

Endowment Lecture 1

Our Spiritual Universe

Sermon - 1966



by Evangelist Arthur A. Oakman

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A series of six lectures to members of the Melchisedec Priesthood, given at the R.L.D.S. Stone Church, Independence, Missouri from October 3 to 13, 1966.

Two scriptures which are familiar to you. One from Doctrine and Covenants, Section 36:6, in which the prophet Enoch was lifted up and said to the Lord:

“How is it that you can weep, seeing you are holy, and from all eternity to all eternity? And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, and {the} millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of your creations; and your curtains are stretched out still, and yet you are there, and your bosom is there; and also you are just; {and} you are merciful and kind forever. You have taken Zion to your own bosom from all your creations, from [all] eternity to [all] eternity, and naught but peace, {and} justice and truth is the habitation of {thy} [your] throne; and mercy shall go before your face, and have no end.” [corrected wording] / {added wording} (Doctrine & Covenants 36:6c-f)

And the other scripture is from Section 22, which all of you are familiar with:

“And [the Lord] God said unto Moses, For mine own purpose have I made these things. Here is wisdom, and it

remaineth in me. And by the word of my power have I created them, which is mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth. And worlds without number have I created, and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten. And the first man of all men have I called Adam, which is many. But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you; for behold there are many worlds which have passed away by the word of my power; and there are many also which now stand, and numberless {they are} [are they] unto man; but all things are numbered unto me; for they are mine, and I know them.

And [it came to pass, that] Moses spake unto the Lord saying, Be merciful {to} [unto] thy servant, O God, and tell me concerning this earth, and the inhabitants thereof; and also the heavens, and then {shall} thy servant [will] be content.

And the Lord God spake unto Moses, saying, The heavens, they are many [and they] cannot be numbered unto man, but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine; and as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof, even so shall another come; and there is no end to my {words} [works], neither to my {works} [words]; for this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality, and eternal life of man.” (Doctrine & Covenants 22:21a-23b)

Now a little poem which enshrines something of the appreciation of these things:

*“A fire-mist and a planet
A crystal and a cell,
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
And caves where the cave-men dwell;*

*Then a sense of law and beauty
and a face turned from the clod,
Some call it Evolution,
And others call it God.”*

*“A haze on the far horizon,
The infinite, tender sky,
The ripe, rich tint of the cornfields,
And the wild geese sailing high;
And all over upland and lowland
The charm of the golden-rod,
Some of us call it Autumn,
And others call it God.”*

And I don't know whether I will be able to say this next stanza, but I'll try, because it contains the heart of what I'd like to present.

*“Like tides on a crescent sea-beach,
When the moon is new and thin,
Into our hearts high yearnings
Come welling and surging in;
Come from the mystic ocean
Whose rim no foot has trod,
Some of us call it Longing,
And others call it God.*

*“A picket frozen on duty,
A mother starved for her brood,
Socrates drinking the hemlock,
And Jesus on the rood;*

*And millions who, humble and nameless,
The straight, hard pathway plod,
Some call it Consecration,
and others call it God.”*

(Each In His Own Tongue by William Herbert Carruth,
1859-1924)

All of you know that the outer visible universe is but a shadow of a reality which lies behind it. All of you have been at times gripped with:

*“...a sense sublime,
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And in the round ocean and air..the living air...”*

(Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on
Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour.
July 13, 1798 by William Wordsworth).

And we, like I myself, like you, have exclaimed with the poet:

*“How exquisitely is the mind fitted to the external world
and the external world to the mind...”*
(Prospectus to The Recluse – Williams Wordsworth)

With Paul of old:

*“...we look not at the things which are seen but at the
things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are*

temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (II Corinthians 4:18)

The clue to the whole vast mysterious universe which is around us, is given us in the words of Moses, or in the words spoken to Moses:

“...this is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality, and eternal life of man” (Doctrine & Covenants 22:23b)

Brethren, there is an outer, external world which is designed to minister the life of God to us. And there is also an invisible, interior, inner world, and it is this invisible interior world, the world that is within us, with which we have to do, so terribly important. And, all of the apparatus known to us as the universe, the whole flux of things created, the presence of our fellow men, our heritage, history, all things, are designed that we may take them inside us. And that there may be created in us, in each one of us a universe of discourse, which shall be truly in harmony with the Spirit, and the mind, and the will of our Heavenly Father.

I want to emphasize this point, and I'm ignoring my written manuscript here because I don't feel like reading it. If only we could gather to ourselves the conviction that what goes on inside us is much more important than what goes on around us. I think we should discover the secret of the eternal.

You know time and time and time again in the scriptures the Lord says:

“I am in your midst and ye cannot see me...” (Doctrine & Covenants 38:2b)

In these days when a lot of people say God is dead, and a lot of the gods that people have had never were alive to start with, so they didn't have much trouble dying. In this day when men are talking about God being dead, of all people on the face of the earth we here in the Church, especially we Elders, have something to offer, something tremendous. We know that from the deeps within each one of us, that in these deeps, there dwells the record, the image, the Spirit, of the living God. And that with this Spirit we can take all things which are around us and put them inside us. And because it is the Spirit of Truth, the things which are around us will seem to us as they really are. So that we shall not, in taking them, mistake them, but that our inner life shall be true to the representation of Deity which is in the world around us. I am convinced that this is true.

I am convinced that God is not up there, and He's not out there, I am convinced as He said:

“I am in you midst and ye cannot see me...” (Doctrine & Covenants 38:2b)

How enthralling and how beautiful it is to explore the inner life, the life that is within.

We all take our stand, gentlemen, in this universe of ours, and we are the center of all that we survey. And the universe itself is coming to a focus of appreciation in us. Do you see how tremendously important that is? The whole visible creation is..., exists for the sole purpose, that we might focus it in ourselves,

and carry it in us. And in this way partake of the life of God. What a calling!

In this day when men are losing their sense of direction, when all things are absolutely all things are in commotion, all things it matters not what field of human endeavor you may attempt to enter, all things are in commotion in this day, which, a day which is a day of climax of all that the prophets have seen in this day. We in the Church have a ministry to render to men who are confused and uncertain because there dwells in us a spirit, the same spirit which formed and fashioned the universe; the same spirit which brought to pass the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the same spirit in which there is given all the governments and helps necessary for the bringing forth and the establishment of the Kingdom of Zion.

Some of you have heard me tell before, but I want to repeat it tonight because many of you have not heard it, of the experience that I sustained when I was taken into the bosom of creation on the morn of creation and saw and heard, things which cannot be uttered. The occasion was a reunion in 1938 in England when Apostle Edwards and I, assigned to that field, presiding over a group of Latter Day Saints. They were small in number, and yet they were terribly important in the eyes of the Lord.

And, as the course of this particular meeting proceeded, Brother Edwards stood up and gave a discourse under the influence of the Spirit with a "thus saith the Lord", the language of which could well be laid alongside some of the utterances of Isaiah. It was beautiful. I remember it yet and I made it the basis of my ministry for seven years in my, to my own people across the sea. But as he was talking, as he was talking something happened to me, and I can only explain this in words

that I know. Language they say is used to hide our thoughts instead of to express it. And I trust that the same Spirit, or some of the same Spirit which I sustained in this experience may be given to you so that my words may evoke an appreciation of it to you and in you.

I was taken into the bosom of creation on the...bosom of eternity on the morn of creation. I was there, and God knew I was there, and I knew God knew I was there. Whether the experience lasted ten hundred thousand million years or one ten hundredth part of second, I cannot tell. There was no before or after, there was no time, there was no space, everything temporal had vanished. I knew why I was there.

You know the scripture says:

“Ye were [also] in the beginning with the Father;”
(Doctrine & Covenants 90:4b)

...and that’s said of all of us. And I rather imagine that the good Spirit must have uncovered to me some of the mysterious depths in my own soul which had been forgotten in the process of birth. That is the only explanation that I can make. And I expected the words to be uttered and they were:

“Let there be light and there was light” (Genesis 1:6)

And there proceeded forth from the presence of God and from His Son Jesus Christ, and from the third person who was present there, in a most amazing unity, I cannot express it, there’s no words that I have that could convey it to you. The Spirit of Wisdom. And as the words were uttered there streamed forth from the presence of God, I cannot call it a creature

because it wasn't a creature, it was the mind, and the will, and the Word of God. It was Himself in self-expression. And as this proceeded forth from His presence, it created space, created time, and in this proceeding, and how inadequate the words are I must again emphasize, in this proceeding was contained all that we know and understand of the temporal universe. The sun, and the stars, the galaxies; this was done...

“Let there be light and there was light” (Genesis 1:6).

Then by a process of unimaginable grace, I was made to feel and to know that the order of creation as is outlined in the Inspired Version of the Scriptures is absolutely and utterly true. God created all things spiritually before they were naturally upon the earth.

And I saw too something, which the implications of which are still being worked out in my own mind. In this experience, as I say, there was no fore or after, there was no time and no space, and for that brief instant, or for that hundred thousand million years I don't know which, I had an eternal grasp and an eternal comprehension of things, many, most of which I have since lost; I cannot recall them.

And in this moment of clear sighted insight I saw the creation. I saw the orders of creation. I saw man created, first spiritually, at the climax of the spiritual creation. I saw him created temporally, the first flesh on the earth. And I saw afterwards how marvelous it was that our Heavenly Father had created man, and then framed the animals and brought them before him. How it was that Adam by naming these animals gathered to himself a vocabulary, by which his intellect was unlocked and his mind was enlarged. It was his own language,

which he invented under the influence and the power of the Spirit.

And I saw too, that at the end of the physical creation of the animals, woman was created. And gentlemen, a lot of people have laughed at the myth of the creation of woman, and a lot of men still laugh. And many of the Protestant theologians seek to dismiss it as a mere myth. Seek to dismiss it because it is simply language illustrating a truth which cannot be grasped by the intellect. And I rather suspect that that's true; this truth cannot be grasped by the intellect. It can only be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And I saw that the sleep of Adam, the sleep of Adam was typical of and representative of the death of Christ. And I saw from the wound in his side was taken that which became woman. And that from the death of the Lord Jesus, the spear thrust in His side, there came that which is known to us as the Church of Jesus Christ. And I saw clearly too, that just as woman has become the mother of all living according to the flesh, so the Church becomes the mother of all living according to the Spirit.

This I saw clearly. And gentlemen, I cannot help what I saw; this is what I saw. And when you try to justify it intellectually it's most difficult to do. And when you tell people that there are no sons of God outside of this fraternity they laugh at you. But in the strictest sense this is true. There are many, many, many hundreds of good men and women, thousands of them perhaps millions of them, whom God longs to bring into His Kingdom; but whom He cannot bring into His Kingdom today because our testimony is not of such a character as to win them. In other words we're just not yet quite worthy of them. But it is still nevertheless true. God loves all men; they're His.

Their creation represents a form of His own life. And gentlemen, this I saw clearly, that He loves them passionately, but there are some things that must be done His way. And men and women can only become His sons and daughters by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This tremendous theme burns in my soul and has done ever since the day I first apprehended it.

There are many, many other things I saw. I saw this self-same Spirit, which proceeded forth from the presence of God, to create and fill the immensity of space. This self-same Spirit was taken and used and quickened the seed of life in Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ. The physical miracle was necessary, absolutely necessary, because in our flesh there had been introduced the law of death. And that no man ever had within his own body the power of an endless and immortal life. And if any flesh of man was to ever enjoy immortality and eternal life, that had to come from beyond him as a gift of God and this it did in the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Jesus was born, gentlemen, not by any will of man; only by the consent of the virgin mother in the Divine will. This is gospel and it's not unimportant. For people who say that the virgin birth of our Lord is not an important doctrine miss the mark. They do not understand the nature of sin. For if they understood the nature of sin they would know that no man could ever live a sinless life except it were through a physical miracle. I saw this so clearly. But the life of God was manifested in His Son, who was God's other self; manifested in the meridian of time for us men and our salvation. And I saw this also brethren that in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ the whole, the complete universe was utterly, and completely, and totally focused accurately.

That to Jesus Christ our Lord at every stage of His human development things were to Him, seemed to Him, as they were. And He interprets as the living Spirit of the living God, the creative Spirit; He interprets all things for us. And that we too by the possession of that Spirit of Truth can also in all our encounters in life, correctly evaluate and interpret them and use them as a means of furthering the Kingdom of God. And this we hope to discuss with you later when we come to the problem of suffering and its relation to the Holy Spirit.

But by this inner spirit there has been born in us the same thing that moved in the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that within us, not around us, but within us, there has been given every grace and government necessary to the bringing forth of the Kingdom; the true interpretation of life and every encounter, of life with gift (?) us. We talk about involvement, we are involved, we cannot help ourselves; we have become involved through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And this Spirit again, to continue I saw clearly through the resurrection of our Lord, through the resurrection of His body, that the whole visible universe was capable of being changed and transformed. You see the most distinctive thing the universe does is to bring forth and sustain a human body. We talk about a physical body, but it's really a misnomer; it's merely a figure of language by which we distinguish between those inseparable parts of a human being, body and spirit. I say inseparable. I shouldn't use that word. That was a slip of the tongue because they are separable while we are in this sinful state. But the most distinctive thing the universe does is to produce and sustain a human body. Every order that the universe reveals to us is contained in us.

And gentlemen one of the greatest heresies I know today, is the heresy which has been made unconsciously and is made continually; that the only solid and sane approach to reality is through the scientific method. It is true that the scientific method does give us a valid approach to reality. But, if you approach the universe with the idea of a measurement in mind, that's all you'll get out of it; a measurement. Is it not? The whole visible creation under the scrutiny of the scientists has delivered to us many secrets. And because it has we've conquered time, and space, and substance. And, there has been put into the hands of our generation through the "high priests" shall I say, in quotation marks; the "high priests" of science there has been pressed into our hands every necessary physical visible instrument for world brotherhood. Has there not? The reign of the Spirit of Truth in this has made our outmoded national states outworn and decayed. And, they are not related to our modern world, and the modern facts of science.

A scientist evaluates the physical world from observation, by the extension of his senses, his microscopes, his telescopes; and by the exercise of his reason. He makes frames of reference, and puts his facts into them. If his facts don't fit his frame of reference he'll change his frame of reference. That's the only way he knows to proceed, but I suggest to you gentlemen, again and again and again we are coming back to this point. We are inside the physical universe are we not? And what goes on inside us is just as much a property of the material universe as what goes on around us.

The idolatry of the modern man is that he supposes the only valid approach to reality is by the scientific method. When we know, do we not, that the soul of man and the body of man has other windows beside the intellect by and through which we

may view reality. This little poem I read to you is an illustration of that is it not? And any of you who are musicians know that this is true. I cannot but too strongly emphasize this, that there has been placed within us a key, by which the mysteries of the universe can be unlocked; if only we would look within. Augustine, one of our early day fathers, one of our early day brothers, one of our former day brethren; Augustine said:

*“Men compass sea and land
to observe the wonders which are
abroad and pass themselves,
the crowning wonder by.”*

(Against the Letters of Petilian by Saint Augustine 354-430)

What a tragedy. To overlook the grace of God given to us within our own souls.

And so as I say I saw that our Lord Jesus Christ gathered to Himself in visible form the whole order of the visible creation and in His resurrection showed that the visible universe was capable of being transformed into a glorious dimension, which comes from beyond and from within the race of men which He has created. This is vital to our understanding.

Our church stands at the crossroads today, because so many of us have taken for granted the phrases that are recorded, which are recorded in the Three Standard Books. Have memorized them and not understood them. Have failed to appreciate that the locus of Divine revelation is always history and that every utterance of the Divine has a historical background and it cannot be understood apart from the historical background which

brought it forth. Consequently, many of us have a hand-me-down religion. Very good, very respectable, but it is not something which we have created out of the exercise of the gifts which God has given us. No criticism here; just a pure statement of fact.

And some of us I rather suspect, have taken our priesthood as a means of escape from the harsh glare of reality. Retired so to speak. We hold the priesthood so tightly nobody else can see we have it.

So Jesus I saw clearly in His resurrection was the ultimate revelation in its individual mode of the destiny of creation. He was not only a Jew of the first century; I saw that He was man. Each of us is connected in the inner man to a vast sea of consciousness; the Spirit it is called. Ye were in the beginning with the Father; that which is spirit. And from beneath the deeps in this vast sea of consciousness by which we are connected to every other human being; whether we are conscious of it or not. And our connection with every other human being only comes to our consciousness when we are born again and when we see clearly our relationship with our Heavenly Father which in turn induces an understanding of our essential relationship and involvement with our fellow men.

All of us I say again are connected to a vast sea of consciousness. And the whole history of the race is within every one of us. What Charlemagne did in 800 AD affects me today. And do you believe that? Yet it is true.

And it was this man, this vast representative man that Jesus became. He took our humanity. He was not only a Jew of the first century He was Man; as man is when man is fully indwelt by the Creator. He took this and not only was He this; He was the Kingdom of Zion in its individual mode, gentlemen. And

when you look at the life of Jesus Christ under the influence of the Spirit which you have within you; which many of us have failed to exercise and experience.

We have not taken the time nor the trouble to discipline ourselves that there might be uncovered to ourselves the nature of the gift which God has given us within. We see when we look at the life and ministry of Jesus, we see how the Kingdom of God affects the kingdoms of this world and how the kingdoms of this world affect the Kingdom of God. We see all of the whole of human history as a microcosm. Every jot and tittle of every human beings existence is manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is true gentlemen; I bear testimony to you that it is true.

I saw too some other things. I saw that when God set His hand to create He did so because it was His nature to create. Just as it was the nature of Beethoven to write music, and Shakespeare to write plays, the nature of Botticelli to paint, and the nature of Bernini to carve statues and so forth. And that He did this to express Himself. I saw that He created the whole universe to please Him and not to please us. And it was a form of His own life. And I was permitted to see that the reason He did this was that He might find Himself in that which He had brought into being. It pleased Him so to do.

And this is true of every creative artist. He creates his art not to please others but to please him; to satisfy something in him which cries out for expression. When Beethoven composed his last five quartets which are to music and to art like the Theory of Relativity is to physics; his servant came running home to the master the first night they were performed and he said, "Master, the public didn't like your quartets."

He said, “I didn’t write them to please the public; I wrote them to please me.” He said “Someday, someday, when they grow up, musically, they’ll like them.” And it’s come to pass.

God wants us to grow up. For all that He has created He did to please Him. And the joy that was in His soul when He created things and said that they were very good, He desires to share with us. That by looking at His creation we may see it with His eye, and say like Him, yes it is very good; and share His life with Him. God proposes to make us equal with Him. And He yearns and He longs for the time to come when by our growth He can commune with us and share with us.

Read your Doctrine and Covenants. Study the promises that are made to the faithful. They’re marvelous, gentlemen. Anyone that can study those promises and reflect on them, and then find delight in modern television is beyond me.

I saw too, as I said, that our Lord sought a revelation of Himself in that which He has made. Gentlemen, you know what the scriptures say:

“The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold; but the Lord trieth the hearts” {of men} (Proverbs 17:3)

The goldsmith, in the molten metal, heats the ore until it’s heated to very great heat. Then he scrapes the scum from the top of the molten stuff, and keeps on scrapping ‘till there’s no more scum left. And then when he can see himself perfectly mirrored in the gold his work is finished.

So it is with the course of time, our God in all the welter, and concern, and sin and derangement that there is within us and within the world around us, with all of this; God still seeks His image in that which He has created. And will devote to any man

that will seek this image the resources of the whole universe to satisfy that man. But the search must be unremitting; it must be single of purpose; it cannot have some hidden secret nefarious purpose back of it. It must be utter and complete and sincere; a search and a love for the truth because the truth is the truth.

I saw too that God, the one thing that I discerned in this experience which I have said many times and which comes naturally to place here, is the cardinal distinction between God and man is this; a simple one, yet tremendously profound and carries a great mystery. He is one and we are many. He is one and we are many. He has created each of us with His own particular point of view, with His own angle of vision. We have come to our present state of consciousness, each of us in a different way with a different background; it's left a different mark upon us. So that each of us has been created by God as a special act of creation if you please; that we might each individually learn to appreciate just some aspect of the Divine beauty which is ours to appreciate and belongs to nobody else.

So that each man and each woman coming to know the Eternal, can apprehend just that aspect of the Divine beauty which is the constitution of his nature, qualifies him to apprehend. And then under the influence and the endowment of the Spirit, pool with all others his apprehension and her apprehension of the Divine, so that together there may be brought out of the multifarious individuality, a unity. God still seeks a new man in Christ Jesus; a new humanity which shall be like Him. Which shall be...in which one man shall be distinguishable from another, clearly, but which in which no man shall be separable from any other man. And this is what Zion really means, gentlemen. God when He created the universe had in mind this. And when you think that all this vast

apparatus was undertaken for us, we men; when you think of the tremendous calling which is ours, and the opportunity which is ours; one can only fall to his knees in grateful adoration, in humility. And yet after his devotions, stand and walk abroad on the face of the earth with faith and with confidence in the eternal love for the eternal God.

Our universe is spiritual; there is no question about that. And I saw in this experience too, that it was the will of God that one day, I say one day, and the term is a misnomer because it isn't so, really; that the time will come, and there again I go using temporal language which I have to do; when heaven and earth shall come together and the sons of God be tried so as by fire. I saw this clearly too; that the fire referred to was the passionate love of God. For every man shall be bathed in it and as he is bathed in it he shall see himself and his own life for what it really is. Until every vestige of selfishness shall be purged; because the universe, the stars in their courses, are against every bit of selfishness in every man, and every family, and every community, and every nation, and every age. And the universe which is geared to bring forth the Kingdom of Zion, this universe will destroy ultimately, all that is selfish and sinful in the midst of it.

Gentlemen, one brief moment of insight under the Spirit, into the heart of God, lifts the man from himself out of the beggarly elements of this life and sets him on high. It brings to him clear insight, knowledge which cannot be acquired in any other way. It opens the windows of his soul to those aspects of the universe which are, before were hidden. It makes him alive with the consciousness that he belongs to God because he came from God. So brethren, as we think and continue to ponder upon these things, let us be sober men and true. For remember

each of us has this gift. There is nothing impossible to us, only except we lack the faith to move out under the influence of the Divine Spirit.

The universe is spiritual; it is designed to minister to men. It is designed to minister the life of God to men. And it does this because wrapped up in each part of it, in each facet of it, wrapped up in every man, there is just that aspect of the Divine, which it is God's good pleasure to give him. You know in nothing is Joseph Smith {III} more prophetic than when he said, it is designed that we should use:

"...the things of this world in the manner designed of God..." (Doctrine & Covenants 128:8c)

And as we do, so much of the life of God as is wrapped up in what we use passes over into us.

And scientists in their pursuits, measurements, dimensions, and the functions of the universe are blessed with the light and the inspiration of the Spirit. And although they cannot tell us anything about purpose; they don't know anything about purpose. Do you know what the scientist's definition of purpose is? I'll quote one of them to you. Sir Arthur Eddington when asked one time, what it was all about, do you know what he said? Listen to this carefully:

"Something unknown is doing we don't know what"
(Uncertainty Principle In Quantum Physics 1927 by Sir Arthur Eddington)

So in the realm of purpose, my dear brethren, science cannot help us. It can tell us about process. Oh yes; it can tell

us tremendously about process. But what about purpose? What about the end of life? What about the reason for our existence? And if ever man is to find meaning it must be because the purpose of existence is made clear to him; is made clear to him by the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

May God bless you. May His Spirit abide with you. Tomorrow night we'll talk to you about history. Not in a way I trust you ever heard before. I hope not. Because somewhere, sometime, somebody has to write a new history book before ever Zion is built. So may God bless you. I thank you for your attention, your expectancy, and I trust that you have been blessed in this hour with new insights perhaps, or with old insights renewed. And I with you shall look forward to the blessing of the Spirit as we meet tomorrow.

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