

DISCOURSE

Delivered in the open air, Temple Block, by Orson Pratt, Sunday morning, Feb. 18, 1855, on the HOLY SPIRIT and GODHEAD.

[REPORTED BY J. V. LONG.]

I presume that the people who are now before me feel, with myself, somewhat disappointed in their expectations this morning. We met together here for the purpose of hearing an address from our beloved President, in regard to the views of this people respecting the Government of the United States, and our relations and connection with that Government as a people.

It is certainly a disappointment to me, and I have no doubt but it is to all who are under the sound of my voice, but you see that the house is insufficient to accommodate us all, and in consequence of this, being requested by some of the first Presidency, I have come out into the open air for the purpose of addressing you, according to the strength of my lungs and the wisdom which God may be pleased to give me.

Let us all lift up our hearts in faith before the Lord, that in our disappointment in not hearing the President, the Lord may still be merciful and pour out from on high the Holy Ghost upon us, that we may be instructed, and edified, and have our minds strengthened by the gifts, and power, and wisdom thereof; for without the gifts and strength of the Holy Spirit to inspire the hearts of those who speak, and of those who hear, our remarks will be in vain, and our hearing will be in vain; but keep that Spirit with us, and then, notwithstanding the circumstances under which we are placed, all will be well; and never let the Saints feel discouraged, neither forget to pray for the Holy Spirit to rest down upon them, and upon those who speak to them, that each and all may be directed to act at all times by that Spirit that is able to guide into all truth. This certainly is the object for which we are gathered out from the nations of the earth; this is the object for which we are assembled here to-day; at least, it ought to be. We ought not to have any other thing in view only to be blessed, edified, and strengthened in the Lord.

I am sure that I have no other object in view, and I am the last person in my feelings that would come out and undertake to speak for the sake of hearing myself and getting the applause of men; for so far as speaking is concerned, I feel more like retreating into some lonely place; for I never did feel a desire to be engaged in public life, only so far as I can do good; but I have a desire to serve the Lord, I have a desire to do good, I have a desire to persuade men and women to become righteous, I have a desire to understand the knowledge and things of God, and those great principles that will be calculated to aid me under all the circumstances of this life as well as in that which is to come, and for these things I live, and for this cause (believing that it is required of my hands by the Lord,) I take a part in public life.

I believe I will take a text, and then I can, perhaps, collect my thoughts and concentrate my mind upon some subject. I am aware that it is very difficult to speak in the open air, but I will endeavor to make all hear. I know of no more appropriate text than one which is expressed in two words, and it is therefore a very short one; and although I have spoken and written upon the subject before, there may be those present who are not fully acquainted with it, and it may also assist the elders to defend our principles when they are sent forth to preach the gospel. It is comprehended in the following two words—"BE ONE."

Why are we required to be one? What is the object of being one? I do not know of any better way to illustrate this question than this: If this congregation who are now present before me, were required to perform some great and mighty works, wherein great strength was necessary to be exerted, and each individual went and tried to perform the work given to them to do unitedly, his acts being individually and separately performed, would fail to perform the work.

It may be a work of great moment which we are called upon to perform, requiring all the union, strength, and force that are in our minds. If men undertake any work of great magnitude by their united force and strength, they may be able to bring to pass that which they could not accomplish individually; and so it is with regard to the things of the kingdom of God.

We are required to be one in order that our exertions and strength may be united, and have an influence to accomplish our great end and aim; for by our united faith and exertions we shall be able to prove ourselves worthy. The saints are universally interested, as much as we are, in the building up of this kingdom, which requires oneness of action.

The devil is all the time working in opposition to our exertions, and he feels quite interested in opposing us by all his forces, embodied and disembodied; for he has a great many ways by which he overcomes the human family, and brings them into bondage. He has been a long time in war with the kingdom of God, and has become very wily, and has great experience in his favor, and that is the way he has acquired such a great deal of cunning; although he has not the same degree of knowledge that there is in exercise in behalf of the saints; for he knows not the mind of God in all things.

That he is thus limited in knowledge is clearly revealed in the prophet Joseph's inspired translation of the book of Genesis. He has many years of experience, and so have his associates; for they have been engaged in a spiritual warfare for many ages, endeavoring to bring into captivity the spirits of men, to lead them into subjection to his own power; and it requires a strong force to operate successfully against his numerous host; consequently, we read that in the last great battle that shall be fought with this adversary, all the forces of heaven will be brought to bear against him: they will all be united in one great body under the direction of our father Adam, the chief prince, the archangel who was appointed in the beginning to overcome the devil by the assistance of his children. He will marshal all the hosts of heaven, and will be able to prevail against him; and then will the saints be delivered from his power from henceforth and for ever.

Now you see the nature of the thoughts and ideas that the Savior had in his mind when he commanded his people to be one. We have to learn the lesson of union here, that when the time shall come for the commands to be issued forth by the archangel, or the head angel, that his children may be ready, and all under his command

really prepared to go and perform the work that is given them to do. How, or in what manner this battle will be fought, it is not necessary in this discourse to explain; indeed, we do not know all the particulars, for they are not revealed, but we may judge from analogy.

We see how the devil operates with us in this life, for he knows now that our strength is broken; some are in distant settlements, and some here, and others scattered abroad among the nations; and he is all the time operating and laying plans for the purpose of injuring and afflicting the saints of the living God; and he will not alter his evil course, but will try to entrap as many as possible by his stratagems, and lead them astray from the path of life. That is the way he fights against the cause of God.

Whether there will be any physical force used by celestial beings when fighting against other beings, is not revealed; but suffice it to say, that there will be a spiritual strength and force exercised, and an endeavor made to overcome the minds of men and women, and bring them into subjection and captivity; and when the mind is brought into subjection, there will be a spiritual misery, and this is one of the greatest causes of misery.

It is not this physical body that suffers in such a case as the one we have mentioned; but as I have, years ago, frequently told the people that the body has not life in itself; it is the spirit that has life and feeling, and that is capable of experiencing sorrow and joy, and all those changes of sensation to which we are liable in this mortal state; when we are overcome, the spirit is in bondage, subject to the power of him who has subjected and overcome it, and so it will be with those that Satan finally overcomes; they will become his prisoners, for he will have prevailed against them; and thus they are spiritually subdued.

If they are overcome in their bodies while here, if their minds are bound down in captivity by their great enemy, if they render themselves subject to him, it will produce misery, and pain, and wretchedness to every such soul. This is compared to a literal pain of the body by fire and brimstone, about which so much has been said by the religious world.

I do not know but there will be a literal hell of this description; for ought I know, the Lord may have worlds prepared with plenty of fire and brimstone in them; but in my opinion the greatest torment the wicked will have, will be the torment and sting of the mind, being brought into subjection to that being that is continually seeking to overcome and entangle mankind in his snares.

Then, it is necessary that we should be one, and hence the Lord said to us in the early rise of this church, "If ye are not of one, ye are not mine." Why not his? Why will he not accept of us? Because without union, without concentration, it is clear that we cannot enjoy ourselves as the Lord designs we should; in short, exclusive of the principle and spirit of union, we never can accomplish any great work like the one given into our hands.

The Lord, therefore, designed to have his people united in one, to show us the nature of his laws, and the necessity of being united, so that we may enjoy the society of the ancients, and be one with them.

We are also commanded to shun all contentions and strifes, and all those fiendly emanations that would create a hell for us, and for those with whom we are associated in our families.

The Lord has no sure foundation to work upon, unless we are united; and consequently, in order to prevent discord and disunion, the results of every one going his own way, he has warned us before hand, and said that unless we are one, we are not his.

But let us for a few moments examine this text. The scriptures read in one place that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one. What are we to understand from this expression? Are we to understand that the persons of the Father and Jesus Christ are incorporated in one? No, it has no such meaning as this. Then are they one in substance, as the Methodist discipline, and many other creeds, declare? No: from the very fact that two particles of matter can never be one; or in other words, where one is, the other is not, and cannot be at the same instant of time.

There may be several separate substances existing at the same time, possessed of the same properties, perfections, and attributes; the particles of which they are composed may be the same in kind, and be possessed of the same amount of wisdom, power, and intelligence; but still they are separate substances, occupying separate portions of space; so with the persons of the Father and Son; for instance, if we examine the constituents of pure water, obtained in Utah and in France, we find them the same, not in substance, but in quality.

A particle of oxygen, or of hydrogen, in Europe, is precisely the same in quality as in America, or any where else; it is just so with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They are one in the attributes and principles that exist in their substances, the materials being the same in kind and qualities only. But I will not say that the Holy Ghost is a personage the same as the Father and Son. When I speak of the Holy Spirit, I speak of it as being a substance that is precisely the same in its attributes, as those of the Father and Son; I speak of it as a substance that is diffused throughout space the same as oxygen is in pure water or air, and as being cognizant of every day's events. And wherever this Holy Spirit is, it possesses the same attributes, and the same kind of qualities that the personages of the Father and the Son are possessed of; consequently, the oneness that is here spoken of, must be applied to the attributes, and not to the persons themselves.

This subject has been a great mystery to men in the religious world; they could not comprehend it, and consequently they have conjectured many things in relation to it, without having the inspiration of the Almighty to guide them; and hence, one has got one idea, and another has conjectured in his way and got another idea, quite different from that of his neighbor. And in this way, men have got up creeds and systems diverse from each other, and contrary to the real truth; and about these false creeds, they have been striving and contending for ages.

For my own part, I see no mystery about it; the subject is plain and simple to those who enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In order to explain my mind more fully upon this subject, I will take a father and son, and a person who lives with them, and works about the farm, and performs such other duties as may be required: let those persons have

the same attributes, suppose that one knows as much as the other, and that they all act in union and concert; it could then be said of those three persons that they were one; and no one would, from that expression, suppose them to be one identical person, but every one would believe and understand that they were one in their knowledge, one in their views, and in their attributes. I understand the same with regard to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

I will tell you what I believe in regard to the Holy Ghost's being a person: but I know of no revelation that states that this is the fact, neither is there any that informs us that it is not the fact, so we are left to form our own conclusions upon the subject, and hence some have concluded that they were right, and that others were not. It is in fact a matter of doubt with many, and of uncertainty, I believe, with all, whether there be a personal Holy Spirit, or not.

I am inclined to think from some things in the revelations, that there is such a being as a personal Holy Ghost, but it is not set forth as a positive fact, and the Lord has never given me any revelation upon the subject, and consequently I cannot fully make up my mind one way or the other.

I know there are indications that such is the fact; for instance, where the personal pronoun is applied to the Spirit, as "*He* shall lead and guide you into all truth;" "*he* shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak;" and "*he* shall take of the things of the Father, and show them unto you."

From these and many other passages of the same kind and bearing, we may draw the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is actually a person. Then, again, there are other revelations where the pronoun *it* is applied, such for instance as, "*The Spirit itself* maketh intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered." And many other revelations convey the idea that the Spirit is a diffused substance. Just so in the Book of Mormon, we find many of those terms, and consequently we are left to our own conjectures respecting there being a personal Holy Spirit; but one thing is certain, whether there is a personal Holy Spirit or not, there is an inexhaustible quantity of that Spirit that is not a person. This is revealed; this is a fact. And it is just as probable to my mind, that there should be a portion of it organized into a person, as that it should exist universally diffused among all the materials in space.

This Holy Spirit is all wise, and in many of its attributes much like the Father and Son, and acts in concert with them. It governs and controls all things, and from this some might infer that it has the same knowledge and power as the Father and Son have.

I will tell you some of the knowledge that this Holy Spirit has: it controls all the laws that you see existing around you in the variations of the weather and the changes of the seasons, and all those phenomena that you behold, and that you call the laws of nature; all these are nothing more nor less than the workings of this all-wise Spirit.

You see a stone or other substances fall to the ground, and you ask what makes them fall, and what controls them? Why will they not rise? Has any person ever found out the cause of this? No; even Sir Isaac Newton's principles of gravitation have failed to show it; as learned a man as he was, he has only given us an index or key to the effects, but not the cause of those effects. He has taken great pains to show us that when anything falls to the ground, that it is the effect of the law of universal gravitation; but he himself declares that the law gives no indication of the cause; he makes this declaration in his writings.

If, then, he knew nothing about the cause of stones falling, and if no other persons know, the inquiry may still with propriety be made, what is the cause of stones or any other substances, when hurled into the air, falling to the earth? This is one of the mysteries of nature not yet discovered, unless we can attribute it to the Holy Spirit's governing and controlling all things. But is the Holy Spirit in the stone, says the inquirer? and is it that which causes it to fall to the ground, instead of going upward, or instead of going in a horizontal direction? This spirit is in all things, governing and controlling them according to the eternal decrees of the Almighty. How do you prove it, says one? I will prove it by quoting a revelation where it says, "*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," meaning the light of the sun, "which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understanding; 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."

This light then recollect is so universally diffused that it giveth light to all things. This is the same light that governs all things, and it is called the "power of God."—And this, in connection with another passage in the same revelation, clearly sets forth the doctrine I have presented before you; the passage says that "*light cleaveth to light.*" You all recollect the paragraph. The revelation goes on to say that, "*God who sitteth upon his throne, 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 all things are by him and of him, even God, for ever and ever.*"

Well then, shall we say, when God or his Holy Spirit, which in many revelations is called God, is through all things, being universally diffused, and in and round about all things, that it is not in a stone when it falls to the ground? No; we will not exclude it from anything that exists, for if we exclude that spirit from one substance, we might as well exclude it, or attempt to exclude it from all matter. If God be in all things he is in the stone. If we were to take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, God is there; or if we make our bed in hell, he is there; and that Spirit is there, not in suffering, but executing the decrees of the Almighty.

All those vast bodies which we behold traversing space, are governed and controlled by the same Spirit. If each of them or the Holy Spirit diffused through them, did not know enough of those universal laws by which all worlds, and all matter are kept in order, they might frequently come in contact with each other as the orbits of many of them intersect each other in performing their revolutions. Even the stone that is thrown into the air does not go at random, but its path is marked out systematically, according to certain laws and conditions, it always falls to the ground.

Why did the axe rise to the top of the water when commanded by Elisha the prophet? I will tell you how Elisha made it come up to the surface of the water. The spirit or power that caused the piece of iron to sink, was used to bring it up again, for it required the same power to bring it to the top of the water that it did take it down. The agency or power that caused the iron axe to sink when it fell into the water, is called the law of universal gravitation. There is no attraction towards the earth as some have supposed, but there is a gravitating power, or a power that sends everything towards the earth as soon as it is left loose in the atmosphere.

Suppose you take the spirit, which is in all things, away from the axe of which we are speaking, would the particles of iron cleave together? No, they would not; there would be no more union of the particles than there is in the atmosphere we all breathe; but it is the spirit of God that causes the particles of iron to cleave together in the axe, and it is the same spirit that brings it up to the water's surface, and that same spirit causes iron to sink to the bottom of a creek or river into which it may fall; and consequently all these universal laws that appear so prominently before us from day to day are nothing more than the operations of that all-wise Spirit which we are told is "round about and in all things," and which acts according to certain laws prescribed by the Almighty.

It is this same Spirit that acts in connection with the Father and Son in governing all things in the heavens and upon the earth, and through all the boundless extent of space. Cause this oneness, this union among the particles of the spirit to cease, and you would soon see all things go into confusion. Take away this spirit, and you would immediately see some things going up, others down; some moving horizontally; one portion of the earth would divide from the other; one part would be flying here and another there. Unless there were a oneness existing in the innumerable atoms of this universal spirit, matter would cease to move by law; but they all act in concert, and hence there is no confusion in the operations of nature or of nature's laws.

I have heard it observed, as an argument against this view of the subject, that if all the particles of the Holy Spirit had the same degree of knowledge, they might get to quarrelling with each other. Take away this kind of union that now exists, and you would find one particle contending for one kind of government, and a second for another, and each would think its own method the best; there would be room for a great deal more contention and quarrelling where a diversity of opinion exists through lack of knowledge, than if they had the same knowledge. In short, if the particles of the Holy Spirit were not one in knowledge, there would be a constant quarrelling for want of understanding. Differences of views, arising from the want of the same knowledge, introduce discordant feelings and expressions into every family, and among every class of persons where they exist.

Give to two individuals of the same capacities the same knowledge of anything; let them see and understand so that they shall have the same views formed by that sameness of knowledge, and they will not quarrel about their views, but they will act as one, and consequently will be one in the thing which they understand alike; and just so it is with the planets, the earth, the moon, and other worlds; they act in concert, and the spirit that governs them understands the principles by which this world and all others are governed, and consequently there is no confusion nor discord; no worlds clashing against each other, and breaking themselves into millions of atoms and scattering themselves throughout space. Why is there nothing of this kind? Because the particles of the Holy Spirit are one.

You do not find one part of our spirits or our bodies fighting against another part. You do not find the spirit that is in our left foot fighting against the spirit that is in the right foot; but they act together, being one. If one hand gets burnt, the other is warned and keeps away from the fire. Why is this? It is because the particles of spirit in both have the same degree of intelligence, and being united in all things, one is warned by the other.

Some suppose that all our intelligence is in the head. I do not believe any such thing; but I believe that if our spirits could be taken from our bodies and stand before us, so that we could gaze upon them with our natural eyes, we would see the likeness and image of each of the tabernacles out of which they were taken. Not only the head, but the figure of the head, feet, arms, hands, face, and of the whole body. If the spirit is composed of innumerable particles possessing knowledge or intelligence, we argue that it is diffused through the system in which it dwells. For if the parts of the spirit had individually no knowledge, then they would not have any knowledge collectively.

How many dead persons would you have to pile together to make a living one? If ten thousand were piled together they would produce neither life nor knowledge. And it is just so with these particles or parts of the body said to have no spirit in them, you might bring them together, and they would know just as much as a hundred thousand dead persons. Consequently, if the whole is intelligent, the parts are. It matters not if the particles are so small that ten thousand of them might be put upon the point of a cambric needle, they all form parts of that intelligent spirit, and act in unison one with the other in all things; and hence there is a oneness according to the words of our text. No fighting one against the other, but a perfect oneness exists, and is exhibited through all the actions of that spirit. If the all-wise Spirit gains an existence in man, it endeavors to influence and persuade him to become one with God, as it is one with him.

[Concluded in next number.]

For the community to honor one who spends his life in kenteel idleness is like dressing a hog in silk stockings.