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A HISTORY OF THE ADAM-GOD DOCTRINE

“For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.” (1 Nephi 10:19)

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of the Adam-God Doctrine is one that fascinates both scholars of Mormon history as well as students of Mormon theology. Those who are interested in this unique doctrinal teaching of 19th century Mormonism have numerous questions and research interests about it such as: When did Adam-God start to be believed and taught? Did the Adam-God Doctrine come from Joseph Smith? How long was it taught for, and when was it disavowed?

This paper attempts to explore the history of Joseph Smith's teachings about Adam, as well as the genesis of the Adam-God Doctrine and its integration into LDS belief and worship in the 19th century. It explores which apostles supported the Adam-God Doctrine and who opposed it. It also dives into the demise of the Adam-God Doctrine as it began to be de-emphasized and ultimately disavowed by later Church leaders.

A HISTORY OF THE ADAM–GOD DOCTRINE

by
Jacob Vidrine

JOSEPH SMITH’S TEACHINGS ABOUT ADAM

When the subject of the Adam-God Doctrine comes up in Mormonism, one of the common questions associated with it is “Did Joseph Smith reveal it? Is there any evidence that Joseph Smith taught Adam-God?”

The earliest seeds in Joseph Smith’s teachings and revelations raising Adam’s status is the Book of Mormon. Lehi’s views of a *felix culpa* or “fortune fall” expressed in 2 Nephi 2:25 lay an important foundation for Adam-God teachings, yet the Book of Mormon does not identify Adam with God, rather instead on several occasions referring to the “creation of Adam” by God.

Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible in 1831 provides additional revelatory emphasis on Adam, though again not identifying him with God but as separate individuals. Still, these revelations emphasize Adam's presiding role as the first high priest over humanity, who was blessed with a knowledge of the Atonement and Gospel of Jesus Christ, and who was forgiven by God for his transgression in the Garden of Eden.¹ According to W.W. Phelps, as early as November 1832 the subject of Adam's role as an exalted figure was referenced by Joseph Smith when the Prophet stated that the Lord God would send "one mighty and strong" with a "scepter of power in his hands" to "set in order the house of God" and "arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints":

"And it shall come to pass that I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God."²

W.W. Phelps was the recipient of this letter by Joseph Smith, so as such he would have had insight into what the Prophet understood about it. Recalling this revelation in 1861, Phelps wrote to Brigham Young that it was referring to Father Adam:

¹ Moses 5:6–7, Moses 5:58–59, Moses 6:53.

² D&C 85:7.

“Now this revelation was sent to me in Zion, and has reference to the time when Adam our Father and God, comes at the beginning of our Eternal Lot of inheritance, — according as our names are found in the Law of the Lord, while the fools that received the priesthood, like the fool that took his ‘one Talent’ and hid it; — or reached out to steady the ark, will find themselves where the rich man did — in hell, with plenty of fire — but no water. Love begets lives eternal; our grace begets glory, but sin seeks secession, where goats and skunks can enjoy the lower room fog of a more dismal prison, than the nether room of Noah’s Ark. Now should I be wrong in my belief as to these quotations: — please let me have your views, for I am for God, light and life as his ‘steward’.”³

An emphasis on Adam’s theological importance — or identification as Michael or the Ancient of Days — is absent from the earlier Book of Commandments and Kirtland Revelation Book. But by the late Kirtland period the Prophet’s revelations placed greater emphasis on Adam.

ADAM AS THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

The April 1834 issue of the Latter-day Saint newspaper the *Evening and Morning Star* provides the earliest account of Adam being identified as the “Ancient of Days.”⁴ Additionally, many significant

³ W.W. Phelps letter to Brigham Young, 6 May 1861, LDS Archives.

⁴ *Evening and Morning Star* vol. 2 no. 19, April 1834.

revelatory statements about Father Adam were incorporated into revelations included in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

The 1835 D&C gives canonicity and revelatory approval identifying Adam as both the Archangel Michael and the Ancient of Days. One revelatory expansion, D&C 78, states that the Lord who “established the foundations of Adam-ondi-Ahman” would make his faithful saints “rulers over many kingdoms” and that he also appointed “Michael your prince” to hold the “keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One.”⁵ Another revelation in the 1835 D&C states that the Lord appeared to Adam and his posterity three years “previous to the death of Adam”, and noted Adam’s presiding significance:

“53 Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing. 54 And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel. 55 And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever. 56 And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation.”⁶

⁵ D&C 78:15–16.

⁶ D&C 107:53–56.

“And also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days;”⁷

While identifying Adam as the Ancient of Days was clearly raising him to be an important priesthood figure in Mormon cosmology, in Joseph Smith’s lifetime it was not understood by Latter-day Saints to identify him as being God the Father. An 1834 editorial about Adam being the Ancient of Days did not equate Adam with God, but simply as being the most ancient man that had lived the Earth:

“In the 24 chapter of Isaiah, and 23 verse, the prophet, after having described one of the greatest desolations ever pronounced on the head of any generation of men, says, ‘Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.’ We have before seen that this reign was to last a thousand years; and his ancients, before whom he was to reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, gloriously, were all the redeemed from among men, of every tongue, language, kindred, and people. According to Daniel, he was to come to the *ancient* of days: here he is said to reign before his *ancients*, that is, all the saints from our father Adam, down; for who could the ancient of days be but our father Adam? Surely none other: he was the first who lived in days, and must be the ancient of days. And to whom would the Savior come, but to the father all the race, and then receive his kingdom, in which he was to reign before, or with his ancients gloriously?”⁸

⁷ D&C 27:11.

⁸ *Evening and Morning Star* vol. 2 no. 19, April 1834.

Additionally, Orson Pratt gave a sermon in Nauvoo on Adam being the Ancient of Days at the April 1843 General Conference, which explicitly stated that this did not mean Adam was God:

“Who is the Ancient of Days? This is a question frequently asked by the biblical student, especially those who have studied the prophecies of Daniel with any degree of attention. The most careless reader will have observed that the Ancient of Days is one of the most prominent personages introduced before Daniel, while he was wrapped in his prophetic visions.

...The Great King, having sent forth the Ancient of Days, with the grand council of heaven, as messengers to set all things in their most perfect order, at length, appears in the clouds of heaven. He comes in royal splendor, and in the greatness of his strength, to the Ancient of Days who delivers up the kingdom into his hands, and henceforth all people, nations, and languages serve and obey him. O glorious period! O happy time!! How these glorious visions must have cheered the heart of Daniel in his long captivity! And how blessed, and how inexpressibly happy will that people be who inherit the earth in that day! But who is this Ancient of Days, that is to act this glorious and conspicuous part in the grand councils of the last days, and finally deliver up the kingdom organized and prepared, into the hands of the Great King? It cannot be the Son of God, for he afterwards comes to the Ancient of Days. It cannot be the Father, for if the Saints were prepared to meet the Father and set in council with him, they would also be prepared to meet the Son, for the glory of the Father is equal to that of the Son. Who then can it be? Let us reflect for a moment. — THE ANCIENT OF DAYS! — It must be some very ancient personage, and probably the most ancient personage that ever lived in days, and

hence is called by that name, in distinction from all others that lived after. But thanks be given to the Most High God, for he has not left his saints in uncertainty about this matter, but has raised up a prophet, through whom he has revealed this mystery; thus the saints will not be left in the dark in regard to the great purposes and events of the last days. The Ancient of Days then, is ADAM — the great progenitor of the human race. He has a mission to perform for the benefit of his children, in the last times. As he performed the first mission on the earth in the beginning of the first dispensation, so he will perform a mission in the ending of the last dispensation. In the first he presided over a few; in the last he will preside over unnumbered millions.”⁹

Yet traditionally Christians and Jews understood the Ancient of Days as being a representation of Deity, and Christians generally identify the Ancient of Days as God the Father. The text of Daniel chapter 7 makes it clear why: the Kingdom of God that Daniel saw was the kingdom of the Ancient of Days — it was the Ancient of Days being “ministered” to by one million, and 100 million “stood before him.”¹⁰ The Ancient of Days then dispenses dominion, glory, and judgment to both the “son of man” and the “Saints of the Most High,” a representation more closely matching a Deity’s role than a mere prophetic figure.¹¹

The New Testament clearly identifies the Ancient of Days as God the Father. Jesus Christ

⁹ “Ancient of Days,” sermon by Orson Pratt delivered on 6 April 1843, in *Times and Seasons* vol. 4, no. 13 <15 May 1843> page 204.

¹⁰ Daniel 7:10.

¹¹ Daniel 7:13–14, 21–22.

himself said “ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”¹² The “glory” that the Son of Man receives from the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:14 is identified by Jesus as the Father’s glory: “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”¹³ Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:24–28 draws on Daniel chapter 7, identifying the interaction as being between Christ and The Father. And most explicitly, the apostle John in Revelation 5:11 directly borrows from Daniel 7:10 to describe the throne of God in heaven:

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;”¹⁴

“A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.”¹⁵

It should be readily observed that the same amount of angels are described in both verses — and the statement in Daniel 7:10 referring to the “books were open” is also paralleled by John in Revelation 5:2–5 describing Christ being the one who “prevailed to open the book,” fitting with Daniel 7:14 stating that the Son of Man was given

¹² Mark 14:62.

¹³ Matthew 16:27.

¹⁴ Revelation 5:11.

¹⁵ Daniel 7:10.

“dominion, and glory, and a kingdom” from the Ancient of Days.

By July 1839 Joseph Smith recognized that this placed the Ancient of Days in a position of authority above Christ, stating:

“Daniel in his seventh chapter speaks of the Ancient of Days; he means the oldest man, our Father Adam, Michael, he will call his children together and hold a council with them to prepare them for the coming of the Son of Man. He (Adam) is the father of the human family, and presides over the spirits of all men, and all that have had the keys must stand before him in this grand council. This may take place before some of us leave this stage of action. The Son of Man stands before him, and there is given him glory and dominion. Adam delivers up his stewardship to Christ, that which was delivered to him as holding the keys of the universe but retains his standing as head of the human family.”¹⁶

This statement by the Prophet strongly implied that Adam held the dominion of a God in holding the “keys of the universe.”

PRELIMINARY NAUVOO TEACHINGS ABOUT ADAM

In Joseph Smith’s July 1839 “Instruction on Priesthood” he privately gave to the Twelve and Seventies about to travel to England on missions, he made many other significant statements about Adam. He clearly states that Adam held the “keys”

¹⁶ *History of the Church* vol. 3 <2 July 1839> pages 386–387.

of the “First Presidency” in the Creation of the World, before the human family were spiritually created in Genesis 1:26–28.¹⁷ Additionally, he indicates that Adam presided over the keys of the priesthood being revealed from Heaven:

“The Priesthood was first given to Adam; he obtained the First Presidency, and held the keys of it from generation to generation. He obtained it in the Creation, before the world was formed, as in Genesis 1, 26, 27, 28. He had dominion given him over every living creature. He is Michael the Archangel, spoke of in the Scriptures. Then to Noah, who is Gabriel; he stands next in authority to Adam in the Priesthood; he was called of God to this office, and was the father of all living in his day, and to him was given the dominion. These men held keys first on earth, and then in heaven.

The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days, or end of years. The keys have to be brought from heaven whenever the Gospel is sent. When they are revealed from heaven, it is by Adam’s authority.”¹⁸

Joseph Smith however made two additional statements in his July 1839 instructions that are ambiguous enough that those who believe Joseph

¹⁷ Joseph Smith on one occasion taught that “world” and “earth” are distinct terms, world referencing the human family and “earth” referring to the planet: “The world and earth are not synonymous terms. The world is the human family. This earth was organized or formed out of other planets which were broke up and remodelled and made into the one on which we live.” (*Words of Joseph Smith* <5 January 1841> page 60)

¹⁸ *History of the Church* vol. 3 <2 July 1839> pages 385–386.

Smith understood and taught Adam-God as well as those who don't believe that he taught it could interpret them either way. First, he made a statement that is ambiguous enough that it could be identifying Adam as either "The Father" or "the creation of man":

"Our Savior speaks of the children and says, Their angels always stand before my Father. The Father called all spirits before Him at the creation of man, and organized them. He (Adam) is the head, and was told to multiply. The keys were first given to him, and by him to others. He will have to give an account of his stewardship, and they to him."¹⁹

Additionally, Joseph Smith made a statement about priesthood genealogy that could be interpreted as either Adam being above Christ as the individual who gave Christ his priesthood, or Adam as the second "Great High Priest" *under* Christ:

"How have we come at the Priesthood in the last days? It came down, down, in regular succession. Peter, James and John had it given to them and they gave it to others [i.e. Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith]. Christ is the Great High Priest; Adam next."²⁰

Supportive of Adam being *above* Christ, John Taylor interpreted this statement as Joseph Smith tracing his priesthood from Adam to Peter, James, and John down to himself:

¹⁹ *History of the Church* vol. 3 <2 July 1839> page 387.

²⁰ *History of the Church* vol. 3 <2 July 1839> pages 387–388.

“I heard Joseph Smith say that Adam was the Ancient of Days spoken of by Daniel. ...Joseph traced the priesthood from Adam to Peter, James and John, [and] they to Joseph.”²¹

Yet it should be acknowledged that in Joseph Smith’s October 1840 General Conference “instructions on Priesthood”, while the Prophet did make some additional strong statements concerning Adam, he still explicitly placed him below Christ in the Priesthood:

“These angels are under the direction of Michael or Adam who acts under the direction of Christ ...Adam receiving his Presidency and Authority from Christ, but cannot receive a fulness, until Christ shall present the Kingdom to the Father which shall be at the end of the last dispensation.”²²

Parley P. Pratt repeated this cosmology in 1845:

“This kingdom, organized and established upon earth in its beauty and order will be ready for the Son of man. He will then come in the clouds of heaven and receive it to himself. Adam and all the other patriarchs, kings, and prophets, will still be subject unto Christ, because he was in the eternal world, the first-born of every creature,

²¹ *In the President’s Office: The Diaries of L. John Nuttall, 1879–1892* <13 January 1880> page 53.

²² Joseph Smith “Instructions on Priesthood,” 5 October 1840 in *Joseph Smith Papers: Documents* vol. 7 pages 436–437. It should be noted that when this statement was published in the *History of the Church* they changed “Christ” to “the Lord” making it easier to harmonize with Adam-God teachings (see *History of the Church* vol. 4 pages 208–209).

and the beginning of the creation of God. Hence in the patriarchal order, he rules by right of birth.”²³

Yet Joseph’s October 1840 sermon on priesthood, like his July 1839 sermon on priesthood, exalts and expands the authority Adam held, laying out an expansive view of Adam that would be foundational for later Adam-God teachings.

ADAM PRESIDES OVER ALL DISPENSATIONS AND MEN

The first large stepping stone to the Adam-God Doctrine established by Joseph Smith was exalting Adam to preside over the human family as its patriarchal father and priesthood head. As Joseph Smith said in his July 2, 1839 discourse: “He (Adam) is the father of the human family, and presides over the spirits of all men.”²⁴ This private teaching to the apostles and seventies was more explicitly declared in Joseph Smith’s October 5, 1840 instruction on priesthood:

“Adam holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all the times [that] have been and will be revealed through him from the beginning to Christ, and from Christ to the end of the dispensations that are to be revealed.”²⁵

²³ *Millennial Star* vol. 5 <May 1845> page 191.

²⁴ *History of the Church* vol. 3 <2 July 1839> pages 386–387.

²⁵ *History of the Church* vol. 4 <5 October 1840> pages 208–209.

Only a few months later Joseph Smith would also begin to teach that Adam did not actually sin in the Garden of Eden:

“Adam did not commit sin in eating the fruits for God had decreed that he should eat and fall. But in compliance with the decree he should die — only ‘he should die’ was the saying of the Lord.”²⁶

On May 4, 1842 Joseph Smith revealed the Endowment ceremony which incorporated Adam as a key priesthood figure in the ritual. At the same time he reiterated that Adam was one of the primary creators of Earth, according to Willard Richards’ account Joseph Smith explained “the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days” at this meeting.²⁷ In early 1845 Parley P. Pratt would explain that the order of the Ancient of Days is the human family all organized under Adam and Eve as the “head of the whole great family of the redeemed”:

“First. His most gracious and venerable majesty King Adam, with his royal consort Queen Eve, will appear at the head of the whole great family of the redeemed, and will be crowned in their midst as a King and Priest forever after the order of the Son of God. They will be arrayed in garments white as snow, and will take their seats on the throne, in the midst of the paradise of God on the earth, to reign forever and ever. While thousands of thousands stand before him and ten thousand times ten thousand minister unto him. And if you will receive it, this is the Order of the Ancient of Days — the kingdom prepared and organized to meet Jesus when he

²⁶ *Words of Joseph Smith* <9 February 1841> page 63.

²⁷ *History of the Church* vol. 5 <4 May 1842> page 2.

comes. This venerable patriarch and sovereign will hold lawful jurisdiction over Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the prophets, apostles, and saints of all ages and dispensations, who will all reverence and obey him as their venerable father and lawful sovereign.”²⁸

ADAM WAS A GOD

In Joseph Smith’s July 1839 discourse on priesthood he indicated that Adam had received his priesthood keys and obtained the “First Presidency” before the Creation, yet said that Adam “held keys first on earth, and then in heaven.” This indicated that Adam had lived and faithfully held the priesthood on a previous world:

“The Priesthood was first given to Adam; he obtained the First Presidency, and held the keys of it from generation to generation. He obtained it in the Creation, before the world was formed, as in Genesis 1, 26, 27, 28. He had dominion given him over every living creature. He is Michael the Archangel, spoke of in the Scriptures. Then to Noah, who is Gabriel; he stands next in authority to Adam in the Priesthood; he was called of God to this office, and was the father of all living in his day, and to him was given the dominion. These men held keys first on earth, and then in heaven.”²⁹

In keeping with this, the Endowment ceremony Joseph Smith introduced in 1842 taught that Adam was one of three exalted Gods involved with the Creation — Elohim, Jehovah, and

²⁸ *Millennial Star* vol. 5 <May 1845> page 191.

²⁹ *History of the Church* vol. 3 <2 July 1839> pages 385–386.

Michael,³⁰ which Edward Stevenson also heard Joseph teach in some unspecified setting:

“Joseph Smith was the first, whom I ever heard proclaim a plurality of Gods, he said that there was Eloheim God, and Jehovah God, and Michael God. ...Joseph the Seer, said, in the grand Council of Heaven, The Great Eloheim, directed Jehovah and Michael for the Gods counseled in the beginning of the Creation of This Earth.”³¹

Anson Call recalled that in in the winter of 1843–1844 Joseph Smith explicitly taught that Adam came from another planet:

“Now regarding Adam: He came here from another planet an immortalized being and brought his wife, Eve, with him, and by eating of the fruits of this Earth became subject to death and decay and he became ‘of the earth earthly’, was made mortal and subject to death.”³²

Further corroborating that this aspect of the Adam-God Doctrine — travelling to new worlds and that each wife gets her own planet — originated from Joseph Smith, the February 1844 poem “Buckeye’s Lamentation” stated “There you may reign like mighty Gods, Creating worlds so fair;—

³⁰ See the upcoming issue of *One Eternal Round* “The Adam–God Doctrine in the Endowment.”

³¹ *Autobiography of Edward Stevenson, 1820–1870* page 64, spelling and grammar corrected.

³² Anson Call Statement, 1877, John M. Whitaker Papers, Special Collections, University of Utah Library, italics in the original.

At least a *world* for every *wife*, That you take with you there.”³³

MANKIND ARE THE PHYSICAL OFFSPRING OF GOD

A final aspect of the Adam-God Doctrine that Joseph Smith began to reveal is that mankind are the physical offspring of God. Brigham Young recalled:

“Joseph did say in the endowments, ‘We do make man out of the dust of the earth as much as God did make Adam.’ ...Joseph knew from the Lord Almighty that Adam was not made out of an adobe.”³⁴

Benjamin F. Johnson similarly recalled that “He [Joseph Smith] taught us that God was the great head of human procreation — was really and truly the Father of both our spirits and our bodies.”³⁵ Johnson further testified that Joseph Smith taught that one of the purposes of the Council of Fifty was so that “man will be taught to know his origin.”³⁶ The Council of Fifty minutes appear to record the meeting wherein Joseph Smith taught that mankind were the physical offspring of God:

³³ Buckeye’s Lamentation for Want of More Wives, *Warsaw Message*, 7 February 1844, italics in original.

³⁴ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <20 April 1855> page 933.

³⁵ Benjamin F. Johnson letter to George S. Gibbs, 1903, LDS Archives.

³⁶ Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life’s Review* page 87.

“The chairman [Joseph Smith] explained the meaning of the word ‘Ahman’ which signifies the first man, or first God [of the Trinity]; and ‘Ahman Christ’ signifies the first man’s son.”³⁷

Two days later, on April 7, 1844, Joseph Smith gave the King Follett Discourse, revealing that God “was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did.”³⁸ Two months later, on June 16, 1844 the Prophet gave his final doctrinal discourse, preaching on the plurality of Gods and that God the Father had Fathers above Him.³⁹ Being martyred less than two weeks later, the Prophet clearly was cut short on laying out his full theology on the nature of God. It would be up to his successors to finish revealing what he had privately taught them about the nature of God and man’s relationship to Deity.

ADAM-GOD IN LATE NAUVOO

Those who were close to Joseph Smith and were privately taught his deeper theology about God began to reveal it to the Saints after his death. The doctrine of Heavenly Mother began to be discussed as early as December 1844,⁴⁰ and in

³⁷ *Joseph Smith Papers: Council of Fifty Minutes* <5 April 1844> page 81

³⁸ *History of the Church* vol. 6 <7 April 1844> page 305.

³⁹ *History of the Church* vol. 6 <16 June 1844> page 476.

⁴⁰ “He [Brigham Young] also spoke of the relation we held to our Father in Heaven and to our Mother, the Queen.”

January 1845 John Taylor spoke about man being “related to Gods”:

“When we are all united as the tribe of Ephraim, we shall have an invulnerable bulwark that the powers of hell cannot subvert. We can see the order of the Father taking His place and all being in subjection to him, and when we trace our descent like the branch of the tree, we shall trace the root of it to our Father in Heaven. And we shall be related to Gods, and shall find our union in temporal and spiritual things. We have Fathers — one who is in Heaven and others on earth.”⁴¹

On January 15, 1845 the *Times and Seasons* published a song by W.W. Phelps that was written for and sung at the dedication of the Seventies’ Hall on December 29, 1844. This song appears to equate Adam and Eve to “our Father in heaven, and Mother, the Queen”:

“Come to me, here are Adam and Eve at the head,
Of a multitude, quicken’d and rais’d from the dead;
Here’s the knowledge that was, or that is, or will be—
In the gen’ral assembly of worlds: Come to me.
Come to me, here’s the myst’ry that man hath not seen;
Here’s our Father in heaven, and Mother, the Queen;
Here are worlds that have been, and the worlds yet to be,
Here’s eternity, — endless; amen: Come to me.”⁴²

(*Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <29 December 1844> page 62)

⁴¹ Minutes of a Family Meeting in Nauvoo, 8 January 1845, *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine* vol. 11 page 115.

⁴² “Come to Me,” Composed for and Sung at the Dedication of the Seventies Hall, 29 December 1844, published in *Times and Seasons* vol. 6 <15 January 1845> page 783.

In recalling her experience receiving the Endowment in the Nauvoo Temple in the winter of 1845–6, Mary Ettie V. Smith recalled that the identity of God became a stir in connection to the Temple:

“[In the Nauvoo Temple] we were next led into what is called the Terrestrial Glory; where Brigham Young received us, and after a long effort to explain the disgusting scene in the ‘Garden,’ as necessary to our future exaltation, he gave each a password and grip necessary, he said, to admit us into the ‘Celestial Glory;’ where our (i.e. Mormon) ‘god’ dwells. Some say this is Adam; and some that Joe Smith is to be our ‘god,’ and afterwards, Brigham Young intimated, that he (Brigham), was the medium of our salvation, and that Joseph was his ‘god’. They do not all agree upon this point; but they do agree upon another thing, and that is: that there are many gods...”⁴³

It seems plausible that her recollection was accurate, given that Heber C. Kimball in the Nauvoo Temple taught that one of the important purposes of the Endowment was to “personify Adam”:

“We have been taken as it were from the earth, and have traveled until we have entered the Celestial Kingdom, and what is it for? It is to personify Adam. And you discover that our God is like one of us, for he created us in his own image. Every man that ever came upon this

⁴³ *Fifteen years among the Mormons: being the narrative of Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith <1857>* page 48.

earth, or any other earth, will take the course we have taken.”⁴⁴

BRIGHAM YOUNG’S CONVERSION TO ADAM-GOD

Some argue that Brigham Young understood Adam was God the Father at least as early as February 16, 1847, based on his comment “Father in the priesthood implies the Great Head. The term would be proper to Father Adam.”⁴⁵ Yet a more complete account of this sentence was written in Willard Richards’ journal, which recorded Brigham say “I want you to stop your calling me Father Young, in the priesthood the term properly applies to Father Adam, *and to our Father in Heaven.*”⁴⁶ On other occasions in the late 1840s Brigham also indicated the absence of Adam-God in his early teachings. On December 6, 1847 he said: “God is the father of our spirits yet not the father of our bodies.”⁴⁷

Yet on multiple occasions Brigham testified that Joseph taught that “Adam was our Father and

⁴⁴ *Nauvoo Endowment Companies* <21 December 1845> page 120.

⁴⁵ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <16 February 1847> page 180.

⁴⁶ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <16 February 1847> page 184, italics added.

⁴⁷ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <6 December 1847> page 267. On July 2, 1848 he said “He [Jesus Christ] is the only begotten by the Father—in the flesh. We are all begotten in some other way.” (*Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <2 July 1848> page 290)

our God.”⁴⁸ How does this fit with him not initially understanding Adam-God? Either Brigham did not initially comprehend the implications of what Joseph taught, or he understood Joseph’s teachings as Adam being our lowercase “father” and our lowercase “god”, not that he is our Father in Heaven. Brigham understood that Joseph’s doctrine was that every priesthood leader was a “god,” and that every parent stands as a god to their posterity in the New and Everlasting Covenant. At the April 1845 General Conference Brigham taught:

“Becoming a ‘God’ is simply to be in possession of a kingdom — that makes him an Almighty man to that kingdom. As Joseph said it is written in your scriptures ‘to whom the word of God came — they were gods.’ when a man is in possession of the principles of revelation, who obtains knowledge more than any other being, it actually makes a God of him.”⁴⁹

Similarly on November 30, 1862 Brigham Young explicitly preached:

“When we are crowned kings and queens, Father Adam and Mother Eve will be king and queen of us all. Under the priesthood which is after the order of the Son of God and the power of an endless life, each father, being a son, will always, throughout time and eternity, be subject to his father as his king, dictator, father, lord and God. Each son in turn becomes a father and is entitled to the same obedience from the line of his descendants. It is by the authority and power of the holy priesthood alone

⁴⁸ See Appendix A — “Joseph Smith Taught Adam is our Father and God.”

⁴⁹ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <20 April 1845> page 81.

that beings in heaven and on earth can be entitled to and secured in the possession of this regal authority.”⁵⁰

So it is perfectly plausible that Brigham Young indeed heard Joseph say that Adam was our father and god — and understood it in the context of being the patriarchal father and head of humanity. On January 8, 1845 Brigham taught:

“You and your children will rise up and administer unto your children, and you will rule over your posterity, and they may get up in tens, hundreds, thousands, and millions. Yet all will finally join with Adam who will be the King of all; Seth comes next; Seth rules under his father and over all; so this process will never end.”⁵¹

In January 1847 Brigham more directly said “Adam will claim us all as members of his kingdom we being his children.”⁵² One month later he taught:

“The seal of the covenant that I have been speaking of today was what the apostle saw previous to the destruction of the wicked, when the angel was commanded not to pour out the vials of wrath on the wicked until the Saints were sealed in their forehead and when this was done they all became Father Adam’s family.”⁵³

⁵⁰ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <30 November 1862> page 2084.

⁵¹ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <8 January 1845> page 66.

⁵² *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <16 January 1847> page 172.

⁵³ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <16 February 1847> page 180.

By the end of 1847 Brigham Young began to teach that Adam was a resurrected being. On December 27, 1847 he said “there was no person except a resurrected body who held the keys of the resurrection. Michael the Ark Angel or Ancient of Days who was Father Adam held the Keys of the resurrection.”⁵⁴ On February 23, 1848 he reiterated:

“Michael the archangel or Adam holds the keys of the resurrection and after a man is raised from the dead, has an immortal body and receives an ordination to hold the keys of the resurrection from under the hands of Michael or those having authority [from him], he then has power to raise the dead, and not before. Jesus was the first fruits of the resurrection.”⁵⁵

Interestingly, despite his later opposition to the Adam-God Doctrine, during this same time period Orson Pratt also taught that Adam was the individual who presided over the resurrection. On November 21, 1847 Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal:

“21st Sunday I met at the stand some of the Twelve and the congregation. O[rson] Pratt addressed the congregation upon the subject of the resurrection which was interesting to us all. Some had been teaching the doctrine that the resurrection was by birth or through the womb but brother Pratt showed the folly of such a doctrin, and Proved by many revelations that the dead were raised by the power of God and the Blowing of the Trump of Michael the Ark Angel who was Father Adam

⁵⁴ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <27 December 1847> page 273.

⁵⁵ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <23 February 1848> page 276.

and that the graves of the Saints would be opened and their bodies would come forth out of their graves according to the visions of Ezekiel and many of the prophets. He showed that however miraculous it might appear unto us it was just as easy for God to perform this work as it was to turn water into wine or make Bread without flour to feed a multitude. W[ilford] Woodruff followed brother Pratt and bore testimony to what had been said and spoke in the spirit of the Lord.”⁵⁶

On September 2, 1849 Brigham Young first taught his belief that mankind were the physical offspring of God: “But just wait a little while and you will know I never believed that Father Adam was made out of a chunk of clay.”⁵⁷ Seven months later, on April 21, 1850 he preached: “Our Father came down and partook of an earthly tabernacle – No spirit can beget a mortal tabernacle.”⁵⁸

Brigham alluded to his identification of Adam as the “Father” and Adam’s God as the “Grandfather” in his February 5, 1852 discourse on race, slavery, and the priesthood, stating:

“After the deed was done, the Lord inquired for Abel and made Cain own what he had done with him. Now, says the Grandfather, I will not destroy the seed of Michael and his wife, and Cain, I will not kill you nor suffer anyone else to kill you, but I will put a mark upon you. What is that mark? You will see it on the

⁵⁶ *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal* vol. 3 <21 November 1847> pages 291–292.

⁵⁷ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <2 September 1849> page 351.

⁵⁸ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <21 April 1850> page 375.

countenance of every African you ever did see upon the face of the earth or ever will see.”⁵⁹

On March 14, 1852 in a private prayer circle of Church leaders, Brigham “rolled out revelation upon revelation in regard to the creation of the world” and stated that the faithful “shall receive our resurrected bodies and shall all have the privilege of going as Adams” to future worlds:

“<At 4 p.m. Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, Orson Pratt, Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith, Thomas Bullock, Edward Hunter, Daniel H. Wells, and W.W. Phelps met in the temple rooms, and prayed.>

Brigham Young rolled out revelation upon revelation in regard to the creation of the world. Adam came to the Earth when he assisted to form it, he then partook of the fruits of the Earth and became Earthy, and they which are [faithful] after shall receive our resurrected bodies and shall all have the privilege of going as Adams to form an Earth and do likewise.”⁶⁰

ADAM-GOD PROCLAIMED TO THE WORLD

Less than a month after his private prayer circle wherein Brigham told other leaders that the

⁵⁹ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <5 February 1852> page 468.

⁶⁰ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <14 March 1852> page 487.

faithful will become Adams to future worlds, at the April 9, 1852 General Conference he proclaimed:

“Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a *celestial body*, and brought Eve, *one of his wives*, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is MICHAEL, the *Archangel*, the ANCIENT OF DAYS! about whom holy men have written and spoken — He is our FATHER and our GOD, *and the only God with whom WE have to do*. Every man upon the earth, professing Christians or non-professing, must hear it, and *will know it sooner or later*.”⁶¹

Throughout the 1850s Brigham Young gave many other Adam-God sermons. On February 19, 1854 he preached:

“Who was it that spoke from the heavens and said ‘This is my beloved Son, hear ye him?’ Was it God the Father? It was. ...Who did beget [Jesus]? His Father, and his father is our God, and the Father of our spirits, and he is the framer of the body, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who is he? He is Father Adam, Michael, the Ancient of Days.”⁶²

At the October 1854 General Conference Brigham Young gave a sermon that Wilford Woodruff called the “greatest sermon that was ever delivered to the Latter Day Saints since they have

⁶¹ *Journal of Discourses* vol. 1 <9 April 1852> page 50, emphasis and italic in the original.

⁶² *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <19 February 1854> page 763.

bene a people.”⁶³ The sermon was never published in the 1800s, but in it he primarily focused on the Adam-God doctrine and stated it in many different ways to drive home the ultimate point that “when you see your Father in the Heavens, you will see Adam; when you see your Mother that bear your spirit, you will see Mother Eve.”⁶⁴

In many of his discourses, Brigham Young would emphasize that he had no doubt about the Adam-God Doctrine and that it was revelation from God to himself:

“I tell you this as my belief about that personage who is called the Ancient of Days, the Prince and so on. But I do not tell it because that I wish it to be established in the minds of others, though to me it is as clear as the sun. It is as plain as my alphabet. I understand it as I do the path to go home. **I did not understand so until my mind became enlightened with the Spirit and by the revelation of God, neither will you understand until our Father in Heaven reveals all these things unto you.** To my mind and to my feelings those matters are all plain and easy to understand.”⁶⁵

⁶³ *Wilford Woodruff's Journal* vol. 4 <8 October 1854> page 290.

⁶⁴ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <8 October 1854> page 852.

⁶⁵ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <25 April 1855> page 935, emphasis added.

THE APOSTLES AND ADAM-GOD

Many of the apostles also publicly supported and taught the Adam-God Doctrine. Heber C. Kimball was the most vocal proponent, preaching the day after President Young announced the doctrine:

“Some have said that I was very presumptuous to say that Brother Brigham was my God and Savior. Brother Joseph was his God. The one that gave Joseph the keys of the kingdom was his God which was Peter. Jesus Christ was his God, and the God and Father of Jesus Christ was Adam.”⁶⁶

Some alleged that Heber C. Kimball was the first apostle to publicly teach the Adam-God Doctrine. On April 5, 1860 Orson Pratt stated “in regard to Adam being our Father and our God, I have not published it, although I frankly say, I have no confidence in it, although advanced by brother [Heber C.] Kimball in the stand, and afterwards approved by brother Brigham.”⁶⁷ T.B.H. Stenhouse similarly alleged “Brother Heber had considerable pride in relating to his intimate friends that he was

⁶⁶ *Wilford Woodruff's Journal* vol. 4 <10 April 1852> page 130.

⁶⁷ *Minutes of Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve, 1835–1893* <5 April 1860> page 255.

the source of Brigham's revelation on the 'Adam-deity'."⁶⁸

Regardless of whether Heber or Brigham were the first to teach Adam-God, Heber C. Kimball was a firm believer and public supporter of the doctrine. In his journal Kimball wrote:

"The Lord told me that Adam was my father and that he was the God and father of all the inhabitants of this earth."⁶⁹

Kimball additionally preached many sermons referencing that Adam was God, such as a sermon he gave on June 29, 1856:

"I have learned by experience that there is but one God that pertains to this people, and He is the God that pertains to this earth — the first man. That first man sent his own Son to redeem the world, to redeem his brethren; his life was taken, his blood shed, that our sins might be remitted."⁷⁰

Orson Hyde was another supporter of the Adam-God Doctrine. Brigham Young alluded to Orson Hyde delivering an Adam-God discourse on March 28, 1858, but the sermon is not extant.⁷¹ On April 5, 1860 Orson Hyde stated in response to Orson Pratt's opposition to Adam-God that "Who is our Heavenly Father. I would as soon it was Father

⁶⁸ T.B.H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* <1873> page 561.

⁶⁹ *On the Potter's Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball* <30 April 1862> page 176.

⁷⁰ *Journal of Discourses* vol. 4 <29 June 1856> page 1.

⁷¹ *Journal of Discourses* vol. 7 <28 March 1858> page 47.

Adam, or any other good and lawful being.”⁷² Later on January 25, 1871 Orson Hyde “preached to us here in Manti, that, Adam is our God for this planet (Earth).”⁷³

Orson Pratt would be the only apostle during President Young’s lifetime to offer significant opposition to the Adam-God Doctrine. While travelling with William Clayton and other missionaries, on October 3, 1852 Orson Spencer gave a sermon on Adam coming to earth with a resurrected body. In response, Orson Pratt preached a sermon strongly contradicting what Orson Spencer had just barely taught:

“Morning foggy and very chilly, but about 10 o’clock it cleared off fine and pleasant, and the brethren were called together for public worship. The chaplain Orson Spencer addressed the meeting for an hour and a half on the doctrine of our father Adam coming to this earth in the morning of creation with a resurrected body, etc. He read extracts from the New Translation of the 1st and 2nd chapters of the Book of Genesis, and the Prophecy of Enoch to maintain his position. He was listened to with great attention.

He was followed by Elder Orson Pratt on the same subject, who read more copiously from the above mentioned works, followed by deep and reasonable remarks. He takes the literal reading of the scriptures for his guide, and maintains that God took the dust of the earth and moulded a body into which he put the spirit of man just as we have generally understood from the

⁷² *Minutes of Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve, 1835–1893* <5 April 1860> page 255.

⁷³ Jans Christian Anderson Weibye Daybooks, 25 January 1871.

scriptures; while Brother Spencer endeavors to substantiate the position taken by President Young viz. that Adam came to this earth with a resurrected body, and became mortal by eating the fruits of the earth which was earthy.

The subject was finally left in much difficulty and obscurity as it has been from the beginning. The brethren are evidently getting tired of arguing on a subject in regards to which so little is known, or satisfaction desired; and on which there is so great a difference of opinion.”⁷⁴

Even though Orson Pratt blatantly taught against Brigham’s views, Brigham attempted to be patient with him and suggested he philosophize less and spend more time in the canyons and strive to get revelation:

“Brother [Orson] Pratt also thought that Adam was made of the dust of the earth. Could not believe that Adam was our God or the Father of Jesus Christ. President Young said that He came from another world and made this. Brought Eve with him, partook of the fruits of the earth, begat children and they were earthly and had mortal bodies and if we were faithful, we should become Gods as He was.

He [Brigham] told Brother Pratt to lay aside his philosophical reasoning and get revelation from God to govern him and enlighten his mind more and it would be a great blessing to him to lay aside his books and go into the canyons as some of the rest of us was doing and it would be better for him. He said his philosophy injured

⁷⁴ *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* <3 October 1852> pages 433–434.

him in a measure many good things was said by President Young that we should grow up in revelation so that principle would govern every act of our lives. He had never found any difficulty in leading this people since Joseph's death."⁷⁵

Two years later there was again another serious conversation between Orson Pratt and Brigham Young, as summarized by Samuel W. Richards in his journal:

"A very serious conversation took place between President B. Young and Orson Pratt upon doctrine. O. P. was directly opposed to the President's views and very freely expressed his entire disbelief in them after being told by the President that things were so and so in the name of the Lord. He was firm in the position that the President's word in the name of the Lord, was not the word of the Lord to him. The President did not believe that Orson Pratt would ever be Adam, to learn by experience the facts discussed, but every other, person in the room would be if they lived faithful."⁷⁶

Unfortunately Orson Pratt's opposition continued on and off for years, reaching a climax in 1860 wherein the apostles had several meetings between January and April regarding Pratt's opposition to President Young's teachings and ultimately required him to sincerely confess and promise to not teach contrary to Brigham

⁷⁵ *Wilford Woodruff's Journal* vol. 4 <17 September 1854> pages 288-289.

⁷⁶ Samuel W. Richards journal, 11 March 1856, underline in original, *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* page 1061.

anymore.⁷⁷ Still, Orson Pratt would be double-minded about his repentance, again repenting to President Young before the School of the Prophets for opposing him on Adam-God eight years later:

“The school of the prophets met in Salt Lake City at 2 p.m. Elder Orson Pratt made a full confession before the School of his error in opposing doctrines revealed; said whenever he had done so and excused himself because of what was written [in scripture], his mind became darkened and he felt bad. He asked forgiveness of President Young, of the Twelve and the whole school. President Young expressed his satisfaction with Elder Pratt’s confession and [then] preached in relation to Adam, etc. Elder [Wilford] Woodruff spoke and felt happy at Bro. Pratt’s position and present feelings.”⁷⁸

In contrast to Orson Pratt, who in the 1850s often taught against Brigham Young’s teachings, brothers Franklin D. Richards and Samuel W. Richards who presided in England wrote and published articles defending Brigham Young’s teachings. In one article defending the Adam-God Doctrine, Samuel W. Richards wrote:

“In the Patriarchal order of government, each and every ruler is independent in his sphere, his rule extending to those below, and not to those above him, in the same order. While the God of unnumbered worlds is

⁷⁷ Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 24 March 1858; See also Minutes of Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve, 27 January 1860 and 4–5 April 1860, also in Fred C. Collier, *The Office Journal of President Brigham Young Book D* <Appendixes A–D> pages 405–444.

⁷⁸ *Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minutes* <4 July 1868> page 24.

acknowledged to be his God and Father, Adam still maintains his exalted position at the head of all those who are saved from among the whole family of man; and he will be God over all those who are made Gods from among men.”⁷⁹

Similarly, Franklin D. Richards also defended Adam-God, preaching:

“Adam is our Father and our God. [But] I have to say, do not trouble yourselves, neither let the Saints be troubled about that matter. ...Tell the Saints that if this stone does not seem to fit into the great building of their faith just now, to roll it aside. You can help them roll it out of their way, so that they will not stumble against it while at their daily duties, and it will be but a short time till they will find a place in their building where no other stone will fit; then it will be on hand all right, and will come into its place in the building of their faith with the sound of hammer or chisel.”⁸⁰

In 1862, Francis M. Lyman as a young man mentioned Adam-God as a matter-of-fact in a sermon, and stated that he knew of a case where a man was excommunicated for not believing in it:

“I have heard of a man who was cut off because he would not believe that Adam was our Father and God. ‘Well, but was it not so?’ Its being so does not change the fact that we are sinners and need salvation, and such preaching does not help men and women to repent of their sins.

⁷⁹ Samuel W. Richards, *Millennial Star* vol. 15 <10 December 1853> page 803.

⁸⁰ Franklin D. Richards, *Millennial Star* vol. 16 <28 June 1854> pages 534–535.

I call all that preaching senseless which cannot be applied. When we get where such things are needed, we shall be better able to understand them. We want men to be sober, temperate, just, honest, virtuous, and pure, always doing right, rising in progressive intelligence, and helping their fellows to rise also; and to accomplish this we must teach them to be so—teach them principles which they can comprehend and apply. When men know so much that they cannot preach from things on the earth, but have to go to heaven for them, I would as soon they would stop preaching and go home. Men have tried to preach how the resurrection was going to be brought about, and all those great things, a knowledge of which is so much sought after by some individuals. Such preaching will not redeem mankind, nor make them wiser and happier.

As for believing that Adam was our God, I do not know but that we are gods; only, if it is so, we are very young yet. But could we ever feel that we are the children of a God who watches over us with more care and solicitude than we can bestow upon the little ones who call us fathers here on the earth, would not our desires and object be to win the continued love of such a Parent by leaving off everything wrong, while we would seek to fill up the whole aggregate of our judgments with knowledge that is pure and holy, that we might become like that Father and be prepared to dwell with him. Then it is well to think that God is our Father; and whether it be Adam or anyone else, ever struggle upwards, upwards; always keep your hearts and faces upwards, and let every struggle you make be to carry you to the harbour of rest, the haven of peace, where you may enjoy the felicity awaiting the faithful children of our God.⁸¹

⁸¹ Francis M. Lyman, *Millennial Star* vol. 24 <15 February

POEMS AND HYMNS

It should be recognized that not only was Adam-God taught in sermons and published editorials, but that it was also incorporated into poems and hymns in the early Utah period. One poem about Adam-God by W.W. Phelps was published in the *Deseret News* in 1857:

“Shine you with the stars to-night, —
Where the ‘Dog-stars’ ever eye us,
As the upper suns of light?
What if Kolob is Si-ri us?
God, who’s Adam, with a madam,
Brought our garden seeds from there,
Nightly singing—‘Here we are.’
Shine you with the stars to-night, —
Where our Adam’s Father’s Father,
In another range of light,
Sees the wiser virgins gather, —
Where the lions fill up Zions —
For yet further kingdoms there?
So on — Singing: — ‘Here we are’.”⁸²

Eliza R. Snow also wrote poetry about Adam-God. One of her poems, written in 1877 states:

“Adam, your God, like you on earth, has been
Subject to sorrow in a world of sin:

1862> page 100.

⁸² W. W. Phelps, song “Here We Are” composed for the 12th night of February 1857, *Deseret News* <28 January 1857> page 5.

Through long gradation he arose to be
 Cloth'd with the Godhead's might and majesty...
 By his obedience he obtain'd the place
 Of God and Father of this human race."⁸³

In 1856 when a new hymnal was published in Liverpool, England, an Adam-God hymn "We Believe in our God" was included:

"We believe in our God the great Prince of His race,
 The Archangel Michael, the Ancient of Days,
 Our own Father Adam, earth's Lord, as is plain,
 Who'll counsel and fight for his children again."⁸⁴

The hymn "Sons of Michael" is another example of an Adam-God hymn. The hymn, which is still in LDS hymnals today, as originally published referenced Michael as the "Eternal Father":

"Sons of Michael, he approaches!
 Rise; the Eternal Father greet:
 Bow, ye thousands, low before him;
 Minister before his feet.
 Hail the patriarch's glad reign,
 Spreading over sea and main."⁸⁵

⁸³ *Poems, Religious, Historical, and Political* vol. 2 pages 8–9.

⁸⁴ *Sacred Hymns and Spiritual Songs for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* <1856> page 375.

⁸⁵ *Millennial Star* vol. 23 no. 15 <13 April 1861> page 240.

ADAM-GOD OUT OF PUBLIC VIEW

Even though President Brigham Young recognized that there were many Latter-day Saints that struggled with his doctrinal revelation, he did not doubt it in the slightest. On September 1, 1859 Brigham stated:

“You have been taught doctrine in abundance, and I have sometimes thought it a pity the Lord has revealed quite as much as he has. And I can truly say that I believe, if I am guilty in any one point in my walk before this people, it is in telling them things they are not worthy of — that I have given unto them things that they could not receive.”⁸⁶

He similarly preached on May 20, 1860:

“And I will say, as I have before said, if guilt before my God and my brethren rests upon me in the least, it is in this one thing — that I have revealed too much concerning God and his kingdom, and the designs of our Father in heaven. If my skirts are stained in the least with wrong, it is because I have been too free in telling what God is, how he lives, the nature of his providences and designs in creating the world, in bringing forth the human family on the earth, his designs concerning them, etc. If I had, like Paul, said — ‘But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant,’ [1 Corinthians 14:38] perhaps it would have been better for the people.”⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *Journal of Discourses* vol. 7 <1 September 1859> page 238.

⁸⁷ *Journal of Discourses* vol. 8 <20 May 1860> page 58.

During a Quorum of the Twelve discussion on January 27, 1860, Brigham Young said:

“Michael was a Resurrected Being and he left Eloheim and came to this earth with an immortal body, and continued so till he partook of earthly food and begot children who were mortal (keep this to yourselves).”⁸⁸

Telling the apostles to “keep this to yourselves” appears to mark the beginning of a shift in policy regarding Adam-God. While Brigham Young gave frequent sermons on the subject in the 1850s, Brigham did not preach or mention Adam-God as commonly in the 1860s and 1870s.

Yet in the privacy of the School of the Prophets, not only did President Young reiterate his belief in Adam-God, but many other Church leaders bore testimony in support of it as well. On January 24, 1868 Wilford Woodruff preached:

“I wish to refer to the first doctrine preached that Adam was our Father and God. In the Revelation called the Olive Leaf [i.e. D&C 88] it says that ‘the Devil gathered together the Hosts of Hell and Michael the Ark Angel gathered together the Hosts of Heave and he overcame the Devil and his angels and this is the Battle of the Great God.’ Who is this Michael the Ark Angel? — It is Adam who was Michael in the Creation of the World.”⁸⁹

George Q. Cannon also endorsed the Adam-God Doctrine in the School of the Prophets:

⁸⁸ *Minutes of Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve, 1835–1893* <27 January 1860> page 243.

⁸⁹ *Salt Lake School of the Prophet Minutes* <24 January 1868> pages 13–14.

“Elder George Q. Cannon fully endorsed the doctrine that Father Adam was our God and Father — or as He in many places is called Michael the great Prince — Arch Angel, Ancient of Days, etc. It was not only wisdom, but perfectly consistent that Adam and Eve should partake of the forbidden fruit and start the work of increase of their species. The above Doctrine had been revealed to me, so that I know it is true.”⁹⁰

After George Q. Cannon’s remarks, Joseph F. Smith recorded that “President Young spoke on the subject of Adam and God, ‘whom to know is life eternal’ — who knows him? It is certainly important to know. He wanted the brethren to mediate on the subject, pray about it, and keep it to themselves.”⁹¹ The minutes of the school record that after Brigham said this he asked the rhetorical question “If we do [not] know who Adam is, how can we know anything about his Father?”⁹²

Additionally, both Daniel H. Wells and Joseph F. Smith endorsed the doctrine of Adam-God in the School of the Prophets:

“President Daniel H. Wells said that President [Brigham] Young touched on certain principles and doctrines yesterday, and particularly that doctrine pertaining to Adam being our Father and our God, and thought this was a proper place to call for the minds of the brethren and learn whether we as a school endorse the doctrine.

⁹⁰ *Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minutes* <15 October 1870> page 127.

⁹¹ Joseph F. Smith journal, 15 October 1870, LDS Archives, underline in original.

⁹² *Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minutes* <15 October 1870> page 128.

He bore a powerful testimony to the truth of the doctrine, remarking that if ever he had received a testimony of any doctrine in this Church he had of the truth of this. The Endowments plainly teach it and the Bible and other revelations are full of it.

The doctrine was approved or endorsed by Henry Grow, D. B. Huntington, and Joseph F. Smith. The latter read a portion of a revelation given to the Church, affirming that Michael or Adam is the Father of all the Prince of all, and stated that the enunciation of that doctrine gave him great joy. A. H. Raleigh said he had never heard any one dispute the doctrine, to him it was perfectly natural, as was every other principle of the Gospel when understood.”⁹³

As Brigham expressed in the Salt Lake City School of the Prophets at the end of this meeting, his only concern is that he may have been too open about Adam-God to the world:

“President [Brigham] Young queried whether the brethren thought he was too liberal in launching out on this doctrine [Adam-God] before the Gentiles. He was positive on the truth of the doctrine, but thought we should be cautious about preaching on doctrines unless we fully understand them by the power of the Spirit, then they commend themselves to the hearts of our hearers. ...Said there were many revelations given to him [Brigham Young] that he did not receive from the Prophet Joseph. He did not receive them through the Urim and Thummim as Joseph did but when he did

⁹³ *Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minutes* <9 June 1873> pages 377–378.

receive them he knew of their truth as much as it was possible for him to know of any truth.”⁹⁴

During the last year of his life, Brigham would firmly integrate Adam-God into LDS cosmology by explicitly incorporating a detailed Adam-God sermon into one of the lectures of the Temple Endowment ceremony that was known as the “Lecture at the Veil.”⁹⁵ In this sermon, President Young taught that Adam “was made just the same way you and I are made but on another earth”:

“Adam was an immortal being when he came on this earth; he had lived on an earth similar to ours, he had received the Priesthood and the keys thereof, and had been faithful in all things and gained his resurrection and his exaltation, and was crowned with glory, immortality and eternal lives, and was numbered with the Gods, for such he became ‘through his faithfulness.’ [He] had begotten all the spirits that were to come to this earth, and Eve, our common mother, who is the mother of all living, bore those spirits in the celestial world.

...Father Adam’s oldest son, Jesus the Savior, who is the heir of the family, is Father Adam’s first begotten in the spirit world; who, according to the flesh, is the only begotten, as it is written. In his divinity he [Adam] having gone back into the spirit world, and come in the spirit to Mary and she conceived; for when Adam and Eve got through with their work in this earth, they did

⁹⁴ *Salt Lake City School of the Prophets Minutes* <9 June 1873> page 378.

⁹⁵ See *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <1 February 1877> pages 3104–3105; for more on this see the upcoming issue of *One Eternal Round* “Adam–God in the Endowment.”

not lay their bodies down in the dust, but returned to the spirit world from whence they came.”⁹⁶

AFTER BRIGHAM’S DEATH

Brigham Young died on August 29, 1877, less than eight months after he explicitly incorporated Adam-God into the Lecture at the Veil. Yet the Adam-God Doctrine did not die with him, the belief remained with many church leaders and members during the decades that followed.

While no published sermons exist of President John Taylor explicitly preaching Adam-God during Brigham’s lifetime, John Taylor taught Adam-God as the next Church President privately. On January 13, 1880 he taught:

“I heard Joseph Smith say that Adam was the Ancient of Days spoken of by Daniel. ...Joseph traced the priesthood from Adam to Peter, James, and John, and they to Joseph, and all who have held a portion of the priesthood would have to give an account of their stewardship or priesthood to the one from whom they received it, rendering up an account of your stewardship to the one that proceeded you, but you do not give up your priesthood. Adam heard the voice of the Lord walking in the garden. Adam had a God then...and when we get to God our Father we are told to approach him in the name of Jesus. Adam is the father of our bodies. Who is to say he is not the father of our spirits.”⁹⁷

⁹⁶ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <1 February 1877> pages 3104–3105.

⁹⁷ *In the President’s Office: The Diaries of L. John Nuttall, 1879–1892* <13 January 1880> pages 53–54.

In 1882 George Q. Cannon recorded in his journal that he spoke with John Taylor on Heavenly Father being Adam:

“I had a most delightful conversation with President [John] Taylor upon doctrine. Listened to his views about our Father in Heaven (Adam) and Jesus, and gave him some of mine upon the same subjects.”⁹⁸

Franklin D. Richards recorded in his journal that on March 24, 1887 there was a pleasant discussion on the Adam-God Doctrine among Church leaders:

“At 10 met with G[eorge]. Q. Cannon, L[orenzo]. Snow F[ranklin]. D. R[ichards]. J[ohn]. H[enry]. Smith, F[ranklin]. S. R[ichards]. L[e].G[rand]. Young A[urelius]. Miner, A[ngus]. M. Cannon, W[illiam] Budge, James Jack, Geo[rge]. Reynolds, W[illiam]. B. Preston at Presidents office — while we discussed the unfinished business of the changes from the former arrangement to the present new condition of things. A pleasant diversion occurred by a brother asking about Michael Adam. Our Father and our God. Which proved edifying as well as instructive.”⁹⁹

In December 1890 there arose a controversy in the St. George over one of the bishops in Bunkerville, Nevada and his father teaching that the Endowment ceremony was wrong to teach that Adam was a resurrected being from another earth,

⁹⁸ George Q. Cannon Journals, 18 November 1882, parenthesis in the original journal

⁹⁹ Franklin D. Richards Journal, 24 March 1887, in *Minutes of Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve, 1835–1893* page 382, underline in original.

the father of our Spirits, and the Father of Jesus Christ. This matter led to several meetings and discussions which culminated with two members of the First Presidency — Wilford Woodruff and George Q. Cannon — visiting St. George on June 11, 1892 to resolve the dispute about doctrine.¹⁰⁰ George Q. Cannon recorded his doctrinal arguments he employed at length during that meeting in his journal:

“I took up his quotation from the new translation of the Bible concerning the creation of Adam, and I said, according to my reading and interpretation, it is as clear to me that Adam was begotten in the usual way, through procreation, as it appeared to be in the mind of Father Bunker that he had been made as an adobie was made. I said, now we know that the Lord Jesus received a tabernacle in the manner in which our tabernacles were organized, and no doubt his father, if he had received a tabernacle, had received it in the same way; and I asked, Why should Adam be *sui generis* — that is, the only being in all the species that was a new creation? I reasoned upon this, and I think made it clear to all who were present that it was nonsensical.

I then referred to a number of passages to explain how difficult it is, unless we have the light of the Spirit, to understand the Godhead. I said the Savior — and I quoted revelations to illustrate the point — spoke to His servants as though He were the Father himself and spoke of himself as the Only Begotten Son. I said the reason for this is that Jesus represented the Godhead and spoke

¹⁰⁰ For more on the Bunkerville controversy, see *Unpublished Revelations* vol. 1 3rd edition pages 185–197 and *Minutes of Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve, 1835–1893* pages 484–490.

for the Godhead. Viewed in this light, many passages that would be puzzling might be clearly understood.

I said that according to the teachings of President Young Adam was our Father and our God, and the father of the Lord Jesus, but it was not necessary for us to argue or contend about this. If we cannot understand it, let it remain without agitation and without discussion; for it would inevitably lead to bad consequences if men indulged in that spirit.”¹⁰¹

According to the minutes of the meeting, Wilford Woodruff supported what George Q. Cannon taught, Woodruff adding the supportive comment: “Adam stood ahead of this world and Jesus was born long after. Now this is the key to the whole matter.”¹⁰²

In 1897 the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve had the last friendly discussions on the Adam-God Doctrine we have record of. On October 12, 1897 they discussed “Adam being our Father and God” and Franklin D. Richards expressed his feeling that “it made him thrill through his whole body — it was new and it was inspiring”:

“President [Lorenzo] Snow led out on Adam being our father and God. How beautiful the thought — it brought God nearer to us. Brother Franklin [D. Richards] said it made him thrill through his whole body — it was new and it was inspiring. I followed.”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ George Q. Cannon Journal, 11 June 1892.

¹⁰² *Minutes of Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve, 1835–1893* <11 June 1892> page 485.

¹⁰³ Brigham Young Jr. diary <12 October 1897> LDS Archives.

In December 1897 the apostles again discussed Adam-God, and affirmed their belief in it yet said there was no use discussing it with “Josephites,” the members of the RLDS Church:

“Meeting at 11 a.m. in Temple. Pres[ident]. W[ilford]. [Woodruff] Geo[rge] Q. [Cannon] Jos[eph]. F. S[mith]. L[orenzo]. S[now]. F[ranklin]. D. R[ichards]. B[righam]. Y[oung]. [Jr.] Jno [John] H[enry]. S[mith]. Geo[rge]. T[easdale]. H[eber]. J. G[rant]. A[nthon]. Lund present. ...Adam is our Father and God and no use to discuss it with [the] Josephites [Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints] or any one else.”¹⁰⁴

THE DEMISE OF ADAM-GOD

One of the earliest discussions from Church leaders that appeared to be neutral or conflicted about whether the Church accepted the Adam-God Doctrine was recorded by Abraham Cannon on May 26, 1892. This was apparently a discussion relating to the Bunkerville controversy, which Wilford Woodruff and George Q. Cannon would travel down to Saint George to resolve several weeks later:

“At two o’clock I was at my Quorum meeting. ...Thereafter some conversation followed as to whether Adam is our God or not. There are some in the Church who do not accept of the statement of Pres. [Brigham] Young that such is the case, but to me it seems reasonable to think that Adam has at least much to do

¹⁰⁴ Brigham Young Jr. Journal <16 December 1897> LDS Archives.

with our present condition, and will control greatly our future destiny.”¹⁰⁵

While George Q. Cannon and Wilford Woodruff upheld the Adam-God Doctrine’s truthfulness in their meeting with Edward Bunker and the St. George High Council, the first nails in the coffin to the doctrine occurred in that meeting.

In spite of affirming the Adam-God Doctrine, George Q. Cannon said “if he knew of any one teaching these things in Sunday School he would want to suspend him.”¹⁰⁶ According to Charles Walker’s diary, George Q. Cannon taught:

“It was not wisdom for the elders to contend about such matters and things they did not understand. And not to teach such things to the children in the Sunday Schools; they could not comprehend them. ...it was not necessary that we should [teach] or endorse the doctrine that some men taught that Adam was the Father of Jesus Christ. Counsel was given for the Elders to teach that which they knew, not that which they did not.”¹⁰⁷

At the April 1895 General Conference Wilford Woodruff counselled all the Elders of Israel to not concern themselves about the identity of God, Adam, Christ, or Jehovah, and to “let these things alone”:

¹⁰⁵ *The Diaries of Abraham H. Cannon* <26 May 1892> page 338.

¹⁰⁶ *Minutes of Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve, 1835–1893* <11 June 1892> page 486.

¹⁰⁷ *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker* vol. 2 <11 June 1892> pages 740–741.

“Cease troubling yourselves about who God is; who Adam is, who Christ is, who Jehovah is. For heaven’s sake, let these things alone. ...why trouble yourselves about these things? God is God. Christ is Christ. The Holy Ghost is the Holy Ghost. That should be enough for you and me to know. If we want to know any more, wait till we get where God is in person. I say this because we are troubled every little while with inquiries from Elders anxious to know who God is, who Christ is, and who Adam is. I say to the Elders of Israel, stop this. ...We have had letter after letter from Elders abroad wanting to know concerning these things. Adam is the first man. He was placed in the Garden of Eden, and is our great progenitor. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, are the same yesterday, to-day and forever. That should be sufficient for us to know.”¹⁰⁸

At the First Sunday School Convention on November 28, 1898, George Q. Cannon stated that Church leaders’ position was to no longer teach Adam-God:

“Concerning the doctrine in regard to Adam and the Savior, the Prophet Brigham taught some things concerning that; but the First Presidency and the Twelve do not think it wise to advocate these matters.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Wilford Woodruff, 7 April 1895, in *Millennial Star* vol. 57 <6 June 1895> pages 355–356.

¹⁰⁹ *Proceedings of the Sunday School Convention* vol. 1 <28 November 1898> page 88.

JOSEPH F. SMITH AND ADAM-GOD

It should be noted that Joseph F. Smith was not involved with George Q. Cannon and Wilford Woodruff to affirm the Adam-God Doctrine at the St. George High Council in June 1892. Even though Joseph F. Smith endorsed the Adam-God Doctrine in the Salt Lake School of the Prophets in 1873, his views about the doctrine later changed. As early as 1878 he preached that “no one man had the right to enforce his doctrines upon the Church without the sanction and concurrence of the priesthood and people.” George Q. Cannon recorded in his journal that Joseph F. Smith was apparently being subtly critical of Brigham Young:

“He conveyed the idea also that a revelation or doctrine, to be binding, should be submitted to the various quorums of the priesthood, an idea not incorrect of itself as the manner and spirit in which it was put forth. He dwelt in his positive and emphatic style upon the idea that no one man had the right to enforce his doctrines upon the Church without the sanction and concurrence of the priesthood and people. If he did not have President Brigham Young in his mind, he was unfortunate in his selection of words and in his manner of presenting his thoughts; for I could not help thinking that he had him in his mind. My brother Angus also obtained the same impression.”¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ George Q. Cannon Diary, 6 January 1878.

In 1897, Joseph F. Smith became the first high ranking Church member to say that Brigham Young only taught his own “personal opinion” and that it was not binding upon Church members:

“With reference to President B. Young’s remarks, in a discourse delivered in 1852. with reference to ‘Adam being the only God with whom we have to do’ etc. I will say:— President Young no doubt expressed his personal opinion or views upon the subject. What he said was not given as a 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 nor upon the consciences of any of the members thereof, except perhaps only so far as some may have confidence in President Young, believing that he had light on the subject which was not given in connection with his public mention thereof. It is thought, even if there is truth in it, that the bare mention made by President Young, without indubitable evidence and authority being given of its truth, was unfortunate to say the least.

But the sure test is to be found in ‘the law and the Testimony’ and revealed truth. Whatsoever is not in accordance with these must fall. No scripture being of any private interpretation, etc. but open to the understanding of every man who possesses the Holy Ghost, anyone thus endowed may apply the tests by the light of the good spirit. While I am not authorized to sit in judgment upon President Young, I am at liberty to test the truth of his words or utterances by the Revealed and accepted word of God. Anything uttered by man which is contrary to the Divine law must fall, while that only

which is in harmony with it can remain, or stand.

Generally, when the Lord speaks through his approved channel, he speaks with no uncertain sound. Yet many there be who cannot see the truth no matter how plain to the mind of the Spirit. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, (1 Corinthians 2:9-11-16) but carnal things by the natural senses. When the inspired head speaks by the power of the spirit and he is backed up by ‘thus saith the Lord,’ it becomes a serious matter to reject, or lightly pass it by. There is no such responsibility attached to this statement, made by President Young.”¹¹¹

Under Joseph F. Smith’s Church Presidency, the Adam-God Doctrine as taught in the Lecture at the Veil was removed from the Endowment ceremony. It appears that the way the Adam-God Doctrine was phased out of the Endowment was first by only giving the full lecture on Wednesdays, while on other days a “very much shortened” version of the lecture was given:

“All having been sealed, Elohim, or some one in authority, comes to the front of the platform and delivers what is known as the sermon before the veil. On Wednesdays, when there are a number of neophytes, the address is very long and tedious; the entire history of the temple work is repeated, so that the candidates may have a clear understanding of what they have learned. The marks in the veil are also explained, with their significance and uses. Especially is it taught that Adam was not made out of the dust of this earth; that he was begotten as any other man is begotten, and that when he came here he brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. I

¹¹¹ Joseph F. Smith letter to A. Saxey, 7 January 1897, LDS Archives.

have heard that the sermon was the one delivered by Brigham Young at the dedication of the St. George Temple. On Thursdays and Fridays, when there are comparatively few who are going through the temple for the first time, the sermon before the veil is very much shortened, only the essential part which refers to the Creation of Adam being read.”¹¹²

A late recollection affirmed that it was during Joseph F. Smith’s time as Church President that the lecture was removed:

“Brother [J. Arthur] Horne and I chatted again tonight about the Gospel and the Adam-God Doctrine, as we have done many times before. Brother Horne, who grew up in Salt Lake City and was the son of Richard Horne and grandson of Joseph Horne, said — in reference to the Adam-God Doctrine — that when he first went through the Temple (Salt Lake) for his Endowment in 1902 before going on his mission he was surprised to hear the teachings during the Temple ceremony that ‘Adam was our God’ and that ‘He came here with Eve, one of His wives.’ Also it was taught that ‘Eve bore our spirits’ He asked his father about it but he declined to give any opinion about it. After Brother Horne returned from his mission a few years later, in 1905, he noted these teachings had been removed from the Temple ceremony. He feels that they were left over from Brigham Young’s influence.”¹¹³

However it would not be until the Priesthood Conference on April 8, 1912 that Joseph

¹¹² Professor Walter Wolfe, “Mysteries of the Endowment House,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 12 February 1906, page 3.

¹¹³ C. Jess Groesbeck’s *Elders Journal* vol. 1 <28 May 1963> page 291.

F. Smith decided to explicitly disavow the Adam-God Doctrine as “not a doctrine of the Church.” Joseph F. Smith further stated that Brigham Young “only expressed his own views” which were “not corroborated by the word of the Lord in the standard works of the Church” and that patriarchs who continued to teach it should be cut off from the Church. As Thomas Clawson recorded in detail in his journal:

“Monday [April 8, 1912.] Another beautiful day. Met brother Ed. D. Wood at 9 AM, put in a filling for him. After which I went to the Special Priesthood Meeting in the Assembly ...[Charles] W. Penrose then read a letter that the First Presidency had received in regards to the Adam-God doctrine. That some Patriarchs were going about teaching to the people that doctrine. He then read from the Doc. & Cov. Sec 29 also 109 showing that the God we worshipped was not Adam but the father of Adam and that Jesus Christ and all the Spirits of Men. Brigham Young did not qualify his remark which were taken in longhand and there may have been some things said which unless further explained might be misconstrued.

President Joseph F. Smith then said that he was in full accord with what Penrose had said and that President Brigham Young when he delivered that sermon only expressed his own views and that they were not corroborated by the word of the Lord in the standard works of the Church. The Bible, Book of Mormon, Pearl of Great Price, and Doctrine and Covenants were voted up on by the Church convened in a Conference and organized in various Quorums of the Priesthood who voted by Quorum after which the body of the Church were asked to vote to sustain the above books as the Standards of the Church. This first vote was taken by the

Church when they were in the East. It was again take in the same manner here in Salt Lake [later] in the year.

Now all doctrine if it can't be established by these standards is not to be taught or promulgated by members. That those Patriarchs who persisted in teaching these things and did not stop when told to do so should be handled by their Bishops and their names sent up to the High Councils for further action and be cut off."¹¹⁴

Anthony Ivins also wrote a brief synopsis of this priesthood conference in his journal:

"April 8, 1912 Special Priesthood Meeting. ...President Penrose spoke on tithing. Adam-God theory. — Pres. [Joseph F.] Smith. Adam-God doctrine not a doctrine of the Church."¹¹⁵

While the doctrine was dying out among the Latter-day Saints, still four years later Charles Penrose again complained that some of the people still believed in Adam-God.¹¹⁶ In 1931 Heber J. Grant expressed his complete disagreement with the idea that Adam could have been a resurrected being from a previous Earth:

¹¹⁴ Thomas Clawson Journal, 8 April 1912.

¹¹⁵ Anthony Ivins Journal, 8 April 1912.

¹¹⁶ "There still remains, I can tell by the letters I have alluded to, an idea among some of the people that Adam was and is the Almighty and Eternal God. ...The notion has taken hold of some of our brethren that Adam is the being that we should worship." (Charles Penrose, *Conference Report*, 6 April 1916, pages 16–17)

“We have before us your letter of February 18, in which you say that in your Priesthood class one Brother claims that Adam ‘had been through the experience of mortality on another sphere before he came here; that he was a celestialized being when placed in the Garden of Eden.’ What this brother means by ‘celestialized being’ is not clear.

We are informed that we all lived in the presence of God in the spirit world before we came here. In one sense we might say that this was a celestialized existence. If what is meant is that Adam had passed on to celestial glory through a resurrection before he came here, and that afterwards he was appointed to this earth to die again, the second time becoming mortal, then it is not scriptural or according to the truth.”¹¹⁷

TWO DISTINCT REACTIONS

LDS leaders in the late 20th century onward still have to grapple with what Brigham Young taught and incorporated into Mormon theology for nearly half a century. The strongest opposing reaction was expressed by Bruce R. McConkie who said that those who believed in Adam-God did not deserve to be saved:

“There are those who believe or say they believe Adam is our father and our god, that he is the father of our spirits and our bodies, and that he is the one we worship. The devil keeps this heresy alive as a means of obtaining converts to cultism. It is contrary to the whole plan of

¹¹⁷ Heber J. Grant letter to Joseph H. Eldredge, 26 February 1931, in *Minutes of Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve, 1910–1951* page 305.

salvation set forth in the scriptures. Anyone who has read the Book of Moses, and anyone who has received the temple endowment, and **who yet believes the Adam-God theory does not deserve to be saved.** Those who are so ensnared reject the living prophet and close their ears to the apostles of their day. ‘We will follow those who went before,’ they say. And having so determined, they soon are ready to enter polygamous relationships that destroy their souls. We worship the Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Ghost; and Adam is their foremost servant, by whom the peopling of our planet was commenced.”¹¹⁸

In contrast, Gordon B. Hinckley apparently had a less judgmental view of Brigham Young’s cosmology, though admitting he didn’t understand it. In an interview he acknowledged that Brigham taught that “if you went to Heaven and saw God it would be Adam and Eve” yet he didn’t “know what [Brigham] meant by that”:

“In the Mormon scheme, every person is a potential divinity. The adage ‘As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be’ expresses the Mormon belief that God was once a human being, with a wife and children. But Hinckley did not seem interested in discussing matters of theology. When I asked him to characterize God’s connubial relationship, he replied, ‘We don’t speculate on that a lot. Brigham Young said if you went to Heaven and saw God it would be Adam and Eve. I don’t know what he meant by that.’ Pointing to a grim-faced portrait of the Lion of the Lord, as Young was called, he said, ‘There he is, right there. I’m not

¹¹⁸ Bruce R. McConkie, “Seven Deadly Heresies” sermon, 1 June 1980, emphasis added.

going to worry about what he said about those things’.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Lawrence Wright, “Lives of the Saints,” *The New Yorker*, 21 January 2002, page 44.

APPENDIX A – JOSEPH SMITH TAUGHT ADAM IS OUR FATHER AND GOD

Brigham Young and several other Church leaders affirmed that the Adam-God Doctrine did not originate entirely with himself, but came from Joseph Smith's teachings. In a private Quorum of the Twelve meeting on April 4, 1860 Brigham Young remarked "It was Joseph's doctrine that Adam was God."¹²⁰ Seven years later in the Salt Lake School of the Prophets Brigham Young said "Adam was Michael the Archangel and he was the Father of Jesus Christ and was our God and that Joseph taught this principle."¹²¹

On June 8, 1873 Brigham Young preached that "Adam is our Father and God" was a doctrine which "I revealed to [the Latter-day Saints], and which God revealed to me." Yet near the end of his comments he remarked that "Father Adam is the man who stands at the gate and holds the keys of everlasting life and salvation," and that although this was "one of the simplest things in the world," he could not find any man on the earth who could tell him of it, until he "met and talked with Joseph Smith":

¹²⁰ *Minutes of Meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve, 1835 – 1893* <4 April 1860> page 252.

¹²¹ *Wilford Woodruff's Journals* vol. 6 <16 December 1867> page 381.

“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 — I do not know, I do not inquire, I care nothing about it. Our Father Adam helped to make this earth, it was created expressly for him, and after it was made he and his companions came here. He brought one of his wives with him, and she was called Eve, because she was the first woman upon the earth. Our Father Adam is the man who stands at the gate and holds the keys of everlasting life and salvation to all his children who have or whoever will come upon the earth. I have been found fault with by the ministers of religion because I have said that they were ignorant. But I could not find any man on the earth who could tell me this, although it is one of the simplest things in the world, until I met and talked with Joseph Smith.”¹²²

On May 14, 1876 Brigham Young again stated that Joseph Smith taught that Adam was our Father and God:

“Is there in the heaven of heavens a Leader? Yes, and we cannot do without one and that being the case, whoever he is may be called God. Joseph said that Adam was our Father and God, and himself being a leader, he too was their God.”¹²³

Brigham Young was not alone in believing that Adam-God originated with Joseph Smith. Edward Tullidge, who wrote *The Women of*

¹²² *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <8 June 1873> page 2971.

¹²³ *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* <14 May 1876> page 3079.

Mormondom with heavy collaboration from Eliza R. Snow and other Relief Society leaders, wrot

“The grand patriarchal economy, with Adam, as a resurrected being, who brought his wife Eve from another world, has been very finely elaborated, by Brigham, from the patriarchal genesis which Joseph conceived.”¹²⁴

“It was revealed in glorious theology of Joseph and established by Brigham in the vast patriarchal system which he has made firm as the foundations of the earth, by proclaiming Adam as our Father and God. The Father is first in name and order, but Mother is with him — these twain, one from the beginning.”¹²⁵

Helen Mar Kimball and B. H. Roberts both believed that Joseph Smith’s July 1839 discourse on priesthood was abundant proof that the concepts behind Adam-God came from Joseph Smith. Helen Mar Kimball wrote:

“Brigham Young did not happen to be the author of this doctrine... [Quotes lengthy extracts of Joseph’s July 1839 discourse on Adam and priesthood] ...Now if he [Joseph Smith III] feels that it is his duty to proclaim against this people and deny the doctrines which his father felt authorized of God to teach as revelation from on high, I shall only regret it for his own and his father’s sake.”¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* <1877> page 181.

¹²⁵ *The Women of Mormondom* <1877> page 193.

¹²⁶ Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, *Plural Marriage as Taught by the Prophet Joseph: A Reply to Joseph Smith* <1882> pages 31–37.

Similarly, B.H. Roberts observed:

“It is generally supposed that Brigham Young was the author of the doctrine which places Adam as the patriarchal head of the human race, and ascribes to him the dignity of future presidency over this earth and its inhabitants, when the work of redemption shall have been complete. Those who read the Prophet’s treatise on the Priesthood in the text above will have their opinions corrected upon this subject; for clearly it is the word of the lord through the Prophet Joseph Smith which established that doctrine. The utterances of President Brigham Young but repeat and expound the doctrine which the Prophet here sets forth.”¹²⁷

¹²⁷ *History of the Church* vol. 3 <Footnote to Joseph Smith’s instruction on priesthood, 2 July 1839> page 388.

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