

EVIDENCES AND RECONCILIATIONS

lxxiii. Why are the Words "God" and "Father" Applied to Several Personages?

THE supreme, personal intelligence and power in the universe is God. That is his name in the English tongue. He is the Organizer of the universe. He is the one and only God to whom we pray and whom we worship.

We speak of Jesus Christ also as God. He is frequently referred to in sacred writ by that term. On the title page of the Book of Mormon he is called the "Eternal God." The personage known as the Holy Ghost is also called God. Thus, there are God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Ghost; the two latter are under the direction of God the Father.

It is evident, therefore, that since the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinct personages, the word "God" is not only a name, but may be used also as a title describing an attainment or office. Such application of titles is not unusual. In the Book of Mormon it is stated that the Redeemer of man "shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning," (Mosiah 3:8.) These are titles that refer to Christ's relationship to the Father and to his mission under the Father.

In the same manner the title "God" may be applied to anyone who has attained to Godhood, that is, who has risen so high as to partake sufficiently of the essence of divinity.

Joseph Smith the Prophet declared that there is a plurality of gods. An indication of such plurality runs through the scriptures, ancient and modern. In the very beginning of time Adam and Eve were promised that they should "be as gods" (Genesis 3:5); and Jesus reminded the Jews that in their scriptures it was written "ye are gods," (John 10:34.) Paul spoke of "lords many and gods many," (1 Cor. 8:5.) Modern revelation presents the same truth when it says "according to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was." (D. & C. 121:32.)

This implies that many personages may have attained the power and place of Godhood. This does not make them in any sense coequal with God, or with his Son, or the Holy Ghost. Those who are denominated gods have a rank in the eternal councils, with corresponding power to help foster the purposes of the Father. There may be many generals in an earthly government, but only one commander-in-chief. Even so in the government of heaven.

This doctrine is familiar to Latter-day Saints. The gospel teaches that the hosts of intelligent beings here and in the spirit world may progress forever. The condition is obedience to eternal law. These personages are in various stages of progression, some beginning, others far on the way. Some, through the eternities, may already have won sufficient of the attributes of divinity to be spoken of as gods. The destiny of all who are faithful is godhood. Modern revelation makes the promise to all who comply with certain requirements:

"Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them." (D. & C. 132:20.)

The conditions under which Godhood may be attained have not been set forth fully. Necessarily so high a place can be obtained only by rigid obedience to God's laws. Those who aspire to such exaltation must be sealed as man and wife for time and eternity. Then they may continue the work of the Father in behalf of the waiting intelligences in the spirit world. Their "glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever." (D. & C. 132:19.)

This doctrine explains why the word "god" is applied in the holy scriptures to various personages. There is no need to stumble over such use of divine titles, if this is understood.

The word "father" is also applied to different personages. God is the father of the spirits of all men. They were begotten spiritually by him in the pre-existent state. The relationship between God and man as father and son is real. Jesus Christ himself was the First Begotten of the Father. (D. & C. 93:21.) Therefore, we speak of God, the Father, to distinguish clearly among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. But, the title "Father" is used also in behalf of Jesus Christ, who was commissioned by his Father to create the earth and all things on it. Mosiah, a Book of Mormon prophet, speaks of Jesus Christ as "the Father of heaven and earth" because he was the creator of "all things as pertaining to the earth. (Mosiah 3:8; also Helaman 14:12; Ether 4:7; II Nephi 25:12.) Adam likewise, being the first man, has been called the father. (D. & C. 29:34.) This is not an uncommon use of the word. George Washington is called the father of his country. A man who creates a great business is called the father of the institution. The Indians are said to speak of the great father in Washington. The leader of any cause is frequently referred to as its father.

Some students, noting this use of the word "father," have become confused. They have thought that Jesus is really God, the Father. Others have attempted to identify Adam with God, the Father, or with Jesus Christ. That these are distinct personalities is made clear in numerous passages in holy writ. For example:

But God . . . called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh. And he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you. (Moses 6:50-52.)

If God, the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, and Adam, irrespective of their titles, are not distinct personages, the above words become meaningless and absurd.

Readers should distinguish carefully between specific and general meanings of words, as may appear in the sacred books or in gospel discourses. If this is not done, much confusion of thought may arise. In fact, many who have failed to do so, have been led astray from the truth.

A good example of the unfounded foolish notions that may arise from careless reading is the famous discourse of Brigham Young, used by apostates and enemies of the church. (See *Journal of Discourses*, 1:50.) In this address, Brigham Young spoke of Adam as our father and our god. (Concluded on page 797)