysterious subject? I answer, why did the Lord dwell upon it forty-two years ago, if he did not want us, in some measure, to understand it? Would he speak at random? Would he give a revelation without expecting that the people would ever try to understand it? If the Lord wished us to understand something, and condescended to reveal something, why should we, after forty-two years of experience, think that we are stepping over our bounds in trying to approximately comprehend what the Lord desired us to understand, in some measure, forty-two years ago? It is an old sectarian whim and notion, to suppose that we must not try to understand revelation. You know that when they come to something in the divine records which they do not understand, they will say—"Oh, the Lord never intended us to understand that, that is a mystery, we must not search into these things, they are mysteries." Just as though the Lord would reveal something that he never intended or wished the human family to understand. Saying nothing about the Deity, it would be an act of foolishness on the part of a man to attempt a revelation of something that he never intended his fellow men to understand. The Lord is more consistent than man; and if he reveals anything, he surely intends that thing to be for the profit and edification of the pure in heart.

I was going to say that we had dwelt too long on baptism for the remission of sins. But no, we should still retain that in our remembrance. Not leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, we ought to go on to perfection. I believe that King James's translation of that passage says—"Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ let us go on unto perfection." But the translation given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, through the prophet of the Lord puts in the little word *not*. "Therefore *not* leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." I do not want the people to leave baptism, or to cast from their minds, and forget the first principles of the doctrine of Christ; but, on the contrary, you should always retain them in your memories. When you repented you did a good work; retain that good work in your minds. When you were baptized for the remission of your sins, through the ministration of a servant of God divinely authorized, you did a good work; retain that in your minds, do not leave that principle. When you had hands laid upon you for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and that was confirmed upon you, you were obedient to one of the principles of the doctrine of Christ; do not leave that, but retain it in your minds. Do not suppose, however, that those first principles are the only ones to be learned; do not become stereotyped in your feelings, and think that you must

always dwell upon them and proceed no further. If there be knowledge concerning the future; if there be knowledge concerning the present; if there be knowledge concerning ages that are past, any species of knowledge that would be beneficial to the mind of man, let us seek for it, and that which we can not obtain by using the light which God has placed within us, by using our reasoning powers, by reading books, or by human wisdom alone, let us seek to a higher source—to that Being who is filled with knowledge, and who has given laws to all things and who, in his wisdom, goodness, justice and mercy, controls all things according to their capacity, and according to the various spheres and conditions in which they are placed.

When we reflect upon this subject, the query naturally arises in our minds—If he has given a law unto all things, and has set bounds and conditions to every law which he has given, will it hurt any intelligent being to learn concerning those laws as far as he possibly can? I think not. To illustrate this, let us suppose that a learned man, by years of research and study, has discovered many of the great laws of nature, and that he has a family of children growing up; do you think that he would be displeased with his children because they have a curiosity and a desire to know something in relation to that which their father understood? No, you say, he would be pleased to see the intellectual faculties and powers of his children expanding, and to hear them inquiring about this, that, and the other thing, with which he was perfectly familiar, but of which they were ignorant. Furthermore, if it would be pleasing to a father to hear his children making such inquiries, would it not be still more pleasing to him to impart useful information unto them? You reply, "Oh yes, nothing would delight me more than to impart useful instruction to my children, and to aid them in developing their mental powers." Well, that is just the way our heavenly Father feels in relation to his children. Anything that would be for our good to know—and all knowledge is for our good if we make a right use of it—he is willing to impart, if we but seek unto him in a proper and acceptable manner. Let us then keep all the commandments, and laws, and conditions which God has appointed for us to keep. It is our right and privilege to know, and we have the promise that it shall be opened to us; to seek, and when we do seek, to do so with the expectation of finding. In this way we may receive more and more information and knowledge, concerning the things of God, and the works of his hands. There are many things that we can learn, already within our reach, without any special and direct revelation, that is, when I say special revelation, I mean without the Lord revealing directly by a vision, the ministration of an angel, or by direct words, as he revealed many things to the ancient revelators, seers, and prophets. There are a great many things that we can learn independently of these direct revelations; but still we need the help of the Lord, in some measure, in our researches, to learn anything; we need the influence of the Spirit of God to quicken the light that is within us, for light cleaves to light, and the Spirit of God is light, and it cleaves unto the light that enters into the composition of the spirit of man; and when we keep his commandments the Lord is ever ready and willing to quicken the judgment, inform the mind, and lead us along in our thinking and reflecting powers, that we may have power to understand a great many truths, without his coming out and saying,—"Thus saith the Lord."

There are a great many truths which might be revealed to me in words which I should not be able to understand; that is, a law of nature might be revealed to me in words, but I could not understand the principle involved therein after it was thus revealed. For instance, I could reveal a great many things to school children in words, which they could not possibly comprehend. I could give them a revelation that would take them perhaps two or three years deep study to comprehend, and yet it could be printed in a very few words. Just so with the Lord—he could reveal in a few words, a principle to us which it would take us years of study and reflection to understand. Suppose, for illustration, we take the principle

of force or gravitation, by which things fall to the earth, and by which the planets are held in their orbits, and do not fly away from the great central luminary of our system—the sun. We will suppose that we know nothing about this law of force, called gravity, and that some man among us should get a direct revelation, expressing that law; if he had never studied sufficiently to understand the nature of these words, the very words that he would receive would be incomprehensible to himself. For instance, the law of gravity is expressed, in the words of Sir Isaac Newton, as follows—"Every particle of matter in the universe attracts every other particle with a force varying directly as its mass, and inversely as the square of its distance from every particle." Now supposing that law had been given to Newton, or to the world, and that there had been no knowledge of mathematics among men, what would they have understood about the law? They might have said—"There is a formula which comprehends the law of the force of the universe;" but what would they know about it? If, however, they understood the terms used, they would know how the force varied at different distances from the attracting or gravitating body. That is the real revelation; it is not the words. A thousand things might be revealed to this congregation, but if merely revealed in words, they perhaps would not know anything about them. We must understand the nature of the thing, the nature of the idea comprehended in any law in order to have it a revelation to us; words are nothing but signs of ideas; if the ideas are not understood, the words will be a mystery.

When we undertake to investigate the laws which govern the various departments of nature, we are investigating the laws of God. Says one—"Do you mean to say that the law of gravitation, which was discovered by Sir Isaac Newton, by which all the bodies in the universe are held in their proper position, is a law of God?" Yes. If he has given this law of force to all bodies, then it is one of his laws, and all who study that law study one of the laws of God. To illustrate this still more familiarly to the minds of the congregation, we will say—here is Brother Kesler, who, I presume has been teaching school in this house. Perhaps he has some students in algebra, and perhaps in geometry; then, perhaps, he has many scholars who know nothing about these things. Now suppose that Brother Kesler should call up a class, the members of which know nothing whatever of the sciences I have named, and should express certain rules in algebra to them, would that be a revelation to that class? It would in words, but what would they comprehend about it? Not a thing; it would be as dark as midnight. There are the words in which the rules are expressed, but could the students in that class put those algebraic rules into operation? No, a process is necessary in order to enable these children to understand the revelation, and that process is one of slow growth, mastered a little to-day, a little to-morrow, and a little the next day, and by and by, in one or two years, they would probably comprehend the algebraic revelation given to them so long before in words. It is so with arithmetic, with grammar, geography and almost any branch of science taught in our common schools or universities. No wonder then, to me, that Paul in speaking of a man, who was caught up to the third heavens, said he saw things that were not lawful to be uttered, that could not be uttered; for if he had undertaken to utter them, he would have uttered something that the people could not possibly comprehend, until they had learned previous principles. Such a man might tell about certain laws which prevail in heaven, and certain glories which he saw there, but yet, unless the people to whom such things were told had placed themselves in a position to have the Holy Ghost, or the visions of heaven opened to their minds, the words uttered would not be a revelation to them, for it would be altogether beyond their powers to comprehend.

The revelation which Sir Isaac Newton obtained concerning the forces of the universe, has been developed from his day until the present time. The whole learned world of mathematicians have brought all their faculties and powers to bear upon this one little law which I have expressed to you, and have they got through with it? Oh no, it is just beginning to unfold to them some of the common phenomena of the universe, and that is about all. In about a century hence, if the Lord should spare the world, and men make as much advance in these matters as they have done in the century past, this law, there is no doubt, will be carried out into a great many channels and branches that we know nothing about now. Says one—"If it requires so much study on the part of the learned world to unfold and comprehend this one law, it is discouraging to think that there are perhaps hundreds of other laws as intricate as this to investigate before it is possible to come to an understanding of them." We need not be discouraged upon this subject; for if we do the best we can according to the position in which we are placed, and the opportunities which we have, we do all that the Lord requires; and by and by we shall be placed in a condition in which we can learn much faster than we can now. We need