

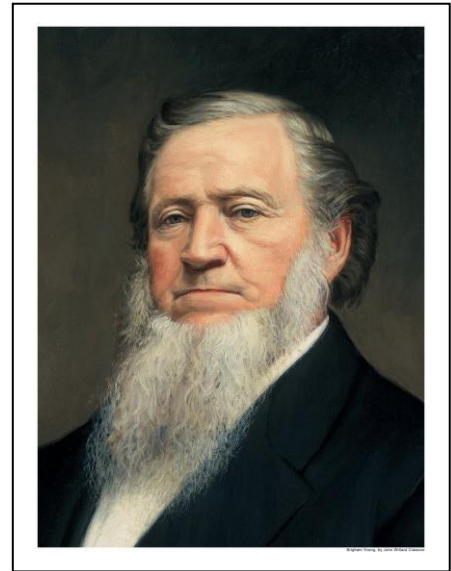
Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Brigham Young's False Teaching: Adam is God

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Of all the vices that entangle a man, perhaps none is as unholy as jealousy. Jealousy, the “green-eyed monster,” dwells in the deeper regions of sin because the source of its existence is unbridled covetousness growing out of pride and insecurity. However, in the case of jealousy, what is a vice in human nature is a virtue in the divine nature of God. Though among men jealousy is a ravaging and soul-destroying cancer, in God it is a righteous zeal, based upon His covenant love for His own people, which seeks to protect a love-relationship and avenge it when broken. The godly zeal which the Lord has for those whom He has chosen is an attribute worthy of all praise and adoration.



The fact that He is a jealous God was one of the first characteristics that the Lord made known to Israel after He had redeemed her out of the slave market of Egypt. She became His love and possession, and He demanded from her a love and devotion that would extend to no other.¹

I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me ... for I the LORD

¹ Calvin, in his exposition of the second commandment, explains this beautifully: The Lord very frequently addresses us in the character of a husband.... As he performs all the offices of a true and faithful husband, so he requires love and chastity from us; that is, that we do not prostitute our souls to Satan.... As the purer and chaster a husband is, the more grievously he is offended when he sees his wife inclining to a rival; so the Lord, who has betrothed us to Himself in truth, declares that he burns with the hottest jealousy whenever, neglecting the purity of His holy marriage, we defile ourselves with abominable lusts and especially when the worship of His deity, which ought to have been most carefully kept unimpaired, is transferred to another, ... since in this way we not only violate our plighted troth, but defile the nuptial couch, by giving access to adulterers (*Institutes*, II, viii, 18).

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thy God am a jealous God (Ex. 20:1, 3, 5). Thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (Ex. 34:14).

Throughout Old Testament history the Lord taught Israel that He was the only God. For her to worship and serve another would be sheer adultery and whoredom:

And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a-whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them (Judges 2:17).

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In the New Testament we find the same teaching. The New Testament writers shared the Lord's jealousy over His covenant people:

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2).

While throughout the flow of Bible history we see God proclaiming that He alone is to be worshiped, at the same time we find prophets who were not of God taught the contrary. True prophets would never be found teaching the people to worship another god—whether it was a stone idol, an imaginary god dwelling in heaven, or a deified man. They knew that it was Jehovah who had redeemed Israel out of Egypt and that He alone is God. Inspired by God's Spirit, they knew the mind of the Lord: that He would give His glory to no other. Therefore, when these living oracles of God spoke as prophets, they were moved to proclaim, "Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

In light of this insistence upon the exclusiveness of the true God, we can understand the test of a prophet that Moses taught the children of Israel. By applying this timeless test, people throughout all ages may detect the false ones:

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice, and ye shall serve Him, and cleave unto Him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death; because he has spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee (Deut. 13:1–5).

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These words tell us that though a man might exercise miraculous powers, he could not be a prophet of the Lord if he sought to lead the people away to a strange god. Any prophet who advocates the service and worship of another god is not a mouthpiece of the Lord, is false, and, under the theocratic nation of Israel, was to be slain.

Holding fast to these truths let us turn now to Brigham Young, a man who claimed for himself the station and office of prophet of God. Recent history records the lives of few men who have possessed the leadership qualities that Young exhibited. For thirty years he presided as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator over the Mormon Church, a people claiming to be led by prophets of God as in the days of ancient Israel. On the basis of this claim the Mormons have always regarded themselves as the only true Church on earth today.² Their priesthood claims sole possession of the authority or power needed to act on behalf of God,³ and they consider all other “Christian churches” to be in a state of apostasy, who at best teach a partial truth about the gospel of Christ.⁴ Now if Brigham Young, Mormon prophet from 1847 to 1877, were a false prophet all along, then the claims of those who have sought to derive their priesthood authority through him are empty and void.⁵ If Brigham taught false doctrine, that cuts the ground from under Mormonism’s claim of latter-day prophetic revelation and the Mormon Church is not divinely led. Acknowledging this to be true, LDS Apostle Orson Hyde stated:

² The *Doctrine and Covenants*, one of Mormonism’s scriptures, states that the Mormon people are “the only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth” (*Doctrine and Covenants*, 1:30).

³ Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt wrote that all other churches are entirely destitute of all authority to administer the sacraments:

But who in this generation have authority to baptize? None but those who have received authority in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: all other churches are entirely destitute of all authority from God; and any person who receives Baptism or the Lord’s Supper from their hands will highly offend God, for he looks upon them as the most corrupt of all people. Both Catholics and Protestants are nothing less than the “*whore of Babylon*” whom the Lord denounces by the mouth of John the Revelator as having corrupted all the earth by their fornication and wickedness. And any person who shall be so wicked as to receive a holy ordinance of the gospel from the ministers of any of these apostate churches will be sent down to hell with them, unless they repent of the unholy and impious act (Orson Pratt, *The Seer*, Washington ed., p. 255).

⁴ Joseph Smith claimed that in the spring of 1820 Jesus Christ appeared to him in a vision and instructed him to join none of the Christian denominations, “for they were all wrong” and “all their creeds were an abomination” and their “professors were all corrupt” (*Pearl Of Great Price*, “Joseph Smith 2,” vs. 19).

⁵ Present day Mormon Prophet Spencer W. Kimball was ordained an Apostle under the hands of Heber J. Grant. Grant was likewise ordained by George Q. Cannon. Cannon was ordained to his apostolic office under the hands of Brigham Young. Similarly, every one of the present Twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church has received his ordination through Brigham Young. If Brigham was false, then all those who were ordained through him lack the very priesthood which they believe Brigham had. A break in one link causes the entire chain below it to fall to the ground; so a break in the Mormon Priesthood succession breaks off the transfer of authority.

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To acknowledge that this is the Kingdom of God, and that there is a presiding power, and to admit that he [Brigham Young] can advance incorrect doctrine is to lay the axe at the root of the tree. Will he suffer his mouthpiece to go into error? No.⁶

Any boast of prophetic guidance would be worthless if that guidance were false. John Taylor, Mormon Apostle and later President, admitted also this to be the case: "If that mouthpiece [Brigham Young] has not the power to dictate, I would throw all Mormonism away."⁷

The Mormon Church must base the truth of her claims on the authenticity of Brigham's calling. Yet, we shall see that Brigham Young, who presided over the Mormon Church longer than any other man, did indeed advance false doctrine that focused worship on a god other than the Lord God of Israel.

Adam-God First Proclaimed

It stormed heavily on April 9, 1852, but the people turned out for the sessions of the Spring LDS Conference that were held that day. Each session of the six-day church conference was filled to capacity. Those desiring the best seats lined up outside the doors hours before they opened. At times, because the crowds were so large, many male members would leave the tabernacle to allow more room for the women to attend.

At 6:00 on the evening of the ninth, all LDS male members gathered together in the Salt Lake Tabernacle for another session. The house was full. After the usual introductory exercises, Mormon Prophet and President Brigham Young began to address his brethren upon various subjects. He instructed them concerning the place recreation and amusements should occupy in their lives and concerning the principle of tithing.

Then, after a moment's pause, the Mormon Prophet took up his next topic. The question was, "Who begot Jesus Christ in the flesh?" This was a hot issue. There had been no little dispute about it among the LDS Elders, and there were opposing views. As a Prophet and mouthpiece of God, Brigham Young stepped forward to silence all erroneous opinions and to declare with finality the true answer to the inquiry.⁸

⁶ "Misc. Minutes," unpublished ins., Brigham Young Collection, Church Archives, Salt Lake City, p. 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

⁸ Believing himself to be a prophet of God, Young declared that it was his gift and calling to teach true doctrine and to guard the members against heresy:

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First, he repeated the fundamental Mormon doctrine that the Father and Son each has a physical body of flesh and bones. Next, he set forth Mormonism's belief that God the Father in a pre-existent period begot every spirit that would come to this earth. Then Brigham looked out over the vast audience and boldly commanded all of his hearers, whether near or far, Mormon or non-Mormon, to take heed to his next statements:

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*.⁹

After declaring that Adam was the God of this world and the Father of its inhabitants, Brigham then addressed the original inquiry concerning the Saviour's birth:

When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten him in his own likeness. He was *not* begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who is the Father? He is the first of the human family; and when he took a tabernacle, it was begotten by *his father* in heaven, after the same manner as the tabernacles of Cain, Abel, and the rest of the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve; ... I could tell you much more about this; but were I to tell you the whole truth, blasphemy would be nothing to it, in the estimation of the superstitious and over-righteous of mankind. However, I have told you the whole truth as far as I have gone.... What a learned idea! Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the garden of Eden, and who is our Father in heaven. Now, let all who may hear the doctrines, pause before they make light of them, or treat them with indifference, for they will prove their salvation or damnation. I have given you a few leading items upon this subject, but a great deal more remains to be told. Now, remember from this time forth, and forever, that Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. I will repeat a little anecdote. I was in conversation with a certain learned professor upon this subject, when I replied, to this idea—"if the Son was begotten

What man or woman on the earth, what spirit in the spirit-world can say truthfully that I ever gave a wrong word of counsel, or a word of advice that could not be sanctioned by the heavens? (*Journal of Discourses*: 12:127).

It is my duty to see that correct doctrine is taught and to guard the Church from error" it is my calling ("Misc. Minutes," unpublished ins., B.Y. Collection, Church Archives).

⁹ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 1, p. 50. According to Mormon theology, Adam is Michael the archangel and the Ancient of Days. Cf. *Doctrine and Covenants*, 27:11.

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by the Holy Ghost, it would be very dangerous to baptize and confirm females, and give the Holy Ghost to them, lest he should beget children, to be palmed upon the Elders by the people, bringing the Elders into great difficulties." Treasure up these things in your hearts. In the Bible, you have read the things I told you tonight; but you have not known what you did read.¹⁰

Having made this response, Young concluded his comments with another reference to tithing. The Mormon choir then sang a hymn and Elder H. G. Sherwood gave the closing benediction.

Few of the Latter-day Saint Elders who filed out of the Tabernacle that night missed the meaning of what their prophet had just announced. Upon returning home that evening, Hosea Stout, the prominent Mormon pioneer, recorded the following in his daily journal:

Friday 9th April 1852.—Stormy morning, attended conference House much crowded, did not stay in House long, *after* noon was not in because of the crowd.— Another meeting this evening. President B. Young taught that Adam was the father of Jesus Christ and the only God to us. That he came to this world in a resurected body &c more hereafter.¹¹

Samuel Rogers, who also was present that night, similarly noted the content of Brigham Young's discourse:

April 16 1852, Conference commenced on the 6 and continued untill the 11, it was heled in the new tabernicle, adjourned untill the 6 of next October We had the best Conference that I ever attended during the time of the Conference President Brigham Young said that our spirits ware begotten before that Adam came to the Earth, and that Adam helped to make the Earth, that he had a Celestial boddy when he came to the Earth, and that he brought his wife or one of his wives with him, and that Eave was allso a Celestial being, that they eat of the fruit of the ground untill they begat children from the Earth, he said that Adam was the only God that we would have, and that Christ was not begotten of the Holy Ghost, but of the Father Adam....¹²

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 50–51.

¹¹ Diary of Hosea Stout. Copied from typed transcript. B.Y.U. Library, Special Collections, Provo, Utah. The spelling, grammar, and punctuation in this quotation as well as in all others cited herein have not been changed from the originals.

¹² Journal of Samuel H. Rogers, vol. 1, p. 179. Copied from the original located at B.Y.U. Library, Special Collections, Provo, Utah.

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Denial Adam-God Was Taught

As we consider Brigham Young's claim that Adam is God, it becomes clear that he was a false, uninspired prophet. This teaching not only runs counter to what has been revealed in the Bible, but it is also branded as false doctrine in modern Mormonism. LDS Apostle Mark E. Petersen, one of Mormonism's doctrinal authorities, stated:

Some dissidents would have us believe that Adam is our God and that we have nothing to do with any other God, which, on the face of it, is ridiculous. To say that Adam is God is, of course, opposed utterly and completely to the scriptures as well as to our Articles of faith, ...¹³

Spencer W. Kimball, current Mormon Prophet, also denounced the teaching that Adam is God:

We warn you against the dissemination of doctrines which are not according to the scriptures and which are alleged to have been taught by some of the General Authorities.... Such, for instance is the Adam-God theory. We denounce that theory and hope that everyone will be cautioned against this and other kinds of false doctrine.¹⁴

These and most other Mormon General Authorities, while denouncing the doctrine that Adam is God, avoid or deny the fact that Brigham Young himself was the major exponent of this doctrine. In his book, *Adam Who Is He?*, Mark E. Petersen tries to rescue Mormonism's second prophet from teaching false doctrine by maintaining that Brigham Young was misquoted in the address in question. On pages 16–17 of his book, Petersen sets forth as evidence for his defense a reference in which C. C. Rich supposedly stated that Brigham was misquoted in this sermon. Petersen claims that Rich was present on the ninth of April and was therefore in a position to note the misquotation which later crept into the published account of the discourse:

Elder Charles C. Rich, of the Council of the Twelve, was present on a day when President Young gave an address that was wrongly reported as saying that Adam was Deity. In the copy of the *Journal of Discourses* that he had, Elder Rich referred to the misquotation as it appears in the *Journal of Discourses*, and in his own hand he wrote the following as the correct statement made by President Young: "Jesus our elder Brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character who talked with Adam in the Garden of Eden, and who is our heavenly Father." (This signed

¹³ Mark E. Petersen, *Adam Who Is He?* (Deseret Book, 1976), p. 14.

¹⁴ Spencer W. Kimball, *Deseret News*, October 9, 1976, Church News Section, p. 11.

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statement is in the hands of the Church Historian.) Some of the reporters at the Tabernacle in those days were not as skill[ed] as others, and admittedly made mistakes, such as the misquotation of President Young as above, which was corrected by Brother Rich and which has caused some persons in the Church to go astray. The erroneously reported statement has been mistakenly made to read: "Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character that was in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven." (JD, 1:51) On the face of it the mistake is obvious and was quickly noted by Elder Rich, who was present and heard the sermon. Hence the correction that he made.

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What seems to be a good case made by Mr. Petersen crumbles, however, upon cross-examination. C. C. Rich, who Petersen claims "was present and heard the sermon," was in reality not even in Salt Lake City on that day! Rich left San Bernardino, California, on March 24, 1852, for the Great Salt Lake.¹⁵ He did not reach his destination until April 21. Under this date, the LDS Journal History records:

April 21, 1852:

Elder Chas. C. Rich and thirteen others arrived today in G.S.L. from California.¹⁶

In the May 1, 1852, issue of the Mormon *Deseret Weekly* the following announcement was made:

Elder C. C. Rich arrived on Wednesday, the 21 of April, in company with 13 others ... direct from San Bernardino.¹⁷

Hosea Stout, in his journal, also noted the event:

Wednesday 21st April 1852 Engaged as yesterday. Gen. Rich and some 15 others arrived today from California by the South rout all well.

Furthermore, not only was C. C. Rich absent on the ninth, but the reference which Petersen claims was written by C. C. Rich "in his own hand" was in reality written and signed by his son, Ben E. Rich, many years after the sermon was delivered!¹⁸

Whether Mr. Petersen was deliberately seeking to suppress the facts or not, the truth is that there is no evidence whatsoever that Brigham Young was misquoted. As we shall

¹⁵ Leonard J. Arrington, *Charles C. Rich* (B.Y.U. Press, 1974), p. 173.

¹⁶ Copied from microfilm of original. B.Y.U. Library, Special Collections, Provo, Utah.

¹⁷ Copied from *Deseret Weekly*, microfilm, B.Y.U. Library.

¹⁸ Copy of the original *Journal of Discourses* volume on which statement was made is located in the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City. For photo reproduction, see Bob Witte, *Where Does It Say That?*, p. 77.

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see, Young came under much criticism from outside and from within the Mormon Church for teaching that Adam was God the Father. If he had merely been misquoted, Brigham simply could have corrected his hearers and accusers. Instead, however, Young continued to affirm and preach this doctrine against all opposition.¹⁹

These facts have forced other Mormon writers to maintain that Brigham was quoted correctly, but that he has been misinterpreted by his hearers and readers. Realizing the implications of one of their prophets teaching false doctrine on such an essential matter as who God is, these LDS apologists insist that Brigham Young did not mean to say that Adam was deity. Characteristic of this argument are the following statements made by the tenth Mormon President, Joseph Fielding Smith:

In discussing the statement by President Brigham Young that the Father of Jesus Christ is the same character who was in the garden of Eden, I maintain that President Young was *not* referring to Adam, but to God the Father, who created Adam, for he was in the garden of Eden, and according to Mormon doctrine Adam was in his presence constantly, walked with him, talked with him, and the Father taught Adam his language. It was not until the fall, that the Father departed from Adam and from the Garden of Eden.²⁰

In regard to Brigham's statement that Jesus was begotten by "the First of the human family," Smith states that this is referring to the God and creator of Adam, who was the "first of the human family," being its "progeniter."²¹

Brigham's statement that Adam is "our Father and our God and the only God with whom we have to do" is interpreted to mean that Adam, being the first man, is the patriarchal head of the human race, and in this regard he could be considered a god. In no way would

¹⁹ Faced with the fact that Brigham Young made no attempt to correct his statements, Mormon scholar, Rodney Turner, was forced to admit that Brigham was quoted correctly:

Was Brigham Young misquoted? It is the writer's opinion that the answer to this question is a categorical no. There is not the slightest evidence from Brigham Young, or any other source, that either his original remarks on April 9, 1852, or any of his subsequent statements were ever misquoted in the official publications of the Church.... In light of Brigham Young's attitude toward the errors of others, and in view of the division created by his remarks concerning Adam, it would be stretching one's credulity to the breaking point to believe that he would have remained silent had he been misquoted. The Position of Adam in Latter-day Saint Scripture and Theology, M.A. thesis, B.Y.U., pp. 45-46; (thesis is presently restricted from viewing or reading).

²⁰ Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers To Gospel Questions*, vol. 5, p. 123.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

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these later Mormon writers believe that Brigham is identifying Adam as God their heavenly Father and the Father of Jesus in the flesh.²²

Young's Statements Become Plainer

It must be admitted that Brigham's statements in the 1852 discourse can be taken in more than one way. However, it again needs to be asserted that if both Brigham's friends and his opponents had understood him to mean that Adam was God and was the Father of Jesus Christ in the flesh. He simply could have corrected the misinterpretation, but he didn't. Instead, 25 years after his original "Adam-God" sermon, we find that the Mormon "Revelator" continued to declare in no uncertain terms that Adam was the Lord God Almighty.²³

During a discourse given on Sunday night, February 19, 1854, Brigham Young again addressed the question of who begot Jesus Christ in the flesh. Speaking of Christ, he asked:

Who did beget him? 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. Has he a Father? He has. Has he a mother? He has. Now to say that the Son of God was begotten by the Holy Ghost, is to say that the Holy Ghost is God the Father, which is inconsistent, and contrary to all the revelations of God both modern, and ancient. I silenced this erroneous doctrine a year ago last fall conference. It was I think when a dispute arose among some of our best Elders, as to who was the Father of the Son of Man pertaining to the flesh. Some contended it was the H Ghost, and some that it was Elohim. When I spoke upon it in this stand before a conference of Elders, I cautioned them when they laid their hands upon the people for the gift of the H Ghost, according to the instructions of the Savior, to be very careful how they laid hands upon young women for if it begat a child in the days of the virgin Mary it is just as liable to beget children in these last days.²⁴

²² See Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Bookcraft, 1966), pp. 18–19.

²³ In his thesis, Rodney Turner similarly discounts the possibility that Brigham was being misinterpreted: It is true that the original discourse of April 9, 1852, could be taken in more than one way; and if he had never mentioned the subject again his actual meaning would be a moot point. However, he did mention the subject again, many times. Therefore the likelihood of misunderstanding him, in view of his subsequent statements through the years, becomes more remote (*The Position of Adam*, p. 36).

²⁴ Brigham Young Papers, Feb. 19, 1854, call number Ms. F 219 #81, Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

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While Brigham in his discourse of 1852 may have been unclear, in this 1854 address there is no question about his meaning. Here Brigham distinctly names Adam as God the Father. Wilford Woodruff, Mormon Apostle and later Church President, had no doubt about what Brigham meant. Referring to this discourse under the date of February 19, 1854, in his journal, Woodruff recorded:

He [Brigham Young] said that our God was Father Adam He was the Father of the Savior Jesus Christ—Our God was no more or less than ADAM, Michael the Arkangel.²⁵

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It should also be noted that Brigham identifies Adam as the “Father of our spirits.” One of Mormonism’s fundamental doctrines is the belief that God the Father was married and that he and his celestial wife in a pre-existent period had begotten every spirit that would come to this earth. These spirits then enter into individual infants who are born physically upon the earth.²⁶ By referring to Adam as the Father of our spirits, Brigham was clearly identifying him as the being whom Mormons address as “Heavenly Father.”

On June 26–28, 1854, a special General Council of the authorities of the LDS British Mission convened in London, England. The council minutes show that Brigham’s doctrine of Adam being God was not readily received by some of the members there. After the introductory exercises, Mormon Elder Thomas Caffall rose to state the affairs of the Southern LDS conference. Among other things he reported the following:

... some of the officers have not met in council for three years. They are lacking faith on one principle—the last ‘cat that was let out of the bag.’ Polygamy has been got over pretty well, that cloud has vanished away, but they are troubled about Adam being our Father and God. There is a very intelligent person investigating our principles, and who has been a great help to the Saints; he has all the works and can get along very well with everything else but the last ‘cat’, -and as soon as he can see that clearly, he will become a ‘Mormon’. I instructed him to write Liverpool upon it.²⁷

Elder Joseph Hall followed with a report of his district’s progress. Despite the non-biblical nature of the Adam-God doctrine, those in his area were willing to receive it as truth:

²⁵ Copied from microfilm of journal located in B.Y.U. Library, Special Collections, Provo, Utah.

²⁶ See Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 5 16–517.

²⁷ *Millennial Star*, vol. 16, no. 31, August 5, 1854, p. 482.

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Relative to the principles recently revealed, we have not the least difficulty. If Adam's being our Father and God cannot be proved by the Bible, it is alright.²⁸

On the final day of the council Elder James A. Little rose and made the following remarks:

I believe in the principle of obedience; and if I am told that Adam is our Father and our God, I just believe it.²⁹

Mission President Samuel W. Richards followed with a concluding exhortation concerning the Adam-God doctrine:

Concerning the item of doctrine alluded to by Elder Caffall and others, *viz.*, that Adam is our Father and God, I have to say do not trouble yourselves, neither let the Saints be troubled about that matter....

If, as Elder Caffall remarked, there are those who are waiting at the door of the Church for this objection to be removed, tell such, *the prophet and Apostle Brigham has declared it, and that is the word of the Lord.*³⁰

Apostle Pratt Opposes Young's Adam-Cod

Though Richards and most of the other Church authorities accepted their prophet's declaration as the word of God, there was one member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles who openly opposed Brigham in his views. That man was Orson Pratt. Under the date of September 17, 1854, LDS Apostle Wilford Woodruff recorded in his journal the details of a confrontation between Young and Pratt. Pratt had been writing and publishing a monthly periodical which contained doctrine contrary to the Mormon President. When Young declared some of Orson's doctrines to be false, Pratt retaliated against the prophet by voicing his disbelief in the Adam-God doctrine:

Brother 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 was that He came from another world & made this brought Eve with him partook of the fruits of the Earth begat children & they ware Earthly & had mortal bodies & if we were faithful we should become Gods as He was. He told Brother Pratt to lay aside his Philosophical reasoning & get revelation from God to govern him & enlighten his mind more....

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 483.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 16, no. 34, August 26, 1854, p. 530.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 534–535.

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This dispute between the Mormon Prophet and his Apostle continued for several years. Because of his disbelief in the Adam-God teaching and in other doctrines of Young, Pratt was for years upon the point of being severed from the Church.³¹

In October of 1854, the Mormon Church held its semi-annual Conference. The session of October 8 was held out of doors in the open air. The congregation, which numbered in the thousands, heard Brigham Young deliver what was perhaps the most colorful discourse ever presented in the history of the Mormon Church. Addressing this immense gathering upon the subject of the identity of God, Young made the following statements:

... my text is in the Bible and reads as follows: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent." I will now put another text with this and then offer a few remarks. It is one of the sayings of the Apostle Paul: "For though there be that are called Gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be Gods many and Lords many) but to us there is but one God, the Father of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." This God is the father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the father of our spirits....

Now if you believe what you have heard me say you will believe there are Lords many, and Gods many; and you will believe that unto us the inhabitants of the earth there is but one God with whom we have to do....

You and I have only one God to whom we are accountable, so we will let the rest alone, and search after the one we have to do with; let us seek after him, the very being who commenced this creation....

But let us turn our attention to the God with which we have to do. I tell you simply, he is our father; the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the father of our spirits....

I tell you more, Adam is the father of our spirits. He had lived upon an earth; he did abide his creation, and did honor to his calling and priesthood, and obeyed his master or Lord, and probably many of his wives did the same and they lived, and died upon an earth and then were resurrected again to immortality and eternal life....

I reckon that Father Adam was a resurrected being, with his wives and posterity, and in the Celestial kingdom they were crowned with glory, immortality, and

³¹ See T. B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints*, p. 492. Photoreproduction of original available through Modem Microfilm Co., Box 1884, S.L.C., Utah 84110.

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eternal lives, with thrones, principalities and powers; and it was said to him it is your right to organize the elements; and to your creations and posterity there shall be no end.

Our spirits and the spirits of all the human family were begotten by Adam and born of Eve.³²

At no previous time had Brigham gone into as much detail concerning Adam as he did during this discourse. While the Mormon prophet had formerly taught that Adam was the God and Father of Jesus Christ and the Father of men's spirits, he had never expounded upon Adam's pre-earthly course of life as he did during this 1854 conference.

To fully comprehend the implications of Brigham's statements concerning Adam's pre-earthly development and advancement from stage to stage, it is necessary to understand the Mormon doctrine of "eternal progression." Mormonism's fifth President, Lorenzo Snow, summarized this doctrine with his aphorism:

As man is, God once was;
As God is, man may become.

The doctrine of eternal progression states that God the Father was once a man who lived, died, and was resurrected upon an earth similar to ours. By his faithfulness to the commandments of his God he progressed and advanced from degree to degree until he was crowned with exaltation, or Godhood. Having become God, he was then given the privilege of creating this world and being the Lord over it. He and his wife then begot the spirits which would later enter into the fleshly tabernacles which he would form for them. In a discourse in September of 1856, Brigham Young described this progression to exaltation which God the Father had passed through:

... our father in heaven is exalted and glorified. He has received His thrones, His principalities and powers, and He sits as a governor, as a monarch, and overrules kingdoms, thrones, and dominions that have been bequeathed to Him, and such as we anticipate receiving. While He was in the flesh, as we are, He was as we are. But it is now written of Him that our God is as a consuming fire, that He dwells in everlasting burnings, ... God is the Father of our spirits; He begat them, and has sent them here to receive tabernacles....³³

This same doctrine of eternal progression teaches that men today, if faithful as their God was, will continue on the road of progression until they too are exalted and crowned with

³² Brigham Young Papers, Oct. 8, 1854, call number Ms. d 1234, Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

³³ Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 4:54.

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Godhood. They will then not only receive eternal life, but they will as Gods be given “eternal lives” or the power of eternal increase. They will then have the ability to organize a world and to be the progenitors of the spirits of its inhabitants. In a discourse delivered during a special conference in August of 1852, Brigham Young described this process:

After men have got their exaltations and their crowns—have become Gods, even the sons of God—are made Kings of kings and Lords of lords, they have the power then of propagating their species in spirit; and that is the first of their operations with regard to organizing a world. Power is then given to them to organize the elements, and then commence the organization of tabernacles.³⁴

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Having an understanding of the Mormon concept of eternal progression, we can now clearly see the implications of Brigham Young’s statements in his 1854 General Conference discourse. When he stated that Adam “was a resurrected being,” he meant that Adam had lived, died, and had been resurrected upon another earth. By stating that Adam “in the celestial kingdom ... was crowned with glory, immortality, and eternal lives,” he was saying that Adam had attained to exaltation and was therefore a God. In his statement that “our spirits and the spirits of all the human family were begotten by Adam,” he was claiming, in no uncertain terms, that Adam was Heavenly Father. In short, by applying these statements to Adam, Brigham meant that prior to the organization of this world Adam had advanced along the road of eternal progression and was exalted to Godhood. He would therefore be our Father and our God and the only God with whom we have to do.

Throughout the lengthy address which was delivered in the open air that day, according to the *Deseret News* Brigham “held the vast audience as it were spellbound.”³⁵ Wilford Woodruff believed Brigham’s address to be “the greatest sermon ever delivered to the Latter-day Saints since they were a people.”³⁶ *The Journal of the Southern Indian Mission* also noted Brigham Young’s address, stating that it was a “discourse equalled by none.”³⁷

Though many were favorably impressed with Brigham’s statements that afternoon, there were nevertheless some who opposed. Joseph Lee Robinson, who attended the conference, noted that Orson Pratt was among them.

Attended conference, a very interesting conference, for at this meeting President Brigham Young said thus, that Adam and Eve were the names of the first man and

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6:275.

³⁵ *Deseret News*. vol. 4, no. 31, October 12, 1854, p. 2.

³⁶ *Journal of Wilford Woodruff*, October 6–8, 1854.

³⁷ *Journal of the Southern Indian Mission*, p. 88.

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woman of every earth that was ever organized and that Adam and Eve were the natural father and mother of every spirit that comes to this planet, or that receives tabernacles on this planet, consequently we are brothers and sisters and that Adam was God, our Eternal Father. This as Brother Heber remarked, was letting the cat out of the bag, ... but behold ye there were some that did not believe these sayings of the Prophet Brigham, even our Beloved Brother Orson Pratt told me he did not believe it. He said he could prove by the scriptures it was not correct. I felt very sorry to hear Professor Orson Pratt say that. I feared lest he should apostatize.³⁸

While Pratt was publicly denying the doctrine of the Church President, others who trusted their prophet's counsel and doctrine were adopting his revelations into their own writings. On January 9, 1855, during a social party in the Great Salt Lake City, Eliza R. Snow³⁹ recited the following from a poem she had written:

Father Adam, our God, let all Israel extol, and Jesus, our Brother, who died for us all: ...⁴⁰

Shortly after this a new edition of the LDS Church hymnbook was printed. Among the hymns contained in the book was one which confessed Adam along with the other two members of the Godhead:

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.

We believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, who in love,
To his brethren and sisters, came down from above,
To die to redeem them from death, and to teach
To mortals and spirits the Gospel we preach.

We believe in the Spirit most holy, that's given
From God our great Father, who dwells high in heaven,
To instruct and enlighten, to comfort and cheer —

³⁸ *Joseph Lee Robinson Journal*, copied from typed transcript located at B.Y.U. Library, Special Collections, p. 62.

³⁹ Eliza R. Snow was a plural wife of Joseph Smith and was later married to Brigham Young.

⁴⁰ *Millennial Star*, vol. 17, no. 20, p. 320.

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Tongues, dreams, visions, healings proclaim it is here.⁴¹

In the spring of 1856 another confrontation erupted between Young and Pratt over the position of Adam. Under the date of March 11, 1856, Samuel Richards recorded in his journal the events which transpired between the two that evening:

Evening with the Regency in the Upper Room of the President's office, ... A very serious conversation took place between Prest. B. Young and Orson Pratt upon doctrine. O.P. was directly apposed to the Prest. 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 Prest's word in the name of the Lord, was not the word of the Lord to him. The Prest. did not believe that Orson would ever be *Adam*, to learn by experience the facts discussed, but every other person in the room would if they lived faithful.⁴²

Brigham's statement, that Pratt would never be "Adam," suggests that the two were again disputing over the subject of the first man. Wilford Woodruff, who was also present that night, noted this indeed was the issue discussed.

I spent part of the day in the committee room and met with the regency in the evening ... the subject was brought up concerning Adam being made of the dust of the earth and elder Orson Pratt pursued a course of stubbornness and unbelief in what President Young said that will destroy him if he does not repent and turn from his evil way For when any man crosses the track of a leader in Israel and tryes to lead the prophet ... he is no longer led by him but is in danger of falling.

A few months after this event, Brigham Young's first Counselor, Heber C. Kimball, publicly sustained the Church President as the Prophet of God whose doctrines were inspired:

Just think of your position; you have heard the teachings and instructions of President Young, and his instructions are the word of God to us, and I know that every man and woman in this Church who rejects his testimony, and the testimony

⁴¹ *Sacred Hymns for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 1856, 11th ed., p. 375. This hymn has been deleted from present LDS hymnals. In the 20th ed. there appeared a hymn titled, "Sons of Michael, He approaches." In the second line Michael was described as the "eternal" Father. In today's edition this has been changed to read the "ancient" Father.

⁴² Diary of Samuel Whitney Richards, copied from typed transcript at B.Y.U. Library, Special Collections, Provo, Utah, p. 113.

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of those that he sends, rejects the testimony of God his Father. I know that, just as well as I know that I see your faces today.⁴³

Because rejecting Brigham's word was rejecting God, Orson Pratt was walking on thin ice. According to Wilford Woodruff, Pratt's Church membership was on the line:

President Young made some remarks about Orson Pratt and said if he did not take a different course in his philosophy ... he would not stay long in this Church.⁴⁴

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Opposition to Adam-God Intensifies

Brigham's opposition did not consist of Orson Pratt alone. Apparently there were a number of Mormons who were muttering their disbelief. It was to this group that the prophet addressed the following remarks during a discourse delivered on October 7, 1857:

Some have grumbled because I believe our God to be so near to us as Father Adam. There are many who know that doctrine to be true. ... Now, if it should happen that we have to pay tribute to Father Adam, what a humiliating circumstance it would be! Just wait till you pass Joseph Smith; and after Joseph lets you pass him, you will find Peter; and after you pass the Apostles and many of the Prophets, you will find Abraham, and he will say, "I have the keys, and except you do thus and so, you cannot pass"; and after a while you come to Jesus; and when you at length meet Father Adam, how strange it will appear to your present notions.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, it was the Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt who was the real thorn in Brigham's side, and it was inevitable that the President would seek its removal. In 1860 Young gathered his Apostles to consider the case of Orson Pratt's remarks.

After the Mormon General Authorities assembled in the President's office on the evening of January 27, Brigham read to them various doctrinal statements written by Pratt. He followed by expressing his disbelief in these doctrines. Wilford Woodruff then confessed his trust in Young:

it has ever been a key with me that when the Prophet who leads presents a doctrine or principle or says thus saith the Lord I make it a point to receive it even if it comes in contact with my tradition or views being well satisfied that the Lord would reveal the truth unto his Prophet whom he has called to lead the Church

⁴³ *Journal of Discourses*, 4:2.

⁴⁴ Wilford Woodruff Journal, December 29, 1856. Typed from microfilm of original.

⁴⁵ *Journal of Discourses*, 5:331f.

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before he would unto me, and the word of the Lord through the prophet is the End of the Law unto me.⁴⁶

One by one the Apostles expressed their faith in their prophet and sought to lead Pratt to a confession and repentance. The stubborn Apostle did not budge, however. Having no confidence in the prophet's declaration, Pratt refused to confess what he believed to be false:

I must have something more than a declaration of President Young to convince me. I must have evidence. I am willing to take President Young as a guide in most things but not in all.... President Young said I ought to make a Confession But Orson Pratt is not a man to make a Confession that I do not believe. I am not going to crawl to Brigham Young and act the hypocrite and confess what I do not believe.... President Young condemns my doctrine to be false. I do not believe them to be false.... I will not act the hypocrite. It may cost me my fellowship But I will stick to it. If I die tonight I would say O Lord God Almighty I believe what I say.

The Apostles stood amazed. After a moment's pause Apostle John Taylor tried to convince Orson of his error. Wilford Woodruff followed:

Brother Orson Pratt, I wish to ask you one or two questions. You see that the spirit and doctrine which you possess is entirely in opposition to the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and all who are present this evening and it chills the blood in our veins to hear your words and feel your spirit. Should not this be a Guidance to you that you are wrong.... Every man in this room who has a particle of the Spirit of God knows that President Young is a Prophet of God and that God sustains him and He has the Holy Spirit and his doctrines are true....

Various other Apostles testified that Orson was in error. President Young then closed by stating the importance of following God's Prophet. The meeting was dismissed; Pratt made no concession.

It must have been a sleepless night for Orson, however; the following day saw a change in the disposition of the Apostle. Wilford Woodruff noted this in his journal:

⁴⁶ The minutes of this session are found in the Wilford Woodruff Journal, under the date of January 27, 1860.

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I spent the day in the office. I met with the Twelve in the prayer circle. Orson Pratt met with us. He did not dress but said he wanted to be in the society of the Twelve. He seemed much more soft in his spirit then he had been.

Quite unexpectedly, Orson Pratt on the next day confessed from the Tabernacle stand that he was in error. Woodruff informs us of the event:

Sunday I met at the Tabernacle. Orson Pratt was in the stand and quite unexpected to his brethren he arose before his brethren and made a very humble full confession before the whole assembly for his opposition to President Young and his brethren and he said he wished all the Church was present to hear it. He quoted Joseph Smith's revelation to prove that President Young was right and that all was under obligation to follow the Leader of the Church. I never heard Orson Pratt speak better or more to the satisfaction to the People, than on this occasion.

At Issue: Is Young Teaching False Doctrine?

Strange and fickle as it might seem, however, within a few months Pratt was again openly opposing Brigham! On April 4 and 5 the Church Authorities again convened to discuss Pratt. Though the subject of Adam was not the major issue during the January 27 meeting, it was brought up often.

On April 4 in the Church Historians Office Pratt told the quorum members that he did not find the Adam-God doctrine to be supported by Joseph's revelation:⁴⁷

I would like to enumerate items first preached and published that Adam is the Father of our spirits.... When I read the revelation given Joseph I read directly the opposite.

Brigham later responded to Orson's attack by appealing to his own prophetic calling:

It is my duty to see that correct doctrine is taught and to guard the Church from error, it is my calling.

Orson spurned this statement, still believing that the Mormon prophet could err in doctrine even when he was acting as a prophet. With Brigham absent on the following day, Mormon Apostle Orson Hyde answered Pratt by affirming that to charge the prophet with advancing false doctrine was in reality undermining the entire truth and foundation of their religion. God's prophets cannot advance false doctrine. Therefore, to

⁴⁷ The council minutes, located in the Brigham Young Collection, Miscellaneous Papers, Church Historian's Office.

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acknowledge that the prophet Brigham was indeed advancing false doctrine would be to acknowledge that he was not divinely led. This would destroy their claim to be the Kingdom of God. Hyde insisted on this implication:

To acknowledge that this is the Kingdom of God, and that there is a presiding power, and to admit that he can advance incorrect doctrine is to lay the axe at the root of the tree. Will he suffer his mouthpiece to go into error? No. He would remove him and place another there. Brother Brigham may err in the price of a horse, ... but in the revelations from God, where is the man that has given thus saith the Lord when it was not so? I cannot find one instance.

Pratt expressed his total disbelief in Brigham's doctrine regarding Adam:

In regard to Adam being our Father and God ... I frankly say, I have no confidence in it, altho advanced by Brother Kimball in the stand, and afterwards approved by Brigham.... I have heard Brigham say that Adam is the Father of our spirits and he came here with a resurrected body, to fall for his own children, and I said to him it leads to an endless number of falls which leads to sorrow and death; that is revolting to my feelings, even if it were sustained by revelation.

Orson Pratt's central argument was that Young's doctrine contradicted the Scriptures. Joseph Smith claimed to have restored the pure version of the Genesis creation narrative in his inspired revision of the early chapters of the Bible. This "inspired" revision later became a part of Mormon scripture, entitled the Book of Moses. In the following verses Joseph's account of Genesis distinctly implies that Adam was not the God and Father of Jesus Christ:

And he called upon our father Adam by his own voice saying: I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh. And he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, ... and now, behold, I say unto you: This is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time (Moses 6:51f., 62).

These and other passages in Joseph's Book of Moses teach that the Father of the only begotten son, Jesus Christ, spoke to Adam in the Garden. That clearly indicates that Adam was not God the Father. It was to this fact that Orson Pratt appealed:

One [revelation] says that Adam was formed out of the earth, and the Lord put in his spirit, and another that he came with his body, flesh and bones, there are two

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contradictory revelations. In the garden it is said that a voice said to Adam, in the meridian of time, I will send my only begotten son Jesus Christ, then how can that man and Adam both be the Father of Jesus Christ?

It was the Father of Jesus Christ that was talking to Adam in the garden. Young says that Adam was the Father of Jesus Christ both of his spirit and body in his teaching from the stand.

The apostles answered Pratt by reasserting Brigham's divine calling; he was God's mouthpiece. The thought that a prophet of God could advance false doctrine chilled their blood. It was the duty of all to set aside any personal opinions and to be subject to the pronouncements of their divinely led leader. Wilford Woodruff angrily retorted:

As our leaders are inspired to talk, they are inspired oracles, and we should be as limber as a dish cloth.

Hyde, the President of the quorum of the Twelve Apostles, later in the session asked his brethren what should be required of Orson Pratt. George A. Smith, Church Historian, responded by suggesting that Orson acknowledge Brigham as a prophet and inspired man. Smith asserted that if Brigham was indeed the Church president, he would be an inspired man. On the other hand, if Orson Pratt were correct in his doctrines, which were declared to be false by Brigham, then all would have to conclude that the man whom they had thought was God's prophet was in fact not divinely led. Smith told Hyde that Pratt should,

... acknowledge Brigham Young as the President of the Church in the exercise of his calling. But he only acknowledges him as a poor drivelling fool, he preaches doctrines opposed to Joseph, and all other revelations. If Brigham Young is the President of the Church he is an inspired man. If we have not an inspired man, then Orson Pratt is right.

Pratt's January confession sermon was then revised for publication. Shortly after this the meeting came to a close. It was agreed that the proceedings of the sessions would be kept silent. Brigham and Pratt assured each other that no more would be said concerning their disagreement, and though Orson still disagreed with the prophet's teachings, it seemed that Brigham would not take any drastic action. In a few months, however, Orson received a mission call which would remove him from the Salt Lake area to the eastern United States.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ The entire Orson Pratt—Brigham Young affair cannot be underestimated. The controversy which raged between the two shows that Brigham was teaching that Adam was God. From the charges that Pratt

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Young's Adam-God Meets Continued Opposition

All opposition did not cease with Orson Pratt's removal. This time, though, the attack came from a group outside the LDS fold—the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.⁴⁹ Believing the original teachings of Joseph Smith to be true, the Reorganized Church immediately spotted the contradiction in Brigham's doctrine of Adam being God. In the November and December issues of their *True Latter-Day Saint Herald* the RLDS Church printed a lengthy refutation of Brigham's Adam-God doctrine. This article uses the same arguments and quotes the same scriptures as Orson Pratt did earlier that year when he contended with the Utah prophet. The *Herald* sought to overthrow the words of the living prophet by appealing to the written word.

The *True Latter-Day Saint Herald* saw clearly that Brigham Young was teaching false doctrine though he claimed to be acting as a prophet. They also clearly realized the implications. The man whom many looked to as being the successor of their martyred prophet was in reality a false prophet who taught as the word of God the imaginations of his own heart. Seeing by this that the Utah faction was not of God, they urged Utah Mormons to return to the true God.

The article in the *Herald* caused no small stir when it reached Utah. In his diary under the date of February 3, 1861, John D. Lee, adopted son of Brigham Young, recorded the following:

Eving attendd Prayer meeting & instructed the Saints on the points of Doctrine refered to by the true Latterday Saints Herald & their Bombarding Pres. B. Young

made, it is clear what Brigham was teaching. Furthermore, it is significant that Young made no attempt to correct a misquotation or misinterpretation. On the contrary, he defended his doctrine, and continued to assert it. Importance should also be placed upon the remarks of the other Apostles who rallied to their Prophet's defense. They replied to Orson that a prophet of God cannot advance false doctrine, therefore all should accept the President's statements. They rightly understood the biblical emphasis that a prophet of God cannot advance false doctrine about God and that he would be inspired to teach the truth. They also realized the implications of Orson Pratt's statement. If Brigham was advancing false doctrine, then he would be a false prophet. Only a false prophet advances false doctrine. To charge Mormonism's prophet with teaching false doctrine would be to undermine Mormonism's claim to be a divinely led people.

⁴⁹ The Reorganized Church at this time was known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Later they attached to themselves the title of being the "Reorganized" Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This Mormon faction has its headquarters in Independence, Missouri, and numbers close to a million members.

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for Saying that Adam is all the-God that we have to do with & to those that know no better, it is quite a stumbling Block....⁵⁰

The Utah authorities held to the revelations revealed by their prophet. Some even claimed to have received for themselves a revelation that confirmed what the Living oracle had spoken. In a notebook that contained several personal revelations which he believed God had personally revealed to Him, Heber C. Kimball, counselor to Brigham Young, recorded the following:

April 30, 1862, the Lord told me that Adam was my father and that he was the God and father of all the inhabitants of this earth.⁵¹

Though assailed from outside and from within the ranks of his own people, Brigham Young continued to set forth his belief in the doctrine. Speaking in the Tabernacle on the morning of October 8, 1861, Young remarked:

I will give you a few words of doctrine, upon which there has been much inquiry, and with regard to which considerable ignorance exists. Br. Watt will write it, but it is not my intention to have it published, therefore pay good attention, and store it up in your memories. Some years ago, I advanced a doctrine with regard to Adam being our father and God, that will be a cause to many of the Elders of Israel because of their folly. With regard to it they yet grovel in darkness and will. It is one of the most glorious revealments of the economy of heaven, yet the world holds it [in] dirrision. Had I revealed the doctrine of baptism from the dead instead [of] Joseph Smith there are men around me who would have ridiculed the idea until dooms day. But they are ignorant and stupid like the dumb ass.⁵²

A year prior to this statement Brigham stated that the only thing of which he was guilty was that he had revealed too much truth to the people.

... 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

⁵⁰ *A Mormon Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee* (The Huntington Library, 1955), vol. 1, p. 293.

⁵¹ *Sacred History*, Solomon F. Kimball Papers, Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

⁵² Manuscript Sermon, “A few words of Doctrine,” Brigham Young Collection, Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City.

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if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant," perhaps it would have been better for the people.⁵³

Nevertheless, as the years passed Young was still emphatically claiming that Adam was God the Father. In fact, he asserted this revelation in terms stronger than he ever had before. On June 8, 1873, Brigham again addressed his audience concerning Adam, and the week following he had his discourse published in the *Deseret News*:

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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.... The Christian world read of, and think about, St. Paul, also St. Peter, the chief of the Apostles. These men were faithful to and magnified the priesthood while on the earth. Now, where will be the mystery, after they have passed through all the ordeals, and have been crowned and exalted, and received their inheritances in the eternal worlds of glory, for them to be sent forth, as the Gods have been for ever and ever, with the command—“Make yourselves an earth, and people it with your own children?” ... Oh fools, and slow of heart to believe the great things that God has purposed in his own mind.... Adam came here and got it up in a shape that would suit him to commence business. What is the great mystery about it? None, that I have seen. The mystery in this, as with miracles, or anything else, is only to those who are ignorant. Father Adam came here, and then they brought his wife. “Well,” says one. “Why was Adam called Adam?” He was the first man on the earth, its framer and maker. He with the help of his brethren, brought it into existence. Then he said, “I want my children who are in the spirit world to come and live here. I once dwelt upon an earth something like this, in a mortal state. I was faithful. I received my crown and exaltation. I have the privilege of extending my work, and to its increase there will be no end. I want my children who were born to me in the spirit world to come here and take tabernacles of flesh....”

The opposition was still present, and there were still those who disbelieved in the sayings of their leader. It is interesting to note in this sermon that Brigham does not grieve over any misquotations or misunderstandings of his previous statements concerning Adam, but rather he laments over the disbelief which existed among his brethren. During all the years Young never claimed to be misquoted or misinterpreted. Instead, he appealed to his divine calling as proof of the truth of his statements.

Young also did not shy away from claiming that his teachings were the Word of God. He did not believe his doctrine to be just his personal opinion, which could be wrong. On the

⁵³ *Journal of Discourses*, 8:58.

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contrary, believing himself to be a prophet of God, he declared all of his sermons to be revelation, directly from the Lord:

I know just as well what to teach this people and just what to say to them and what to do in order to bring them into the celestial kingdom, as I know the road to my office. It is just as plain and easy. The Lord is in our midst. He teaches the people continually. I have never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they might not call Scripture. Let me have the privilege of correcting a sermon, and it is as good Scripture as they deserve. The people have the oracles of God continually.⁵⁴

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Brother Orson Hyde referred to a few who complained about not getting revelations. I will make a statement here that has been brought against me as a crime, perhaps as a fault in my life. Not here, I do not allude to anything of the kind in this place, but in the councils of the nations—that Brigham Young has said “when he sends forth his discourses to the world they may call them Scripture.” I say now when they are copied and approved by me they are as good Scripture as is couched in this Bible, and if you want to read revelation read the sayings of him who knows the mind of God...⁵⁵

There is no room for thinking that Brigham was expressing what he believed to be merely his own opinions. No. He rightly believed that when a prophet of God acts as a prophet, he speaks truth.

Young Firm to the End on Adam-God

As we come to 1877, the last year of Brigham Young’s life, we find him still teaching what he had first taught 25 years before. The setting for this discourse is in the home of Brigham Young. There appears to be evidence that part of this address was to be used as the lecture before the veil in all future endowment ceremonies:

... after supper went to Prest Young’s.... Prest Young was filled with the spirit of God and revelation and said ... “In the creation the gods entered into an agreement about forming this earth & putting Michael or Adam upon it. These things of which I have been speaking are what are termed the mysteries of godliness but they will enable you to understand the expression Jesus made while in Jerusalem. This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, we were once acquainted with the Gods & lived with them

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 13:95.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 13:264.

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but we had the privilege of taking upon us flesh that the spirit might have a house to dwell in. we did so and forgot all and came into the world not recollecting anything of which we had previously learned.

We have heard a great deal about Adam and Eve, how they were formed & some think he was made like an adobie and the Lord breathed into him the breath of life, for we read 'from dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return.' Well he was made of the dust of the earth but not of this earth, he 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, and had begotten all the spirits that was to come to this earth, and Eve our common mother who is the mother of all living bore those spirits in the celestial world, and when this earth was organized by Eloheim, Jehovah & Michael who is Adam our common Father, Adam and Eve had the privilege to continue the work of progression, consequently came to this earth and commenced the great work of forming tabernacles for those spirits to dwell in. and when Adam and those that assisted him had completed this kingdom our earth he came to it, and slept and forgot all and became like an infant child, it is said by Moses the historian that the Lord caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam and took from his side a rib and formed the woman that Adam called Eve—this should be interpreted that the man Adam like all other men had the seed within him to propagate his species, but not the woman, she conceives the seed but does not produce it, consequently she was taken from the side or bowels of her father, this explains the mystery of Moses' dark sayings in regard to Adam and Eve. Adam & Eve when they were placed on this earth were immortal beings with flesh bones, and sinues, but upon partaking of the fruit of the earth while in the garden and cultivating the ground their bodies became changed from immortal to mortal beings with the blood coursing through their veins as the action of life... 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 having gone back into the spirit world and come in the spirit to Mary and she conceived for when Adam and Eve got through their work on this earth they did not lay their bodies down in the dust, but returned to the spirit world from whence they came."

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he had received the Precious Blood and the
Keep 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, and had begotten all
the spirits that was to come to this earth, and
Eve our common Mother who is the mother
of all living birthless spirits in the celestial
world, and when this earth was organized by
Elohim: Jehovah & Michael who is Adam our
common Father, Adam & Eve had the privilege
to continue the work of Procreation, consequently
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L. John Nuttall Journal, February 7, 1877, page 22. Reportedly, this discourse of Brigham Young's was for years used as the "Lecture Before the Veil" in the St. George, Utah, Temple.

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I felt myself much blessed in being permitted to associate with such men and hear such instructions as they savored of life to me.⁵⁶

At one minute past 4:00 P.M., on August 29, 1877, Brigham Young died. He presided over the Mormon Church longer than any other man—30 years. Though many continued to believe in Adam as their God, the doctrine was largely buried along with Brigham. Rather than publicly preaching this doctrine, the Church authorities sought to avoid controversy by remaining silent.

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The Present Dilemma and the True Way Out

As time went on, not only did the Adam doctrine cease to be preached, but it began to be denied. Most LDS General Authorities even denied that Brigham had ever taught it. Being far removed from the time in which the second Mormon President expounded the teaching, these apologists were safe in dismissing his remarks as being misquoted or misinterpreted. Those who continued to believe the Adam-God teaching were soon to be excommunicated from the Church for believing it. Books and articles were written to denounce the Adam-God theory. These books quoted against the false doctrine the precise verses that Orson Pratt and the Reorganized Church had employed against Brigham a hundred years before.⁵⁷ There were no admissions that Brigham had taught it. Instead, there were denials.

An examination of the evidence, however, will admit to no other conclusion than that Brigham Young did teach that Adam was Heavenly Father, the Father of men's spirits as well as the Father of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Brigham Young, one of recent history's most prominent religious leaders, did indeed advance a doctrine that was to focus worship on a strange god. The doctrine that he taught for over 25 years was false doctrine and the LDS Church admits this today. It has, in effect, sided with Orson Pratt and has adopted his arguments and views as being right.

However, in doing this it has unknowingly admitted that Brigham was not an inspired prophet of God. It is caught in the words of one of its own Apostles, George A. Smith:

If Brigham Young is the President of the Church he is an inspired man. If we have not an inspired man, then Orson Pratt is right.

⁵⁶ L. John Nuttall Journal, pp. 20–24, copied from original at B.Y.U. Library, Special Collections, Provo, Utah.

⁵⁷ See Mark E. Petersen, *Adam Who Is He?*

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The implications certainly are obvious. The claims of the Utah LDS Church utterly collapse when they claim to be the only true church and the sole possessor of God's authority.

The Mormon, furthermore, faces the dilemma of being unable to be certain that his present prophet is advancing true doctrine. Perhaps the present teachings of the living prophet will be tomorrow's false teachings of a dead prophet. Perhaps the present revelations which the modern President claims to have received will be swept under the carpet as was the revelation concerning Adam that Brigham Young claimed to have received from God.

Today's Mormon cannot hide behind a testimony that the living prophet is advancing correct doctrine. His testimony holds no more weight than the strong testimonies which past members had concerning the truth of Brigham's Adam-God teaching. In reality, no Mormon can rest assured and have confidence that his prophet is not uttering the imaginations of his own heart. Even when he speaks as a prophet and is sustained and defended by his fellow Apostles, he still cannot be fully trusted.

This frightening dilemma in which the Mormon finds himself is not peculiar to him or to his people, but is the snare in which all men find themselves when they put their trust in men. To trust in the arm of flesh is really to have no hope at all. One's faith can be only as firm as the object upon which he places his trust. To place one's confidence upon erring flesh is to lack firm footing and roots:

Thus says the Lord, Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD. For he will be like a bush in the desert and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt without inhabitant (Jer. 17:5, 6).

God invites all men today to place their trust in Him directly through His Son, Jesus Christ. Unlike a false prophet who teaches the people to follow a strange god, Jesus can be fully trusted to lead us to His Father. By His death, Christ has secured a place in the presence of God for all who place their trust in him. Those who trust Him can be absolutely sure that He will never fail.

Chris Alex Vlachos¹

¹ Vlachos, C. A. (1979). "Brigham Young's False Teaching: Adam Is God." *The Journal of Pastoral Practice*, 3(2), 93-119.