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Van Hale's
"WHAT ABOUT THE ADAM-GOD THEORY?"
Sandy, Utah: Mormon Miscellaneous, July 1983.

At the age of twenty, as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I first came in contact with the so-called Adam-God theory in an anti-Mormon tract. I had read such literature before and knew that it frequently twisted and misinterpreted LDS sources. I therefore felt certain that the purported quotation from Brigham Young's April 9, 1852 discourse--that Adam is our father and our God--either was taken from context or was an outright fabrication.

After examining the evidence, however, I soon became convinced that on at least two occasions Brigham Young had taught a concept which generally has not been accepted by Mormons--namely, that God the Father, the Father of our spirits and the Father of Jesus (of both his body and his spirit), came to this earth, took upon himself mortality, and was known as Adam, the progenitor the of human family. Simply stated, according to President Young, God the Father became Adam. (Journal of Discourses [JD] 1:50; Deseret News, June 18, 1873). Later I found several other references in which President Young hinted at this belief. (JD 4:216-218, 271; 5:331; 6:274; 7:290; 11:41,42).

Over the past fifteen years I have found many additional sources which confirm that this idea was taught for a period of time in the past century. They include sermon reports, private diary entries, minutes of meetings, letters, articles, and statements. Many of these are unpublished and have only come to light in the last several years.

I have encountered strong and varied opinions on this subject. Opponents of Mormonism have taken a particular interest in it. Two positions are most prevalent: (1) Non-Mormon Christians committed to evangelizing Mormons seek to establish that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God theory, that it is contrary to Biblical teaching, and that Brigham Young could therefore not have been a true prophet. (2) So-called fundamentalist Mormons seek to establish that Brigham Young taught it, that recent prophets have rejected it, and that some prophets since Brigham Young could therefore not be true prophets. Both groups have taken advantage of two facts: First, most Mormons are unaware that Brigham Young ever taught the Adam-God theory; and second, most Mormons are uncomfortable with the position that prophets may have differed in their concept of God.

My purpose here is not to present evidence to show that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God theory. Rather, as one who is convinced that he did teach it, I wish to state briefly some of my reasons for rejecting the conclusions of these two groups of Mormonism's opponents.

The non-Mormon Christian Argument

I am not persuaded by the non-Mormon Christian argument for several reasons, two of which I will discuss. First, in their zeal to refute Mormonism they have misstated, ignored, or distorted many points of Mormon history. Second, and perhaps more important, they demand qualifications of a prophet which are both un-Biblical and unreasonable. I will present my response by answering two questions.

Was the Adam-God theory official Mormon doctrine?

My answer to this question is an emphatic "No." After presenting evidence that Brigham Young taught the Adam-God theory, critics usually go on to claim:

that it was official doctrine for 50 years; that it was widely taught and received; that Brigham Young claimed he had received it by revelation; that it was accepted as the inerrant word of God because Brigham Young said his sermons were scripture; and that those rejecting it were excommunicated from the church.

The effort of opponents to establish this point is evidence that they consider it important. Their purpose is to make Mormons feel uncomfortable with Mormonism. To present the Adam-God theory as a concept expressed by Brigham Young on several occasions but which was never accepted officially as doctrine does not serve their purpose nearly as well. They therefore resort to considerable distortion to maintain this erroneous position.

My reasons for rejecting this anti-Mormon caricature are based on the following six points.

1. The Adam-God theory has never been a part of the Mormon canon of scripture. The Church has always had an official canon. During Brigham's Young's lifetime it was the Bible, Book of Mormon, and a somewhat smaller Doctrine and Covenants. President Young never attempted to incorporate any statement of the Adam-God theory into this canon.

Opponents frequently quote Brigham Young's statement that he had "never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call Scripture" (JD 13:95), or that his sermons "when they are copied and approved by [him] they are as good Scripture as is couched in this Bible," (JD 13:264). They contend that President Young in calling his sermons scripture and comparing them to the Bible was declaring his to be the inerrant word of God, but this is their definition of scripture and not Brigham Young's. His definition of scripture and thus the only one appropriately applied here did not define scripture as being word for word the word of God. Rather, he said:

I have heard some make the broad assertion that every word within the lids of the Bible was the word of God ... I believe that the Bible contains the word of God, and the words of good angels and the words of bad angels and the words of the devil; and also the words uttered by the ass when he rebuked the prophet in his madness. I believe the words of the Bible are just what they are (JD 13:175,235).

Brigham Young did not claim inerrancy for his sermons. In fact quite the contrary is true, as will be seen.

2. The theory was never advocated in any official statement. In addition to the canon, official statements were occasionally issued by the First Presidency and by the Quorum of the Twelve. The only one in which Brigham Young ever referred to the Adam-God theory was a statement issued in 1860 entitled "Instructions to the Saints." Signed by the First Presidency and published in the Deseret News, it stated several conclusions of councils held to consider some doctrinal differences between Apostle Orson Pratt and President Young. One of these was the Adam-God theory. But rather than declaring the theory to be Church doctrine, the statement says, "It is deemed wisest to let that subject remain without further explanation at present" (Messages of the First Presidency 2:222).
3. No revelation was ever presented by Brigham Young on the Adam-God theory. Nor does it appear that he ever claimed to have received a direct revelation on the subject. Opponents would challenge my claim with this quotation from President Young:

How much unbelief exists in the minds of the Latter-day Saints in regard to one particular doctrine which I revealed to them, and which God revealed to me--namely that Adam is our father and God (Deseret News, June 18, 1873).

It is not all certain that Brigham Young intended this to be an announcement of a direct revelation. It

was his belief that God is the source of all truth in every field. To him, every truth known to any man has come by revelation from God, sometimes directly but usually indirectly upon such natural principles as observation, study, inquiry, and meditation. Since he believed that the Adam- God theory was true, no matter how he arrived at that conclusion, to him it was revealed by God. (He presented this thought at some length in JD 3:209; see also 12:207; 12:148).

But even if this is to be accepted as a claim of direct revelation, the extent of it seems to be "namely that Adam is our father and God." The more specific idea that God the Father became Adam may be Brigham Young's own expansion or interpretation. There is, however, another possible interpretation - that, as the Lord made Moses a god to Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1) and as Paul was "as Christ Jesus" to the Galatians (4:14), Adam, our great progenitor, will preside over the human family as "father and God." This was the interpretation of Brigham Young's statement advocated in 1853 by Samuel W. Richards, who, as editor of the Millennial Star and President of the Church in the British Isles, first published President Young's initial sermon on the subject (Millennial Star, December 10, 1853). Richards' successor, Apostle Franklin D. Richards, also advanced this interpretation (MS, March 31, 1855), as have most of Brigham Young's successors.

The fact remains that there is no revelation from Brigham Young specifically stating the idea that God the Father became Adam.

4. Brigham Young himself did not consider the Adam-God theory official Church doctrine. Again opponents would challenge my assertion by quoting the bold language he used in his first mention of the subject: "Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner!" and "Every man upon the earth, professing Christian or non-professing, must know it sooner or later." From this they insist that President Young considered the Adam-God theory official Church doctrine. However, he expressed his attitude toward it on several other occasions making it very clear that he considered belief in the subject non-essential. Opponents, to maintain their argument, chose to ignore these quotations:

[The] subject ... does not immediately concern yours or my welfare ... I do not pretend to say that the items of doctrine and ideas I shall advance are necessary for the people to know (October 8, 1854, Historical Department of the Church [HDC]).

... it is one that should not trouble us at all ... I do not tell it because that I wish it to be established in the minds of others (April 25, 1855, HDC).

Whether Adam is the personage that we should consider our heavenly Father, or not, is considerable of a mystery to a good many. I do not care of one moment how that is; it is no matter whether we are to consider Him our God, or whether His Father, or His Grandfather, for in either case we are of one species (JD 4:217; see also JD 4:271; 7:238; 7:285; 11:43, 268).

I cannot believe that President Young would speak this way of an official Church doctrine.

Opponents give the impression that for many years President Young frequently and forcefully advocated the Adam-God theory, but this is another distortion. I have not found a single sermon devoted to a full exposition of the theory. Rather, it must be pieced together from several of his sermons and comments. Also, he delivered some 1500 sermons as President, and not more than half a dozen, only two of which appeared in print, contain explicit statements of central Adam-God theory concepts.

5. The Adam-God theory was not considered Church doctrine by other General Authorities. Tens of thousands of hours of sermons by some twenty leading authorities of Brigham Young's era have been recorded and preserved. Yet we have only several brief comments on the subject by only one of them -

Brigham Young's counselor Heber C. Kimball, and these can be read in less than two minutes. The same is true of their writings. Of thousands of printed pages by these authorities there are less than a dozen on the subject, and most of these argue that Adam, as patriarch, will be our God in a certain sense, not that God the Father became Adam. At least a hundred other topics were more frequently addressed in sermons and in print.

6. The Adam-God theory was not a test of faith. That is, acceptance of it was not required to become a member or to remain a member.

Opponents frequently claim that it was Church practice to excommunicate those who did not accept it. This is simply false. The only reference they present in support of their claim is from a conference talk in Great Britain by Apostle Amasa Lyman. However, this very reference, if read in its entirety refutes their argument. Lyman said, "I have heard of a man who was cut off because he would not believe that Adam was our Father and God." They stop here, but Elder Lyman did not. He continued, disapproving strongly of excommunicating a man on those grounds (MS 24:99, 100).

Those familiar with LDS history and practice are well aware that official doctrine must meet certain requirements which were not met by the Adam-God theory. The fact is it was never a part of the LDS canon, never presented in an official statement, never the subject of any known revelation, and never declared church doctrine by any recognized Church authority. The status of the Adam-God theory was summed up in 1897 in a private letter outlined by President Wilford Woodruff and written by Apostle Joseph F. Smith. Both had been Apostles under Brigham Young:

Prest. Young no doubt expressed his personal opinion or views upon the subject. What he said was not given as revelation or commandment from the Lord. The doctrine was never submitted to the councils of the Priesthood nor to the church for approval or ratification, and was never formally or otherwise accepted by the church. It is therefore in no sense binding upon the Church.

Brigham Young's "bare mention" was "without indubitable evidence and authority being given of its truth." Only the scripture, the "accepted word of God," is the Church's standard (Letter to A. Saxey, January 7, 1897, HDC).

It seems appropriate at this point to state briefly what has been the prevailing LDS belief. The idea most readily found in the LDS scriptures, the teaching of all of Brigham Young's successors is that Adam and all of the human family have a common Father and God, who is the Father of Jesus Christ. In fact, this very concept was stated in public sermons on several occasions by Brigham Young himself. An example is found in his April 17, 1870 sermon:

The world may in vain ask the question: "Who are we?" But the Gospel tells us that we are the sons and daughters of that God who we serve. Some say, "We are the children of Adam and Eve." So we are, and they are the children of our Heavenly Father. We are all the children of Adam and Eve, and they and we are the offspring of Him who dwells in the heavens, the highest Intelligence that dwells anywhere that we have any knowledge of (JD 13:311. See also JD 1:238; 10:231; 13:309).

So, with the exception of several sermons that fell far short of official pronouncements, Mormon belief has been consistent in stating that the Father and God of Moses, Jesus, Joseph Smith, Spencer W. Kimball, and all the rest of mankind is the same being who is the Father and God of Adam. Although never official doctrine, some still wonder how President Young could have held such views. This leads to the next question.

Can Prophets Differ in Their Views?

As one who believes that God has called prophets at various times, I think that the only possible answer to this question is "Yes."

Most opponents who have made an issue of the Adam-God theory insist that true prophets have been infallible, at least in matters of faith and doctrine, and therefore there could be no doctrinal difference or disharmony among them. They demand that LDS prophets either meet this standard or be denounced as false prophets. They assume that Biblical prophets were in such perfect union with God as to be free from all error and personal opinion and that their every word and thought were not their own, but God's. This claim has much appeal, but many devoted Christians who have examined this point have declared that the Bible in no way support this assumption. Commentators who have studied the Bible in chronological order have found numerous differences when comparing earlier writings to later, and when comparing author to author. This basic idea has been widely discussed and abundantly demonstrated in such major Biblical works as the Interpreter's Bible, and the Interpreter's Bible Dictionary.

Several subjects on which the authors of the Bible diverge include: the nature of God, Jesus, and the Messiah; salvation, resurrection, the second coming, and the observance of the law of Moses. Our opponents must be able to deny the differences demonstrated by Bible scholars on these several important points and show a perfect agreement among Bible authors before I could see any validity in their demanding perfect consistency among LDS prophets.

Non-Mormon Christians who acknowledge these differences within the Bible have not felt obligated to reject the Biblical prophets because of their differences. Rather, they have proposed what they feel are valid explanations of them. As far as I am concerned, the same explanations apply with equal validity to LDS prophets.

The two primary points of their explanations are: a) Prophets are not infallible, and b) Their knowledge was fragmentary and incomplete. Rev. J.R. Dummelow, in his widely received work stated:

We must not regard the Bible as an absolutely perfect book in which God is Himself the author using human hands and brains only as a man might use a typewriter. God used men, not machines - men with like weakness and prejudice and passion as ourselves ... in the Bible we do not expect the actors to be real and natural. Because of our false theory of Verbal Inspiration we are puzzled when the divine is mingled with the human. We must learn that the divine is mingled with the human ... It is a mine of precious ore where the gold is mingled with the rock and clay - the ore is richer in one part than another, but all parts in some degree are glittering with gold (p. cxxxv).

The Apostle Paul said that that "which is perfect" would come in the future. For the present, he claimed that he only "knew in part and prophesied in part." He compared his present imperfect knowledge to the distorted, imperfect image reflected in the poor grade of mirrors of his day. He did not consider his knowledge either complete or perfect. The renowned New Testament interpreter William Barclay has commented on this passage from 1 Corinthians 13:9-12:

The Corinthian mirror was made of highly polished metal and, even at its best, gave but an imperfect reflection ... In this life Paul feels we see only the reflections of God and are left with much that is mystery and riddle ... Even if in Christ we have the perfect revelation, our seeking minds can grasp it only in part, for the finite can never grasp the infinite. Our knowledge is still like the knowledge of a child, But the way of love will lead us in the end to the day when the veil is drawn aside and we see face to face and know even as we are known. (The Letters to the Corinthians, p. 125).

I believe that the only reasonable position is that the Biblical prophets were a mixture of the divine and the human. They received revelation progressively. God revealed Himself to them "line upon line." The prophets increased in their knowledge and understanding, as did those who followed them. The result is that in different ages different prophets have held some different views. Even the same prophet grew in insight and understanding.

From their writings and sermons it seems to me that both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young would have concurred with these conclusions of recent Bible commentators. Both maintained that God had not perfectly nor fully revealed Himself to past prophets nor to themselves. There were, like Paul, looking to the future for God's perfect revelation of Himself and for their own perfect understanding of His revelations. Neither one claimed to be infallible, but rather frequently admitted to his own imperfections (D&C 42:61; 50:24, 40; 78:18; 88:49; 121:28; 124:41; 128:18; JD 2:314; 1:115). Brigham Young once stated as his opinion that:

even the best of the Latter-day Saints have but a faint idea of the attributes of the Deity.

Were the former and Latter-day Saints, with their Apostles, Prophets, Seers, and Revelator collected together to discuss this matter, I am led to think there would be found a great variety in their views and feelings upon this subject, without direct revelation from the Lord. It is as much my right to differ from other men, as it is theirs to differ from me, in points of doctrine and principle, when our minds cannot at once arrive at the same conclusion (JD 2:123).

Many non-Mormon Christians, while admitting that differences exist in the prophetic writings, are not willing to reject the prophets. Neither am I. I am not willing to discard Paul's claims because some of his imperfections and lack of harmony with other prophets and apostles have been pointed out. Neither am I willing to discard Mormonism because opponents can point to a difference between Brigham Young and a Bible prophet, or between him and a succeeding LDS prophet.

I believe those who insist that prophets must be infallible are either uninformed or unreasonable. Either they will find themselves disappointed, or will find themselves constantly refusing an objective examination of the subject. I think it only fair that opponents of Mormonism either relinquish this point, or be prepared to refute the massive evidence of prophetic differences and variations presented by objective Christian Bible scholars.

It is common for Mormons who have examined the Adam-God issue to reject this concept of Brigham Young but not reject him as a prophet believing that both the Bible and Mormon history have revealed that all who have been prophets were yet fallible and susceptible to error. When the evidence against the infallibility of prophets is acknowledged, I believe this position is reasonable. However, there is something more which needs to be said. I also know some Mormons who believe the Adam-God theory is true, and others who, after considerable exposure, have not yet formed an opinion. In order to understand these other two positions two additional points need attention.

In their zeal to portray Mormonism as negatively as possible it is very common for opponents to charge that the Adam-God theory is absurd and blasphemous, but this greatly exaggerates the issue. This is a charge made in the spirit of ridicule rather than reasoned examination.

The claim is frequently made that Brigham Young believed in a different God, that he did not believe in the God of the Bible. However, in his sermons, when he spoke of God, he clearly had reference to the God of the Bible, the Being who:

formed the earth (Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 117, 352), made promises to Abraham (p. 342), delivered the children of Israel from Egypt (p. 342), gave the Law to Moses (p. 104, 348), and is the Father of Christ (p. 26, 119).

He did not believe in a different God. He believe that the God of the Bible, He who performed these and many other acts described therein, also came to this earth as Adam. If in error on this point, his error was in believing God performed an act which He did not perform. The point of difference is not who is God, but rather what has God done.

I have frequently heard our opponents respond to the claim that God the Father experienced mortality by

crying absurd, or blasphemous. However, they believe, as do Mormons, that:

the "man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5), who "grew and waxed strong" (Luke 2:40), "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52), "learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb 5:8), "was in all points tempted like as we are" (Heb 4:15), who experienced birth, pain, joy, sorrow, anger, and death.

that this man was in fact God the Son passing through mortality. By comparison, Brigham Young believed that:

- God the Father took upon Himself mortality to begin the human race.
- God the Son took upon Himself mortality to redeem the human race.

I can understand how someone who believes the second statement could disbelieve the first one, but I am surprised that those who believe the second one do not hesitate to declare the first one absurd and blasphemous. Why is it any more absurd or blasphemous to believe that God the Father experienced mortality than it is to believe that God the Son did?

I suppose that ultimately whatever is false is also absurd. My point is that until the ultimate truth is revealed what seems absurd or blasphemous is usually that which contradicts a cherished religious tradition. For 2000 years many Jews, upon their understanding of the Old Testament, have condemned the Christian view of Jesus as absurd and blasphemous. I see this approach as an appeal to tradition, not as a worthwhile argument.

The primary argument of those who do not accept the Adam-God theory is that it is not scriptural. I concur with this. I do not believe that it can be supported from the Bible. To me the Biblical message is that Adam's God is our God; his Father is our Father (Genesis, and Luke 3:38). This also seems to be the message of LDS scripture (Moses 2-5, and D&C 78:15-22).

However, it does not necessarily prove that an idea is false to show that it is not supported by previous scripture, or even that it apparently contradicts previous scripture. If otherwise, then those who rejected the New Testament message were justified. Many rejected Jesus because he came with not only a new message, but sometimes a different message. Several times in the sermon on the mount Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it hath been said ... But I say unto you ..." (Matthew 5, see also 19:3-12). The Old Testament had one message, but Jesus had another. In Acts 15, when Peter, by authority of the Holy Spirit, announced that circumcision would no longer be required of God's people, he announced a different message than that of the Old Testament, which spoke of it as an everlasting covenant for all generations (Genesis 17).

The New Testament Christians rejected the current Jewish belief that God's message was complete in the Old Testament, and of course Mormonism has rejected the common Catholic and Protestant belief that God's message was completed in the New Testament. We believe that God will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God (Article of Faith, 9). One Bible commentator has characterized the "true prophet" as "a progressive, who continually advanced in knowledge and grace." The false prophet "harped continually on the same old string, merely repeating what former prophets had said ... instead of waiting upon Jehovah himself, and from his never-failing treasury bringing forth 'things new and old'" (Abingdon Commentary, p. 151).

Neither the Bible nor Mormonism has ever claimed that truth is to be found only in the official canon. It must be remembered that every new revelation ever given has always been outside of the official canon initially. To reject an idea simply because it sounds new or different is to reject one of the most fundamental principles of the Judeo-Christian religion epitomized in the statement of Jesus, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt 11:15, etc). He clearly had a deeper message which those who remain on the surface will never grasp.

As a result of this line of thought, some Mormons believe the Adam-God theory even though it was never official doctrine, never canonized, and not supported from previous scripture. Personally, I do not find this conclusion unreasonable. There are, however, those who are extreme in their acceptance of the Adam-God theory, are known as fundamentalist Mormons, or just fundamentalists.

Fundamentalist Mormon Argument

On several points the fundamentalist position is identical to that of the non-Mormon Christian - namely, that the Adam-God theory was official Mormon doctrine, and that prophets cannot disagree. Where they differ is in that they believe it is true and scriptural. Non-Mormon Christians believe Mormonism is faulty because early leaders taught the Adam-God theory. Fundamentalists believe current Mormonism is false because recent leaders have not taught it.

They frequently resort to considerable twisting of the scriptures and the teachings of Joseph Smith in order to force them to harmonize with the Adam-God theory. I have stated what I believe to be the doctrine of the scriptures. As for Joseph Smith, he clearly taught that Adam holds a position of authority superior to any of the prophets, that he stands at the head of his posterity, and presides over the spirits of mankind; that it is by Adam's authority that keys are revealed; and that he will judge the saints. However, the most central issue of the Adam-God theory - that God the Father became Adam - has not been found among Joseph Smith's teachings; it has not been shown that he believed that Adam was the Father of our spirits; and he clearly taught that Adam's high position of authority is yet subordinate to that of Jesus Christ (Words of Joseph Smith, p. 9-12, 38-44).

Most of the points previously discussed also apply to the fundamentalist argument. There is one point I wish to discuss further. They claim to be disciples of Brigham Young. Yet I believe they have misunderstood him to a greater degree than even the non-Mormon Christians have. I believe Brigham Young himself would denounce their position in the strongest of terms. By declaring that Church leaders are in apostasy they have created a division over a subject he said "does not immediately concern yours or my welfare," one which he said "should not trouble us at all." They have lost sight of what he believed was most important:

We must be one. Our faith must be concentrated in one great work - the building up of the Kingdom of God on earth, and our works must aim at the accomplishment of that great purpose (JD 7:280).

Even when a leader is in error he emphasized maintaining unity:

... it is not the place for any person to correct any person who is superior to them but to ask the Father in the name of Jesus to bind him up from speaking false principles. I have known many times I have preached wrong but I asked the Father in the name of Jesus to take it from the minds of the people and I believe he always did drop the veil over it. Let your faith be for that man but do not oppose and get up a division between them (Thomas Bullock minutes, May 8, 1854, HDC).

On another occasion he stated:

Let the kingdom alone, the Lord steadies the ark; and if it does jostle, and appear to need steadying, if the way is a little sideling sometimes, and to all appearance threatens its overthrow, be careful how you stretch forth your hands to steady it; let us not be too officious in meddling with that which does not concern us; let it alone, it is the Lord's work (JD 11:252).

Since fundamentalists believe that Brigham Young was a true prophet, I do not feel they can justify hindering one of his major goals by their unbalanced preoccupation with one of his more obscure doctrinal beliefs.

There are three additional attitudes which I have heard expressed by Mormons which I wish to mention.

1. Some are totally disinterested in anything except the teachings of the present leaders. These are working in the present and looking to the future without ever looking back. There is no spark of concern for past issues. There are those most critical of this attitude. Although I am one who must look back, I find myself unable to criticize those not so inclined.
2. Some have insisted that Brigham Young never taught the Adam-God theory; that he has been misquoted, inaccurately reported, or misinterpreted. This was a reasonable view for many years when the entire argument was founded only upon Brigham Young's April 9, 1852 discourse. As additional sources have been discovered this position has become less and less tenable until now I believe it should be totally discarded.
3. Finally, some Mormons believe that after a fair examination of all relevant points several reasonable conclusions could be reached. Convinced that Mormonism does not stand or fall upon the issue of the Adam-God theory, they are satisfied to suspend final judgement on the matter until further light is shed.

Although many individuals have an will resolve the matter for themselves, I am certain that their conclusions will continue to be varied because of the several seemingly reasonable approaches to the issue.

In conclusion I include what I consider to be the most reasonably stated position on the issue. It is extracted from an unpublished letter of President Joseph F. Smith to Bishop Edward Bunker, February 27, 1902:

While it is far from my purpose to stifle thought and free speech among the brethren, or to brand as "false doctrine" any and every mystery of the kingdom, it is never-the less my wish and my advice, in which Presidents Winder and Lund, my counselors, heartily join, that the Elders should not make a practice of preaching upon these abstruse themes, these partly revealed principles, respecting which there are such wide differences of belief.

What is called the Adam God doctrine my properly be classed among the mysteries. The full truth concerning it has not been revealed to us; and until it is revealed all wild speculations, sweeping assertions and dogmatic declarations relative thereto, are out of place and improper. We disapprove of them and especially the public expression of such views ... Let us be content with what is plainly revealed on this subject, namely; that though there be Lords many and Gods many as the Apostle Paul declares, yet to us there is but one God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have attempted to present as fairly as I could in so brief a work the various attitudes I have encountered on this interesting subject. Whatever conclusion most appeals, I am confident that Brigham Young, if he were here, would be dismayed that his few statements on this one subject have prevented some people from giving a fair examination to the restored gospel and church that inspired and motivated him. A man of remarkable common sense, Brigham Young did not think that the existence of sun spots should lead one to turn away from the sun's warmth and light.