

## CHAPTER VI

### The Twofold Problem of Mosiah 15:1-4: Is Jesus the "Father and the Son?" Are God the Father and His Son one God?

The problems indicated above have disturbed many members of the Church who find themselves unable to explain the prophet Abinadi's words to their satisfaction. The prophet was attempting to explain the work and mission of the Christ to the wicked priests of King Noah and said these words:

I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—the Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—and they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth. (Mos 15:1-4)

Notice that Abinadi calls our pre-existent Lord "God himself" and proceeds to explain why He is also to be called the "Son of God" and the "Father and Son." Throughout the whole passage cited above, Abinadi looks forward to the coming of Jesus in the flesh and, for his own convenience, treats our Lord's advent as an accomplished fact. Hence it is easy to understand his reasoning that the Master is to be called the "Son of God" because "He dwelleth in flesh." Abinadi was of course familiar with the teachings of the earlier prophets who knew that our Lord would be his father's "Only Begotten Son" in the flesh. (See, e.g., Jacob 4:5, 11.) We have no difficulty in seeing the point he

makes here. Now let us observe the reason he gives for calling Jesus the "Father." The only *apparent* reason he gives is in Mosiah 15:3, where he explains that the Savior is the "*Father, because he was conceived by the power of God.*" (Italics ours.) This seems, on the surface, to be the essence of his explanation. By it Abinadi would appear to imply that by reason of God's coming sireship of His son in the flesh, our Lord would inherit His Godly powers and qualities. Therefore Jesus would be, in effect, the "Father" also. But certain students of scripture profess to see some difficulties that Abinadi's simple explanation raises.

1. While it is probable that Abinadi knew that King Benjamin, and perhaps other prophets, had taught that Jesus was "the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things," (Most 3:8) he could hardly have been expected to know that centuries earlier the pre-existent Christ had already announced to the brother of Jared that He was "the Father and the Son." (Ether 3:14) Does not this earlier announcement of our Lord to the brother of Jared throw some doubt on the correctness of Abinadi's explanation that Jesus should be called "the Father, because he was conceived by the power of God?" (Mos. 15:3) In other words, our Lord's announcement that he is already "the Father and the Son," long before his conception in the flesh, raises some questions concerning Abinadi's logic.

2. In the Doctrine and Covenants our Lord explains that he is "the Father because he [Elohim] gave me of his fulness." (93:4) And in verses 12-14 it is explained that our Lord "received not of the fulness at first, but received grace for grace; and he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace until he received a fulness; and thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at the first." It is therefore probable that our Lord did not receive a fulness until after he broke the bands of death in the resurrection. Abinadi says nothing of our Lord receiving a fulness by proceeding

from grace to grace. Moreover, how could the Christ announce to the brother of Jared that he was "the Father and the Son," not having as yet received the "fulness" spoken of in the Doctrine and Covenants?

Now let us make clear that we do not believe that Abinadi's statements or those made by the pre-existent Lord to the brother of Jared are necessarily contradictory in any sense with each other, not to mention the scriptures cited from the Doctrine and Covenants. Understood through the Spirit, they all attest that Jesus is both the Father and the Son.

Let us take another look at Abinadi's words. Notice that he says, "God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people . . . having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son." (Mos. 15:1-2) In other words, by subjecting His flesh to the will of the Father, Jesus brings about the atonement and becomes the spiritual Father of all men who are willing to forsake their sins and follow him. And by alluding to the words of Isaiah (see Mos. 14: 8-10), Abinadi makes clear that he means just that:

And now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that *when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed*. And now what say ye? *And who shall be his seed?* Behold I say unto you, that *whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God*. For those are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. *And now, are they not his seed?* (Mos. 15:10-12; italics ours.)

Notice carefully the italicized words emphasizing our Lord's "seed." What man can have "seed" without being a father? Abinadi clearly means that Jesus is our father in the spiritual sense. It is true that he was probably acquainted with King Benjamin's words which teach that the Christ was the Father in the sense that he created the heavens and the earth (Most 3:8); but let it be noted that King Benjamin also mentions our Lord in another role:

And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters. (Most 5:7)

If the Christ has sons and daughters, he is a father in the same sense that Abinadi taught.

So we see that Abinadi was on firm ground when he taught that our Lord was the "Father and the Son." But one has to take into account the implications of his words in Mosiah 15:1-2 before jumping to conclusions about his terse statement in verse 3 that our Lord is the "Father, because he was conceived by the power of God." To be sure, Abinadi did not say in so many words, as the Doctrine and Covenants does (93:4, 12-14), that the Savior received grace for grace, until he became the Father because God had given Him of his fulness, but his discourse certainly encompasses the idea. "Having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father" (Most 15:2) or "the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Most 15:7) give substance to our point.

Now let us deal with the criticism that the Christ, centuries before Abinadi's time, had announced that he was already the "Father and the Son." (Ether 3:14) That is to say, he was the Father and the Son in the pre-existence,

long before he wrought the atonement and brought about the resurrection from the dead. Actually, what the preexistent Christ told the brother of Jared is not at all inconsistent with the teachings of Abinadi. Students of our scriptures are well aware that references are made to our pre-existent Lord as if he had already wrought out his great atonement. Thus Jesus is spoken of as the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. 13:8) Enoch said, "The Righteous is lifted up, and the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world." (Moses 7:47) Alma the Younger speaks of ancient High Priests who became "sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb." (Alma 13:11) And even in our Lord's interview with the brother of Jared he tells his servant that "because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall." (Ether 3:13) How could Jesus say that, when it was yet centuries before His atonement was to be wrought out? The answer is that He could see the end from the beginning and knew that He would make the great sacrifice, thus making good His words to the brother of Jared. He speaks as if His atonement and resurrection were an accomplished fact. And so in the same vein He tells the brother of Jared that He is the "Father and the Son," speaking as if He had already received grace for grace and had received a fulness from His great sire, as the Doctrine and Covenants makes clear.

Knowing that Jesus is the Father and the Son, we can apply that knowledge in the interpretation of certain passages of scripture. Let us look, for example, at Chapter One of the Book of Moses. In verses 6, 32 and 33 it would appear from a casual reading that God the Father is talking about the Christ, his Only Begotten Son. Actually it is the Christ speaking to Moses in his father's behalf. As the Father and the Son he can speak for both. And in further support of that view we point to 3 Nephi 15:5, where the redeemed, resurrected Christ explains that it was he who gave the law to ancient Israel:

Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfil the law;

Yes, the Christ is the God of the Old Testament and the one who spoke to Moses on the mount, as recorded in Moses 1: 1-2.

The last problem raised by Abinadi merits detailed explanation. The prophet explained, as we have already seen, that our Lord and his Father are "one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth." (Mos. 15:4) The idea of Christ and the Father being one has disturbed many of our people. It sounds, so some say, like sectarian doctrine. But notice that the Doctrine and Covenants also affirms the doctrine.

And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, *and the Father and I are one.* (93:2-3; italics ours. Cf. 20:28; 35:2.)

And Mormon speaks of one singing "ceaseless praises with the choirs above, unto the Father and unto the Son, and unto the Holy Ghost, *which are one God.*" (Morm. 7: 7; italics ours.) It will also be of value to quote D. & C. 50: 43 for our purposes here:

And the Father and I are one. I am in the Father and the Father in me; and inasmuch as ye have received me, ye are in me and I in you. (Cf. vss. 24, 27; John 10:30, 38; 14:10-11; 17:20-23.)

Now, how can the Father be "in" the Son and the Son be "in" the Father and the Son be "in" a true believer? The answer must be found in the action of the Holy Ghost. Thus, just as the Spirit which emanates from Deity as a whole (the light of Christ; see D. & C. 84:45-46; 88:11-13) to illumine all mankind must envelope and pass continuously from the source to those benefited, as in an unbroken

circuit, so a higher power or Spirit may also pass in an unbroken circuit from Father to Son. In that way we can crudely illustrate how one is “in” the other. And when a converted man “receives” the Lord, he is allowed to break into the circuit and be “in” the Lord and the Lord “in” him. (See Moses 6:65-66.) At any rate, there is a physical and spiritual rapport between the Father and Son, and between them and the true believer, that is but vaguely understood by us. But through this rapport they become “one” in the spiritual sense. The Holy Ghost is certainly involved in the process. In his Lectures on Faith (Lecture Fifth, found in editions of the Doctrine and Covenants prior to 1921), Joseph Smith gives us this interesting and valuable explanation that bears on the problem at hand:

And he [Christ] being the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and having overcome, received a fullness of the glory of the Father, possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son, and these three are one; or, in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme, power over all things; by whom all things were created and made that were created and made, and these three constitute the Godhead and are one; the Father and Son possessing the same mind, the same wisdom, glory, power, and fullness – filling all in all; the Son being filled with the fullness of the mind, glory, and power; or, in other words, the spirit, glory, and power of the Father, possessing all knowledge and glory, and the same kingdom, sitting at the right hand of power, in the being filled with the fullness of the mind of the Father; or, in other words, the Spirit of the Father, which Spirit is shed forth upon all who believe on his name and keep his commandments; and all those who keep his commandments shall grow up from grace to grace, and become heirs of the heavenly kingdom, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ; possessing the same mind, being transformed into the same

image or likeness, even the express image of him who fills all in all; being filled with the fullness of his glory, and become one in him, even as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one.

Thus we see that Abinadi's teachings are in perfect harmony with the prophet Joseph Smith's instructions concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.