

DISCOURSE,

By Elder JOHN TAYLOR delivered, in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, May 6th, 1870.

REPORTED BY DAVID W. EVANS.

The scriptures inform us "that no man knows the things of God, but by the spirit of God;" and then no man can speak the things of God unless aided by the spirit of the Lord; and no people can comprehend the things spoken unless inspired and guided by the same spirit. We need this spirit continually and so do all mankind, to guide us; to enable us to comprehend the laws of life; to regulate and concentrate our thoughts; to elevate and ennoble our feelings; to give force and vitality to our actions, and to place us in a position before God, before men and before the holy angels, that will be right, acceptable and proper to all true intelligence to the angelic host, and to our Heavenly Father. It matters very little what we are engaged in, it is impossible for us to do right without the guidance of the Almighty; but aided and directed by the spirit of the Lord, we can act in consonance with the dignity of our high position as immortal beings possessing the holy priesthood, and participating in the new and everlasting covenant; by the aid of that unerring spirit we can fulfil the measure of our creation and prepare ourselves for an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of our God.

We are told "that the world by wisdom knows not God;" yet they do comprehend a great many things, and because of the spread of general intelligence and the great progress of science, literature and the arts they believe they can find out God. Like the framers of Babels Tower they seek to penetrate the heavens on natural principles. Like them they are mistaken, as all men have been who have sought to solve the problem of life through the influence of human wisdom. No man ever did understand God on this principle; neither can they by mortal agency alone understand the principle of life and salvation. No man in the present generation comprehends them on this principle: neither will human wisdom enable any man who ever will live to understand them. It is true that mankind, within a short time, have made great advances in the arts and sciences. During the last half century scientific research has made many wonderful developments; and many things which, before that time, were unknown to the human family, are now quite familiar. There was very little known of the application of the power of steam half a century ago. I remember, very well, the first steam-boat and locomotive that were propelled by steam, and riding on the first railway. Before that, locomotion had to depend upon the winds and tides and horse power and a few other agencies. These are now supplanted by what all will acknowledge as a very superior agent,—namely, the power of steam.

Electricity, or rather its application, so as to subserve the wants of man, was unknown until a comparatively recent period. I refer now more particularly to the electric telegraph. That has been a means of greatly facilitating the transmission of thought and the spread of intelligence among the human family, and has been a great advantage to the world at large. When we came to this valley, for instance, even so late as that, we had to depend upon ox teams to bring our mails and to convey intelligence from the East, and I have known it to be four, five, and sometimes as long as six months before we knew what President was elected. Now we can have it in fewer minutes; this exhibits a great improvement in such matters.

I can remember the time when we had to plod along at night, nearly in the dark, in our largest cities, the streets being lighted only by dim oil lamps. Now we have gas, and various luminous oils, which we have made the earth teem forth by millions of gallons, that are almost equivalent to gas. Daguerrotyping, or as it is more generally called, photography, is another great achievement of the human mind, conferring the power to take likenesses, landscapes and views in a moment, which formerly required days or months even by the most eminent artists.

In machinery and chemistry manufactures and many other scientific developments connected with human life wonderful advances have been made, and the world seems to have been progressing with

great rapidity in the arts and sciences, in regard to manufactures. Some years ago every texture, had to be spun by a single thread, now, by the aid of steam and machinery, it is done by thousands and hundreds of thousands. We might go on enumerating many other improvements which have taken place within the past few years; from which it is very evident that the progress of the present generation has far eclipsed that of any preceding it, of which we have any knowledge. Because of these things it has been supposed by many that the human intellect is capable of grasping everything in this world and the world to come,—even eternal things, and many men have got puffed up and vain in their imaginations because of the discoveries they have made and the advancement in science, literature and the arts. They forget "that every good and perfect gift proceeds from God, the Father of light, in whom there is no variableness nor the shadow of a turning." They forget that every particle of wisdom that any man possesses comes from God, and that without Him they would still continue to grope in the dark. They forget that, with all the increase of wisdom and intelligence and the expansion of the human mind, they are in the dark in regard to God, and that no man by wisdom can find Him out. The mystery which enshrouds Him is as high as heaven, as deep as hell and as wide as the universe; and it is unfathomable and incomprehensible by human intelligence, unaided by the inspiration of the Almighty.

There are men, it is true, who profess from the little knowledge they have of earthly things, by a series of deductions, to be able to find out heavenly things, but there is a very material difference between the two. There is a philosophy of the earth and a philosophy of the heavens; the latter can unravel all mysteries pertaining to earth; but the philosophy of the earth can not enter into the mysteries of the kingdom of God, or the purposes of the Most High. But because of the advancement to which I have alluded men set themselves up as teachers of things pertaining to spiritual matters, of which they know nothing. But the moment they do that, they exhibit their folly, vanity, imbecility and shortsightedness, for, as I have stated, they never did comprehend the things of God without the spirit of God, and they never will. What folly it is, for men with the breath in their nostrils, who are but worms of the earth, existing as it were for a day, and to-morrow are cut down like the grass; or like the moth or butterfly, which flutters around for a brief space and then passes away into everlasting oblivion, I say what folly it is for beings so circumstanced so weak, imbecile, circumscribed and controlled to set themselves forward, unaided by the spirit of the Almighty, to fathom the designs of God, to unravel the principles of eternal life, to comprehend the relationship that subsists between God and man and to draw aside the curtain of futurity. Who is there who has seen God or can comprehend Him, His designs and purposes? No man is capable of fathoming these mysteries. Man, indeed can comprehend some of the principles which are developed in nature, and only a few of these. But who can grasp the intelligence that dwells in the bosom of Jehovah? Who can unravel His designs and penetrate the unfathomable abyss of the future? Who can tell upon what principle this world was organized or anything about the denizens of those worlds that we see moving around us? It is true that by the science of astronomy nice calculation in regard to the heavenly bodies can be made; but none can tell who put those bodies in motion, how they are controlled, or by what class of people they are inhabited. As the scriptures say "What man, by his wisdom, can find out God?" No one can comprehend Him. We find ourselves to be a remarkable enigma, both in regard to body and mind—each individual man, woman and child; but who can draw aside the veil and tell how or why we came here, and what awaits us when we lay aside this mortal coil? None can do this unless God reveals it. There never was a man, neither is there a man now, nor ever will be that can comprehend these things upon the principle of natural or human philosophy, and nothing short of the philosophy of heaven,—the intelligence that flows from God can unravel these mysteries.

Some men will stultify themselves with the idea that in ages gone and past the human race was in a semi-civilized or barbarous condition, and that any kind of a religion would do for the people in those days; but with the progress of intelligence, the march of intellect, the development of the arts and sciences and the expansion of the human mind, it is necessary that we should have something more elevated, refined and intellectual than that which existed then. To me such notions are perfect foolishness. If I read my Bible aright and believe in it, known unto God were all things from before the foundation of the world, and I do not think that the intelligence of the nineteenth century can enlighten His mind in relation to these matters. He that framed the body shall He not know its structure? He that organized the mind shall not He understand it? Before this world rolled into existence or the morning stars sang together for joy, the great Elohim comprehended all things pertaining to the world that He organized and the people who should inhabit it: the position

that they would occupy and the intelligence that they would possess; their future destiny and the destiny of the world that He then made. It is vanity, puerility and weakness for men to attempt to gainsay the designs of God, or to boast of their own intelligence. What do they know? Why, they discovered awhile ago that there is such a thing as electricity. Who made that electricity? Did man? Did he originate and place it among the nature's forces? Did it proceed from the acumen of man's intelligence and his expansive mind? No, it always existed, and the man who discovered it—a little smarter than his fellows—only found out one of the laws of nature that emanated from and originated with God. It is just so with steam—the properties which render it so useful in subserving man's purposes always existed, but man discovered them; if there had been no God to make these properties no one could have found them out. It is so with the various gases and their properties, with minerals—their attractions and repulsions—they originated with God; man is incompetent to form anything of the kind. So we might go on through all man's boasted achievements, they amount to no more than the discovery of some of the active or latent laws of nature, not comprehended by men generally, but discovered by some who consider themselves, and they no doubt are, smarter than their fellows. Where, then, is the boasted intelligence of man. Science reveals the beauty and harmony of the world material; it unveils to us ten thousand mysteries in the kingdom of nature, and shows that all forms of life through fire and analogous decay are returned again to its bosom. It unfolds to us the mysteries of cloud and rains, dew and frost, growth and decay, and reveals the operation of those silent irresistible forces which give vitality to the world. It reveals to us the more wonderful operations of distant orbs and their relations to the forces of nature. It also reveals another grand principle, that the laws of nature are immutable and unchangeable as are all the works of God. Those principles and powers and forces have undergone no change since they were first organized, or if changed they have returned again to the original elements from which they were derived. All of the properties of nature were as perfect at the creation as now; all the elements of nature possessed the same specific properties, affinities and capacity of combination that they do at present. Trees, shrubs, plants, flowers, birds, beasts, fishes and man were as perfect then as now. God's works are all perfect and governed by eternal laws. It reminds me of an infant; I can compare it to nothing else. The new-born child is perfectly oblivious to anything and everything around it, although marvellous in its organization and perfect in its structure. By and by it holds up its hands and discovers for the first time that it has a hand. It had it before, but a new light bursts upon the brain of the child, and it discovers it has a hand, and no doubt thinks it is wonderful wise in finding it out, just as some of our philosophers do when they discover the properties of matter. But God made the child's hand, and it was in existence before its brain was capable of comprehending it. And so were all these things, about the discovery of which men boast so much. God made them and made them perfect. Yet men will boast that they know things independent of God, whereas unless they had been aided by the spirit of the Lord, and unless the principles had existed they never could have been found out, for no man could have originated them himself. All that man has ever done, with all his boasted intelligence, has been simply to develop or find out a few of the common principles of nature that always have existed, and that always will exist, for these things, and every principle of nature, is eternal. The gospel is also eternal. But where is there a man who understands heavenly things? Who can unravel them? Who has been behind the veil and talked with the Gods? Who among the wise men, philosophers, divines, philanthropists, kings, rulers or authorities of the earth can comprehend God or His designs. If we can understand so imperfectly the laws of nature with which we are surrounded, with the privileges of seeing, feeling, comparing and analyzing, what do we know of things beyond our vision, hearing or comprehension. We can read in the history of the past of the rise and fall of nations, of the downfall of thrones and of the destruction of kingdoms; we can read of wars and rumors of wars. History points out what has transpired in relation to the nations of the earth and to men who have lived upon it, but who can penetrate into the future? Man is an immortal being; he is destined to live in time and throughout all eternity. He possesses not only a body but a soul that will exist while "life or thought or being lasts, or immortality endures." Who can tell in relation to this future? Who can tell things pertaining to our heavenly existence, or the object God had in view of creating this and other worlds, and the destiny of the human family? No man, except God reveals it to him. What has been and still is the position of the world in relation to these things? It has been governed by every kind of dogma and theory of religion. "Isms" of every kind have prevailed in turn—polytheism, infidelity, Christianity in its ten thousand forms, and every kind of theory and dogma that the human imagination could invent. Such contraries show definitely and posi-

tively that men, by wisdom, cannot find out God. And Christianity, at the present time, is no more enlightened than other systems have been. What does the Christian world know about God? Nothing; yet these very men assume the right and power to tell others what they shall and what they shall not believe in. Why, so far as the things of God are concerned they are the veriest fools; they know neither God nor the things of God. Our Government is engaged just now in an act of this kind. Our legislators would tell me what I shall and shall not believe in, what shall be the course of my morals, as if they were immaculate and had been made perfect; as though they had inspiration from on high, and had found out the truth in all its richness, power and glory; as though they had conversed with the heavens and were acquainted with God. Oh, fools! What do they know about the truth? No more than a child about its hand. They are imbecile and ignorant and in the dark, and the greatest difficulty in the matter is—they are fools and don't know it.

We consider, and always have since this church was organized that that part of scripture that I quoted before is true,—namely "No man knows the things of God but by the Spirit of God." We, as Latter-day Saints, understood no correct principle until it was revealed to us. I did not, nor have I ever met with anybody that did and I have traveled very extensively over the world that we live in, and have met with all classes and grades of men in different nations. We, as Latter-day Saints, are indebted to the revelations of God, given unto Joseph Smith, for the knowledge of the very first principles of the doctrine of Christ and he could not have known it unless it had been revealed to him. One thing I did know of myself before I came into this church, and that is more than a great many know of themselves, namely, that I was a fool, and did not know anything unless God revealed it. It takes a great deal of hammering to get that into some men's minds. The main questions in my mind, when this gospel came, were "Is this true?" "Is this from God, or is it not?" "Has God, indeed, spoken as this man says He has?" If he has not it is all a fiction, a farce and delusion like the other "isms" that exist in the world; if he has it is for me to obey, no matter what the consequences may be.

There is one thing that has always been satisfactory to my mind in relation to this gospel—there has never been one principle revealed, at any time, but what has been instructive and in accordance with the scriptures, which we consider to be of divine origin. Never one principle but what could be substantiated by the word of God although we did not know it before, and the world does not know it now. And I may also say that there has never been a principle revealed but what has been strictly philosophical and is in accordance with good, sound common sense; and, furthermore, I will go on beyond that and say that no principle ever will be revealed but what will be in accordance with philosophy, if we can comprehend it. As there is a philosophy of the earth and a philosophy of the heavens it needs heavenly instigation to comprehend the heavenly things. But, as I said before, "no man knows the things of God, but by the Spirit of God." The scriptures show unto us how we may obtain that spirit, which will give us a knowledge for ourselves.

When this gospel was revealed it was declared unto us that it was an everlasting gospel, that there was a priesthood associated with it, and that that priesthood was everlasting; so we were presented with an everlasting priesthood, and with an everlasting covenant associated with it. We were told how we might obtain a knowledge of this gospel for ourselves,—the promise being that if we would repent of our sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of them, by one having authority, that we should receive the Holy Ghost. We were also told that that Holy Ghost would place us in communication with God; that it would take of the things of God and show them unto us, and that we should know for a certainty, each of us for ourselves, of the truths that had been proclaimed unto us.

This was the position that we were placed in. We went forward and obeyed it, for we were told that God had revealed Himself from the heavens, that He had restored the gospel by the means of an holy angel, as referred to by John the Revelator, and that He had restored, by authority direct from heaven, communication between Himself the heavenly world and His creatures here. We were told that by obedience to that gospel we should be made the recipients of a spirit which would bring things past to our remembrance, that would lead us into all truth and show us things to come.

Believing in this message this vast crowd of people before me, to-day, went forth and bowed, in obedience, and they received that spirit, and they knew and do know that the gospel they had preached unto them came not in word only but in power and in the demonstration of the spirit, and that the Holy Ghost accompanied it. You know, and I know, that when you obeyed this gospel and had hands laid upon you for the reception of the Holy Ghost that you received it. Who else knows anything about it? Nobody. Do any of these strangers around? No. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except a man is born again he can not see the kingdom of God." Then what do they