Letters to the Editor

Adam — An Egyptian Connection?

Your Spring 1982 was excellent, superb, unsurpassed (which is to say you printed articles on my main interest preferences). I found David Buerger's finally honest treatise of Brigham Young's involvement in the Adam-God doctrine well worth reading.

He did a creditable job attempting to see if there was any link between Brigham and Joseph Smith on that doctrine. Even solid adherents to the Adam-God doctrine must admit that little exists to actually link them, though there is some reason to believe that the two prophets may have held similar views.

I found one further link which no one to my knowledge has previously explored in the "Grammar and Alphabet of the Egyptian Language" attributed by many to Joseph Smith, Jr. The document consists of a series of lists of glyphs (not really hieroglyphs) which were purportedly the working sheets Joseph Smith used in his translation of the papyrus found on mummies in his possession.

The glyphs appear in the left column, followed by lines of explanation to the right, supposedly translations of the strange markings. If one checks the list it will be found that one glyph appears to be a kind of checkmark stroke written backwards. In the several lists the explanatory note appears similar but with more information as the lists develop.

For this glyph the notes give the following information:

(glyph represented) = Phah-eh:
the first man-Adam, first father

(glyph represented) = Ah lish:
the first being clothed with supreme glory (supreme power)

(glyph represented) = Ah lish:
the first being — supreme intelligence; supreme power; supreme glory — supreme justice; supreme mercy without beginning of life or end of life; comprehending all things, seeing all things — the invisible and eternal godhead.

All of these notes occur after the same glyph represented in each list. It can be seen that the glyph representing Adam also represents the eternal godhead and the first being, supreme intelligence. It must be said, also, however that another glyph also represents "Adam or the first man, or first king."

This document needs, however, to be further studied in light of the question of whether Joseph and Brigham taught the same doctrine (however secretly) about Adam being God. Photocopies of the "Egyptian Grammar" are, of course, obtainable at some Salt Lake City bookstores.

However, I still have yet to see a good article on the real question that arises out of the Adam-God maelstrom: How could Brigham Young be a true prophet of God and teach a "false God" for twenty-five years as president of the Church?" He did, in fact, claim that he knew the doctrine from God himself and enunciated the magic words: "Thus saith the Lord." How do we defend that?

It also strikes at the heart of the problem of a cohesive definition of testimony. Though I have been unchurched for belief in Adam as God, I still feel the glow of a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ and his father (whoever that may turn out to be).

A young girl recently arose in our ward and said, "I don't care if what Spencer W. Kimball does is contrary to scripture or the words of previous prophets. When he speaks it is truth. He is the prophet." She was quite worked up and wept as she said those words. I wept too. She has decided on one

side of the conundrum, I on the other. But regardless of what side I or she has taken, it is a solid theological question. Do we have testimonies of doctrine, history, reality, philosophy, or the positions and qualifications of men? Does it really matter what the man in the position says, as long as he holds the position that allows him the privilege of saying it? Does our faith in the system of Mormon religion overarch true doctrine? I have heard tearful testimonies in my thirty-nine years of many things. Some testify that the shadow-leadership program a few years ago was a direct revelation from the Lord. I have heard testimonies of the divine origin of the Constitution, the Boy Scouts of America, the Adam-God doctrine, the anti-Adam-God doctrine, and godly support for various individuals touted as being called the infallible. Did the hundreds of dead in Guyana not bear terrible testimony with their own lives and the lives of their children that they believed the words of a man as being the words of their God? And it couldn't happen in Mormonism? Let's ask the Fancher party.

Someone, sometime, with talent and an ability to write needs to address the question of testimony. What is it? What is its origin? What is it of? Do we believe in a system, a man, or a God?

Merle H. Graffam
Palm Desert, California

Brigham Knew . . .

Your Spring 1982 issue was one of your best, with a lot of fresh research on so many theological questions.

The article by Buerger on Adam-God was very good but a more thorough examination is in Culley Christensen's *The Adam-God Maze* ($14.95, Independent Publishers, Box 8375, Scottsdale, Arizona 85252). There is, in fact, no approach to the scriptures and theological issues which resolves everything neatly with regard to the nature of God. For example, a careful study of the name Jehovah makes it clear that this is, at least, a title used by more than one personage and certainly not to be identified solely or perhaps at all with Christ. The key to a lot of the Adam-God doctrine is the use of titles and assumptions of roles — some of which we already understand from the use of divine investiture in the Doctrine and Covenants, among other places. In short, careful and inspired study supports Brigham Young, although not at all an easy task.

There seems to be some expectation that if Joseph Smith had believed in Adam-God he would have made that clear. Assuming that he grasped the full implications of the idea it is doubtful, however, that he would have treated this differently than other "advanced" matters such as polygamy or the endowment and he certainly would have sensed that it would have been too explosive — especially given the other problems he was experiencing. Even Brigham admitted that even in the confines of Utah he probably had revealed too much about the nature of God. While the article mentions that Brigham, Ben Johnson, and Helen Kimball (one of Joseph's wives) attested to Joseph's preaching of Adam-God it failed to note that Eliza R. Snow, John Taylor, and Anson Call, among others, also offered evidence for the doctrine's origin with Joseph. (See Christensen's book).

Gradually the matter was treated as an advanced mystery and eventually when the associates of Brigham passed away, general ignorance set in so that leaders sincerely believed that Brigham had never said such things. One could make an analogy with the death of the apostles in early Christianity and the loss of the vital oral tradition Nibley, Seaich, and others have documented. Today it is clear that unless they are knowledgeable but, like the authorities at the turn of the century, trying not to "cast pearls before swine," contemporary Church leaders are uninformed on the subject. It is doubtful that they would approach the subject with open and prayerful minds because the concept is so radical

and there would doubtless be great resistance to having to eat words, as happened when the revelation on priesthood was received. Before anyone embraces the critics of Adam-God too quickly, the accuracy of Charles W. Penrose, Joseph Fielding Smith, Bruce R. McConkie, and Mark E. Petersen, among others, should be contemplated as to historical and theological issues. Their blatant errors would suggest that we should not dismiss Adam-God as so much speculation.

The real question is simply whether Brigham was right. He declared in no uncertain terms that Adam-God was doctrine and revelation and few things have been declared such so clearly. To reject his words would be to raise serious questions about prophetic reliability. I suggest that Brigham knew whereof he spoke and the rest of us need to catch up.

(Name withheld)

Earliest Pre-Existence Allusion?

Unfortunately, all articles or essays must go to press even though most papers are never quite finished. In my paper on the idea of pre-existence (DIALOGUE, Spring 1982) I failed to include an extremely important source on the idea of pre-existence before the Nauvoo period, William W. Phelps's statement in a letter to the *Latter-day Saint Messenger & Advocate* 1 (June 1835): 130:

> We shall by and by learn that we were with God in another world, before the foundation of the world, and had our agency: that we came into this world and have our agency, in order that we may prepare ourselves for a kingdom of glory; become archangels, even the sons of God where the man is neither without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord.

This statement is significant for several reasons. First, it is the only statement with which I am acquainted which comments on the idea of "real" pre-existence before the Nauvoo period. Further, Phelps seems to be referring to the May 1833 revelation now known as D&C 93 when he says that "we were with God . . . before the foundation of the world." He also affirms that we had our agency in another world in the presence of God before this life. Second, Phelps seems to be referring to the idea of celestial marriage. Since Phelps was an intimate friend of Joseph Smith during this period it is probable that Phelps is commenting on some of Joseph's private teachings before the Nauvoo period. As historians, we should be cautious in affirming when Joseph Smith first learned some of his "more advanced" doctrines which reached full proportion only in the Nauvoo era. We never know what Joseph knew but kept to himself. Those who have asserted the Joseph's idea of pre-existence was spurred in early 1836 by Thomas Dick's *Philosophy of a Future State* are clearly in error. For, Joseph's idea of pre-existence appears to have been developing since early 1833 and had apparently reached a state of refinement before 1836.

Blake Ostler
Salt Lake City, Utah

Vielen Dank

DIALOGUE is a great source of information for me which shows me more about the American society the Church mainly is involved with. It's good to get a magazine which is not one-sided like the four major Church periodicals, which are actually good, but not enough for my widespread interests. (In Germany we nickname the *Church News* "Mormon Pravda" — we Europeans are pretty liberal.) Especially the volume 14, number 2 issue was interesting, because we don't get that information in Germany by official sources in such full details. I would like to encourage DIALOGUE to continue its efforts to clarify the complexities of Mormonism and it has got my support already.

Mit Freundlichen Grüssen geduldig verbleibend.

Peter C. Nadig
Duisburg, West Germany

Appreciated

The Washington, D.C., years have been great ones for DIALOGUE. I try to read each issue when it arrives. But last night I again looked through the issues that have been mailed to us during our four years here in Central Java. Again, I was deeply impressed by the many special issues of the journal as well as with some of the real gems which have been published over the past few years.

The special attention to women in the Church and their contribution as well as their problems is especially noteworthy. So glad that attention was given to Virginia Sorensen, to Fawn Brodie, and others. (The Sonia Johnson interview was also interesting.)

And of course DIALOGUE has made a great contribution over the years in dealing with the problem of brotherhood and racial equality.

Finally, so pleased that the young poets, people especially interested in the arts and others who are not so well known in the Church have had their contributions published.

I can only wonder at the long hours and sacrifice your work with DIALOGUE has called for. But also know that you have had many wonderful and stimulating experiences. Have always enjoyed Mary's articles, "An Hour in the Grove," etc.

Your work has been appreciated, and even though DIALOGUE crosses the plains to Utah we look forward to future contributions Mary and Lester will make the DIALOGUE among Church members.

Joseph E. Black
Yogyakarta, Indonesia

One Half So Precious

Kind Friends and Gentle Hearts,

I have wondered what tune Stephen Foster was composing when he made a note of the above while dying. And certainly Omar Khayyam said it beautifully:

I wonder often what the Vinters buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell,

particularly with my wife's marginal comment, "Or poets." And such things, intangible but of vital importance, come to mind on hearing that DIALOGUE once again is under new editorship.

Without in any way criticizing Mary Bradford, who spent several evenings at my home and is a most wonderful gal, and without knowing the specific pressures (though I know a great deal about such pressures in other cases), I must say that during her editorship DIALOGUE was baptized. As a specific case, I could no longer write for it, except for memoirs and book reviews.

Do you remember the wonderful spirit of DIALOGUE's early years under Eugene England? We had meetings of "Dialogue people," a special type of Mormons. One said to me, "When we move into a new ward we sit at the back, observing, looking for our kind of Mormons." As a type, the DIALOGUE Mormon was an objective observer of the LDS culture. His contributions to the magazine were essays on the world of Deseret. They weren't missionary tracts. DIALOGUE actually was the first independent Mormon periodical in exactly 100 years. And now it, too, has been baptized. Its birth stimulated the resurgence of *BYU Studies* as an antidote. The baptized DIALOGUE is identical with *BYU Studies*.

There definitely is a place for a journal of independent thought and opinion. I hope it will become what it used to be.

Samuel W. Taylor
Redwood City, California

Guilt Conquers Greed

My guilt wins over my greed — enclosed please find $25.00 to renew. I could drag my Ph.D. out for years just to keep my subscription rate low. I'd do it but the dissertation fee is more than the difference.

Cheers, love, and congratulations for a job well done in Arlington. All the best to the new Utah group.

Erin and Charlotte Silva
Havertown, Pennsylvania

Armed with Pink and Red

Thank you for another superb issue of DIALOGUE (Vol. 14, No. 4). I laughed all the way through Furr's "Honor Thy Mother," only to have the end punctuated by a telephone call from one of the Sunday School presidency asking me to be the "Young Mother," sandwiched between "Love at Home" and "What My Mother Means to Me by a Teenager." Sitting through a Mother's Day program is one thing, but aiding and abetting? Then inspiration struck, and armed with the pink and the red issues of DIALOGUE, I gave a talk that brought tears and laughter, knowing nods, and sighs of satisfaction.

Once again, thank you for a job well done.

Linda J. Bailey
San Jose, California

Grace Arrington Honored

The husband and children of Grace Fort Arrington, a member of the Mormon History Association who died in March, have established the Grace Arrington Award for Historical Excellence. A prize of $500 will be awarded annually in her honor "to that person who during the previous calendar year published a book or article of distinction or performed other service which in the opinion of the judges represents a signal contribution to understanding of the Mormon past." Judges are Leonard Arrington, Davis Bitton, and James B. Allen. The judges, members of the Arrington family, and that year's winner of the Mormon History Association Award will normally not be eligible for the award, which will usually be announced in early summer of each year.

The first recipient of the award is Dean C. Jessee, senior research historian with the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History and associate professor of history and church history at Brigham Young University. Dean Jessee is editor of the volume Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons, *published by Deseret Book Company in 1974, and author of articles of distinction that have appeared in* DIALOGUE, Journal of Mormon History, Western Historical Quarterly, BYU Studies, Ensign, *and other Church and professional magazines and journals. Dean is a past president of the Mormon History Association.*

LDSF-2

LDSF-2, a second volume of LDS Science Fiction and Fantasy, *is now being prepared. Please submit stories, artwork, and other contributions to Benjamin Urrutia, 234 East 100 South, Apt. 3, SLC, Ut. 84111.*