

THE SOURCE OF INTELLIGENCE, ETC.

DISCOURSE BY PRESIDENT BRIGHAM YOUNG, DELIVERED IN THE
NEW TABERNACLE, SALT LAKE CITY, MAY 29, 1870

Reported by David W. Evans

If I can have your attention I will talk to you a few minutes. Speaking as much as I have in public makes me feel most forcibly that I have both stomach and lungs, hence I would like to have stillness in the house. I see some sisters withdrawing in consequence of their children not being quiet; I am very much obliged to them, and trust that others will do likewise if they cannot keep their children still.

I am not in the habit of making many apologies nor very many preliminaries when I speak to a congregation. Sometimes I feel to say a few words that might be called apologetic in rising to address a congregation, having that timidity which most men feel on such occasions. I have seen few public speakers in my life who were capable of rising and speaking directly upon a subject, unless it had been studied or perhaps written beforehand. To speak extempore, on the impulse of the moment, without reflection, requires considerable steadiness of the nerve. This is a matter that I have reflected upon a good deal, for in my experience I have learned that there is a modest timidity in the feelings of almost all persons I ever saw when called upon to speak to their fellow beings. This is frequently the case in private circles as well as before the public. I think I understand the reason of it; it is a matter which I have studied. I find myself

here on this earth, in the midst of intelligence. I ask myself and Wisdom, where has this intelligence come from? Who has produced and brought into existence, I will say, this intelligent congregation assembled here this afternoon? We are here, but whence have we come? Where did we belong before coming here? Have we dropped accidentally from some of the planets on to this earth without order, law or rule? Perhaps some, in their reflections, have come to this conclusion, and think that is all that is known in relation to this matter. I inquire where is this intelligence from which I see, more or less, in every being, and before which I shrink when attempting to address a congregation? I ask the question of my friends, my brethren and of every man that lives: Suppose that you, through duty, are called to speak to a private family, to a small congregation, or even to children in a Sunday school, do you not feel this same timidity? Where is the man who can rise to address children without feeling this same modesty? I have seen a very few in my life who could rise before a congregation, in a prayer meeting, or go on the stage of a theater, or anywhere else, and speak with perfect ease and confidence. I think they have great reason to be thankful for their self-confidence; but where they obtained it or whether it is inherent,