

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Adam – God Theory

ACADEMIC DICTIONARIES AND ENCYCLOPEDIAS

In Mormonism, the **Adam–God theory** (also called the **Adam–God doctrine**) was a doctrine taught by Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and other early leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) involving the status of [Adam](#) as the God of humanity. Basically, the doctrine states that Adam was actually God the Father, that he came to this earth with an immortal, celestial and resurrected body, along with his wife Eve, and partook of the fruit in the Garden of Eden thus causing the Fall of Mankind.

Statements by Leaders of the Movement

There are several sources that support this, arranged chronologically:

1. In June 1835, William W. Phelps states that we have the opportunity to “become archangels”. [*Messenger and Advocate*, Vol. 1, No. 9, p. 130.] Joseph taught that angels are “resurrected or translated” beings [*History of the Church*, 4:425, Sunday, October 3, 1841,] and that Adam was “Michael the Archangel”. [*History of the Church* 3:385-391; *Messages of the First Presidency* 1:113.] The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “archangel” as “a chief angel”. Joseph said that “spirits can only be revealed in flaming fire or glory. Angels have advanced further; their light and glory being tabernacled... Angels have advanced higher in knowledge and power than spirits.” [*History of the Church* 6:51, October 8, 1843.]
2. On May 16, 1841, Joseph taught that an “everlasting covenant was made between three personages before the organization of this earth, and relates to their dispensation of things to men on the earth; these personages, according to Abraham’s record, are called God the first, the Creator; God the second, the Redeemer; and God the third, the witness or Testator.” [*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 190.] Joseph seems to be suggesting that the 3 Gods made a covenant between themselves that related to their dispensation on earth, meaning that God the Father may have had a dispensation on earth.
3. The following statement was recorded by Anson Call in Nauvoo and copied by Patriarch John M. Whitaker also of Nauvoo. Elder B. H. Roberts, Church

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Historian and one of the First Presidents of the Seventy later made a copy from Patriarch Whitaker. Date c. 1800-1844: "Now regarding Adam: He came here from another planet, an immortalized Being, and brought his wife Eve with him, and by eating of the fruit of this earth, became subject to death and decay...was made mortal and subject to death."

4. In June 1854, Apostle Franklin D. Richards, British Mission President stated that "Adam is our Father and our God" and that the Lord had revealed this to the Prophet Joseph in a revelation. [*Millennial Star*, 16:534.]
5. On April 4, 1860, a meeting was held in the Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City at 7 pm. Several apostles were in attendance. Brigham Young said: "It was Joseph's doctrine that Adam was God... God comes to earth & eats & partakes of fruit. Joseph could not reveal what was revealed to him, & if Joseph had it revealed, he was not told to reveal it."
6. On September 4, 1860, George Q. Cannon said "...that Adam is our Father [and] is a true doctrine revealed from God to Joseph & Brigham. For this same doctrine is taught in some of the old Jewish records which have never been in print..." [*Journal of Wilford Woodruff*, September 4, 1860.]
7. On December 16, 1867 at a meeting of the School of the Prophets: "President Young said Adam was Michael the Archangel, & he was the Father of Jesus Christ & was our God & that Joseph taught this principle." [*Journal of Wilford Woodruff*, December 16, 1867.]

Historical Overview

The most comprehensive statement of the doctrine, found in the transcript of Young's sermon at the church's 1852 [General Conference](#), includes the ideas that Adam (1) entered the Garden of Eden "with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him", (2) and (3) that Jesus was conceived, not by the Holy Spirit, but by "the Father", i.e., "the first of the human family"

During the life of Brigham Young, elements of the Adam-God theory were taught in church meetings, sung in church hymns, and included in the church's [Endowment ceremony](#). The doctrine was taught privately and publicly, on and off, by most of the apostles and church leaders until just before 1900. One of the last teachings on this occurred at a meeting in St George, Utah. The First Presidency had gone there to resolve a dispute being caused by Edward Bunker Sen and others of Bunkerville, Nevada. Church president Wilford Woodruff and counselor George Q. Cannon were there to put

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the issue to bed. The record states: "Pres Woodruff and Cannon showed...that Adam was an immortal being when he came to this earth and was made the same as all other men and Gods are made." [*Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, Vol II:740-741, June 11, 1892 (In Typescript pp 43-44), See also *Letter of Bishop Edward Bunker, Jr to Joseph F. Smith*, February 9, 1902.] "The doctrine preached and contended for by Father Edward Bunker of Bunkerville was investigated, condemned and Father Bunker set right. Presidents Woodruff and Cannon present." [*Journal of J.D.T. McAllister*, p. 99; BYU, Mor/M270.1/m/v.6, June 11, 1892.]

Beginning around 1892 and forward, the church decided to no longer support the earlier teachings of Adam-God. In a letter written on January 9, 1897, President Joseph F. Smith said, "With reference to Prest. B. Youngs remarks, in a discourse delivered in 1852. with reference to 'Adam being the only God with whom we have to do' &c. I will say:---Prest. 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 not 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..." [*Letter to the Honorable A. Saxey, Provo, Utah*; CHO/d1325/Bk4/fd1.]

In a private Council meeting held on April 4, 1897, President Woodruff said "Adam is our father and God and no use to discuss it with [the] Josephites or any one else." [*Brigham Young, Jr. Journal*, April 4, 1897-February 2, 1899, Vol 30:107; CHO/Ms/f/326, Dec 16th 1897.]

After the turn of the century the church openly took the position that it no longer needed to be taught. [See for example the *Proceedings of the First Sunday School Convention*, November 28, 1898; *Letter to Bishop Edward Bunker*, Feb 27, 1902; *Messages of the First Presidency*, Vol 4:199-206; *Journal of Thomas A. Clawson*, 1912-1917, pp 69-70, April 8, 1912; *Deseret News*, B. H. Roberts, July 23, 1921; *Utah Genealogical Magazine*, Joseph Fielding Smith, pp 146-151, Oct 1930; *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol 1:18, 76-77, 92, 1954]

Apostle Orson Pratt was the only one of the 12 that had a problem with the doctrine. President Young rebuffed Orson on several occasions for not believing in the Adam-God doctrine. [See for example *Journal of Wilford Woodruff*, April 4-5, 1860.] Other apostles were supportive of Brigham Young's teaching. [*Journal of Wilford Woodruff*, April 10, 1852.] [*Millennial Star* 16:534, 28 August 1854.] [*Journal of Discourses* 4:1]

In 1976, the most common interpretation of the theory was rejected by the LDS Church as false doctrine. However, in branches of Mormon fundamentalism that are no longer

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affiliated with the LDS Church, but who closely follow the teachings of Brigham Young, the doctrine remains.

Brigham Young's Public Teachings

Brigham Young first taught the Adam–God theory at the church's spring General Conference on April 9, 1852. This sermon was recorded stenographically by George D. Watt, Young's private secretary, who was an expert in Pitman shorthand. Watt published the sermon in 1854 in the British periodical *Journal of Discourses*, in a volume endorsed by Young and the church's First Presidency.

In Watt's transcript of the sermon, Young said he intended to discuss "who it was that begat the Son of the Virgin Mary", a subject which he said "has remained a mystery in this kingdom up to this day." The transcript reads: "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."

The transcript then reads: "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."¹ Young explained that Adam "was begotten by "his Father" in heaven" in the same way that Adam begat his own sons and daughters, and that there were "three distinct characters, namely, Eloheim, Yahovah, and Michael." Then, reiterating, he said that "Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in

¹ The full text from the *Journal of Discourses* 1:51 reads as follows: "It is true that the earth was organized by three distinct characters, namely, "Eloheim, Yahovah, and Michael", these three forming a quorum, as in all heavenly bodies, and in organizing element, perfectly represented in the Deity, as "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Again, they will try to tell how the divinity of Jesus is joined to his humanity, and exhaust all their mental faculties, and wind up with this profound language, as describing the soul of man, "it is an immaterial substance!" 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 these 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 for ever, that Jesus Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost."

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the flesh by the same character that was in the Garden of Eden, and who is our Father in Heaven."²

He said, "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 mankind.... Now, let all who may hear these doctrines, pause before they make light of them, or treat them with indifference, for they will prove their salvation or damnation."

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Initial Reactions to the Doctrine

The reaction to Young's sermon within the Mormon community was mixed. Many regarded Young's statements as prophetic. For example, the Clerk of the Conference [Thomas Bullock](#) recorded that during Young's sermon, "the Holy Ghost rest [ed] upon him with great power."³ In a session of General Conference the next day, Young's counselor stated his agreement that "the God and Father of Jesus Christ was Adam". [*Journal of Wilford Woodruff*, April 10, 1852.] Another apostle, Franklin D. Richards, accepted the doctrine "that Adam is our Father and our God" as well, stating in a Conference held in June 1854 that "the Prophet and Apostle Brigham has declared it, and that it is the word of the Lord" (emphasis in original). [*Millennial Star* 16:534, 28 August 1854.]

However, some other prominent members of the church took issue with the doctrine. Most significantly, apostle and philosopher Orson Pratt disagreed with the doctrine, and expressed that disagreement publicly [*Journal of Thomas Evans Jeremy Sr.*, September 30, 1852 ("Also he did not believe that Father Adam had flesh and bones, when he came to the garden of Eden, but he and his wife Eve were spirits, and that God formed their bodies out of the dust of the ground, and the (sic) became a living souls. He also said that he

² Watt's transcript of the sermon was the only known stenographic recording; however, several other witnesses summarized it in their journals. These recountings vary somewhat in wording. For example, attendee Samuel Hollister Rogers wrote several days later, confirming that Young said that when Adam went to the Garden, he "brought his wife or one of his wives with him", that "Adam was the only God that we would have, and that Christ was not begotten by the Holy Ghost, but of the Father Adam." {2 *Brigham Young Addresses* 12; *Samuel Hollister Rogers Journal* 145). Young's bodyguard Hosea Stout wrote that night in his diary that "President B. Young taught that Adam was the father of Jesus and the only God to us." {2 *Diary of Hosea Stout* 435 (April 9, 1852)}. Wilford Woodruff wrote that Young said God went to the Garden of Eden with "one of his wives", that "Adam is Michael or God And all the God that we have any thing to do with", and "when the VIRGIN MARY was begotton with Child it was By the Father and in no other way ownly as we were begotton." {4 *Journal of Wilford Woodruff* 127-130, April 9, 1852.}

³ Thomas Bullock:

<http://udn.lib.utah.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/deseretnews1&CISOPTR=170739&REC=8> Minutes of the LDS General Conference. *Deseret News*, April 17, 1852, page 2.

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believed that Jesus Christ and Adam are brothers in the Spirit, and that Adam is not the God that he is praying unto.”)] See generally, and in private meetings with other apostles. [Journal of William Clayton, October 3, 1852.] Pratt also published his disagreement in his East-coast publication *The Seer*. [Orson Pratt (March, October 1853), “The Pre-Existence of Man”, *The Seer*, 1:3, 158-159.] Pratt continued to debate the issue in public forums for months, despite being rebuked privately and publicly by Brigham Young on more than one occasion until 1860, when faced with possible disfellowshipment, he agreed to the language of a public confession as negotiated during a series of meeting among the church hierarchy.

Despite the controversy, Young was adamant about the doctrine. In a special conference on August 28, 1852, Young explained in greater detail the mechanism by which celestial beings like Adam and Eve could give birth to mortal offspring. According to Young, when a couple first become gods and goddesses, they first begin to create spiritual offspring. Then, they begin creating “mortal tabernacles” in which those spirits can dwell, by going to a newly-created world, where they: “eat and drink of the fruits of the corporal world, until this grosser matter is diffused sufficiently through their celestial bodies, to enable them according to the established laws to produce mortal tabernacles for their spiritual children.” This is what Adam and Eve did, Young said, and “Adam is my Father.”

On February 19, 1854, he reiterated the doctrine in a sermon. [Journal of Wilford Woodruff, February 19, 1854.] He also reiterated the doctrine at the October 1854 General Conference, [Journal of Joseph L. Robinson, October 6, 1854.] in a sermon that was reported to have “held the vast audience as it were spellbound” [Minutes of the General Conference, *Deseret News*, October 12, 1853.] In the October conference, Young is reported as clarifying that Adam and Eve were “natural father and mother of every spirit that comes to this planet, or that receives tabernacles on this planet, consequently we are brother and sisters, and that Adam was God, our Eternal Father.” [Journal of Joseph Lee Robinson, October 6, 1854. See also *Diary of Thomas D. Brown*, October 6, 1854, pp. 87-88 (“There are Lords many and there are Gods many, & the Father of our Spirits is the Father of Jesus Christ: He is the Father of Jesus Christ, Spirit & Body and he is the beginner of the bodies of all men”); *John Pulsipher Papers*, Mss 1041, p. 35-37, BYU Special Collections (“There are Lords many & Gods many But the God that we have to account to, is the father of our Spirits—Adam.”)]

Young’s first counselor Heber C. Kimball adopted Young’s views enthusiastically, and preached on June 29 1856 that “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.” [Journal of Discourses 4:1] .

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When Young discussed the doctrine again in early 1857, he emphasized again that “to become acquainted with our Father and our God” was “one of the first principles of the doctrine of salvation”, and that “no man can enjoy or be prepared for eternal life without that knowledge”. [JD 4:215] He referred once again to Adam as “God our heavenly Father, or the great Eloheim”. [JD 4:216] Nevertheless, he said: “Whether Adam is the personage that we should consider Our Heavenly Father, or not, is considerable of a mystery to a good many. I do not care for one moment how that is; it is no matter whether we are to consider Him our God, or whether His Father, or his Grandfather, for in either case we are of one species of one family and Jesus Christ is also of our species.” [JD 4:217] He indicated, however, that this “great Eloheim” (Adam) had lived a life, became a god, created the spirits of mankind, created the earth, and then on earth began bearing the physical bodies of children. [JD 4:217–18] He was able to give birth to physical bodies “by partaking of the course material that was organized and composed this earth, until His system was charged with it.” [JD 4:218] Then later, he physically came down and became the physical father of Jesus. [JD 4:218]

In the October 1857 General Conference, Young again discussed the doctrine, stating that “ [s]ome 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.” [Journal of Discourses 5:327] He stated that on the way to exaltation, one would have to “pass by” and “pay tribute to” various apostles and prophets, then Jesus, and “at length ... Father Adam.” [id.] He said many would be surprised and humiliated, after passing by Jesus, to find “Father Adam” standing there; however, he said, “those are ideas which do not concern us at present, although it is written in the Bible—‘This is eternal life, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.’” [id.]

Adam–God in Young’s Later Administration

After the public debates between Brigham Young and Orson Pratt subsided in 1860, Young continued to maintain his belief in the doctrine, but may have been somewhat bitter that the doctrine did not gain immediate acceptance. In 1861, he stated: “Some years ago, I advanced a doctrine with regard to Adam being our father and God, that will be a curse 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 hold derision. Had I revealed the doctrine of baptism from [sic] the dead instead 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.”⁴

⁴ Quoted from <http://www.xmission.com/~country/by/100861.htm> Manuscript Addresses of Brigham Young . Watt, G.D., transcriber, October 8, 1861, with minor misspellings corrected.

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In 1873, Young alluded to the doctrine, and indicated that when Adam came to the earth, he left behind many wives other than [Eve](#) at the place from which Adam came; however, he said he was “not disposed to give any farther knowledge concerning... [T]he great and glorious doctrine that pertains to this.” [Brigham Young (August 31, 1863), *Journal of Discourses* 16:160]

Just before his death, Young took steps to ensure that the Adam–God theory was taught in LDS temples as part of the [Endowment ceremony](#). In his personal journal William Clayton recorded the teachings of Brigham Young given in the Nauvoo Temple on 28 December 1845. In these teachings Brigham Young clearly states that there are at least two persons named Adam.

Meeting at half past 10 o'clock this day in the attic Story of the Temple, for those who could clothe themselves in the garments of the Priesthood. A very large congregation was present, the side rooms were some of them filled, a curtain was withdrawn and the other rooms besides the east room were filled. About 200 persons were present, clothed in priestly garments. President Young addressed the meeting, it having been opened by prayer by P. P. Pratt, and singing the songs of Zion, “The morning breaks the shadows flee” and “Come to me &c. President Young came into the room at ¼ before 12 M. He said he supposed those present were a part of those who had received their endowment, that they were those who desired to be wise and do honor to the cause they have espoused, and bring no reproach upon the character of him who has given us of the things of his Kingdom liberally. The keys or signs of the Priesthood are for the purpose of impressing on the mind the order of the Creation. In the first place the name of the man is given, a new name, Adam, signifying the first man, or Eve, the first Woman. “Adam’s name was more ancient than he was. It was the name of a man long before him, who enjoyed the Priesthood. The new name should be after some ancient man.” Thus with your ancient name, your modern name and the name that was last given you, you enquire concerning things past present and future. (Brigham Young, *Intimate Chronicle* 238-239 (*William Clayton Journal*) (28 December 1845)

If, as Brigham Young teaches here, Adam was named after “some ancient man” who held the priesthood and lived long before Adam did, then the identity of that more ancient Adam might help us understand better Brigham Young’s teachings concerning Adam. If that more ancient Adam is God the Father, then all the mystery of Brigham Young’s teachings relative to Adam disappear.

In 1877, while Young was standardizing the Endowment ceremony for use in the Saint George temple, Young introduced as part of the Endowment the “Lecture at the Veil.” The final draft of the Lecture, made after Young’s death, is kept private in the St. George

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Temple. There are those who believe that Young's personal secretary recorded Young's dictation of the lecture in his personal journal. A portion of that journal entry reads as follows:

"Adam was an immortal being when he came. on this earth he had lived on an earth similar to ours... and had begotten all the spirit 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.... Father Adam's oldest son (Jesus the Saviour) who is the heir of the family is Father Adams 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 [glory] to Mary and she conceived for when Adam and Eve got through with their Work in this earth. they did not lay their bodies down in the dust, but returned to the spirit World from whence they came." (*Journal of L. John Nuttall*, personal secretary of Brigham Young, February 7, 1877 in BYU Special Collections).

Prefacing the paragraph quoted, L. John Nuttall records in his private journal for Wednesday 7 February 1877 that after serving that day in the St. George Temple and after taking his evening meal, he attended a meeting with President Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, Erastus Snow, Brigham Young Jr, I.G. Bleak, and E. M. Greene. (See paragraphs 1A and 1B below.) This meeting was held in President Young's private winter home in St. George, Utah. During the course of the meeting, President Young gave some teachings which Nuttall later recorded in his personal journal.

It appears that Nuttall recorded President Young's instructions on the 8th, not on the 7th when they were delivered. The claim that Nuttall did not record President Young's instructions on the same night they were delivered is made by Fred Collier. Collier notes that, after Nuttall had written the first sentence of paragraph 1B, "[a]t this point Nuttall stopped writing for the ink beginning the next sentence is much lighter and the same as that used for his diary entry of February 8." Collier notes that Nuttall resumed his entry for February 7 with the word "Works" and continues with the rest of his journal entry as set forth in this section. It would appear that Nuttall wrote the majority of that entry on the following day, the 8th.

Six days before this private evening meeting, President Young had also given some instructions in the St. George Temple. Nuttall, who was serving at that time as the temple's recorder, wrote down those instructions for safe keeping. (According to Nuttall's journal entry for 1 February 1877 "President Young was present and gave some instructions not previously given, which I wrote for safe keeping and reference hereafter.") It is claimed by some that the instructions recorded by Nuttall on 1 February 1877 included what has come to be called "the lecture at the veil" and that Nuttall and

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John Daniel Thomas McAllister had been specifically requested to record that particular lecture. It is further claimed that the teachings recorded six days later in Nuttall's journal entry for 7 February 1877 are actually Nuttall's record of the 1 February 1877 lecture. (E.g., G. Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum* 258-260 (2002) Bergera states that President Young "dictated [the lecture] to one of his secretaries" and then sets out the text of Nuttall's 7 February 1877 journal entry.) Below we will see why this last claim is most likely not true.

Nuttall's 7 February 1877 journal entry begins as follows:

{1A} In the sealing room, in anointing where Josiah Guile Hardy and his wife Ann Lenston Hardy had their 2 anointings, also Matthew Clayton, also Sarah Johnson Macdonald anointed to A. F. Macdonald. His wife Elizabeth Graham Mc D. as proxy, Ranny Van Cott Macdonald was also anointed to A. F. Mcdonald, W. Woodruff anointing.

{1B} After supper went to President Young's. Present Prest. Young, W. Woodruff, E. Snow, B. Young, Jr., I. G. Bleak, E. M. Greene and myself. Works in the temple being under consideration, Prest. Young was filled with the spirit of God and revelation, and said when we got our washings and anointings under the hands of the Prophet Joseph at Nauvoo we had only one room to work in, with the exception of a little side room or office were we were washed and anointed, had our garments placed upon us and received our new name.

In this paragraph, Nuttall summarizes his activities of the day (performing various anointings in the St. George Temple) before he attended the evening meeting at President Young's residence. Many writers about this topic do not discuss paragraph 1A or the first half of paragraph 1B.

Because Nuttall also notes that at this private evening meeting several matters or "Works" concerning the temple were considered by those present, many writers have assumed that this journal entry contains the "lecture at the veil." For example, Theorists Robert Black and Fred Collier both assume that Nuttall's reference to the "Works" in the temple refers to what Black chooses to call "the sermon before the Veil." Unfortunately, they give no reasons for this assumption. Similarly, most other writers simply assume, without discussion, that the text of this journal entry represents President Young's 1 February 1877 lecture delivered in the St. George Temple, despite the fact that Nuttall plainly states in the often omitted introductory sentences of his journal entry that this text was delivered on 7 February 1877 at the residence of President Young.

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Interpretations

Adam as the father of Jesus Christ

Those who accept the Adam–God doctrine believe that it includes the idea that Adam was the father of Jesus Christ through the [Virgin Mary](#), or perhaps God the Father (Elohim), although Young seemed particularly exact not to confuse the identity of Elohim and Adam. ManyWho|date=July 2007 also believe that Eve was a wife from a previous planet or earth. Young's statements on this subject are somewhat ambiguous, and some have rejected this interpretation.

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Distinction between Adam and Elohim

Though Young referred to Adam as the “Father” in his 1852 sermon and thereafter, it is clear that Young did not equate Adam with “Elohim” (who modern Mormons usually identify as God the Father) for he stated in his sermon that “Eloheim, Yahovah, and Michael” were “three distinct characters”. Moreover, in 1873 he stated: “We say that Father Adam came here and helped make the earth. Who is he? He is Michael, a great prince, and it was said to him by Eloheim, ‘Go ye and make an earth’ Adam came here, and then they brought his wife. . . . 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.’” (*Deseret News*, p. 308. June 18, 1873).

Brigham Young's statements in light of Joseph Smith teachings

Joseph Smith explained that the title Eloheim is actually plural meaning Gods. “I will teach on the plurality of Gods. . . . Eloheim is from the word Eloi, God, in the singular number; and by adding the word heim it renders it Gods. It read first - “In the beginning the Head of the Gods brought forth the Gods” or as others have translated it “The Head of the Gods called the Gods together. . . .” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 370-372) In light of this teaching there is no contradiction in Brigham Young's statements. Eloheim or the Gods along with Jehovah and Michael created the earth. The title Elohim could be applied to God the Father or God the Father's Father etc.

The theory as a doctrine

There is some controversy as to whether or not Young considered the Adam–God theory to be official church doctrine. At the end of his 1852 sermon, he stated, “Now, let all who may hear these doctrines, pause before they make light of them, or treat them with indifference, for they will prove their salvation or damnation.” (1 *JD* 51). Nevertheless, in

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1854, after a great deal of controversy concerning the doctrine, Young minimized the importance of the doctrine, stating that the “subject ... does not immediately concern yours or my welfare... I do not pretend to say that the items of doctrine and ideas I shall advance are necessary for the people to know” (October 8, 1854, Historical Department of the Church [HDC]).

After 1854, Young also generally declined requests to elaborate on the doctrine. In 1860, the [First Presidency](#) issued a statement, entitled “Instructions to the Saints”, regarding various disagreements between Young and apostle Orson Pratt on many doctrinal issues. The statement was meant to clear up any questions concerning the official position of the Church on these various doctrinal disagreements. Contrary to the opinions of many, this official document did “not” address the Adam-God theory. Instead, concerning Adam the statement said only that, “It is deemed wisest to let that subject remain without further explanation at present.” (2 Messages of the First Presidency 222).

Although Brigham Young minimized the importance of this doctrine and declined to elaborate on the doctrine much further, there are those who contend that he continued to assert the doctrine until his death. They point out that in 1870, Young claimed that he had “never yet preached a sermon and sent it out to the children of men, that they may not call Scripture. Let me have the privilege of correcting a sermon, and it is as good Scripture as they deserve.” (13 J.D. 95.) Unfortunately they fail to also point out that Young did not have the opportunity to review and correct all his sermons concerning Adam. Nevertheless, in 1873, Young lamented, “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.” (*Deseret News*, June 18, 1873). No one before or since can claim to have fully understood Young’s teachings on these matters.

After the death of Brigham Young, church leaders began to cast the various interpretations of this theory as mere speculation and denied that any particular interpretation was binding on the Church. In 1897, Joseph F. Smith, then a counselor in the First Presidency, wrote a private letter concerning Young’s teachings on Adam, stating:

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. Brigham Young’s ‘bare mention’ was ‘without indubitable evidence and authority being given of its truth.’ Only the scripture, the ‘accepted word of God,’ is the Church’s standard (Letter to A. Saxey, January 7, 1897, HDC).

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Contemporary Interpretations

Evidence for the Adam-is-God interpretation

During the life of Brigham Young and for some time later, many devout Latter-day Saints believed and taught that Adam was the father of Jesus Christ. For example, Heber C. Kimball, a member of the First Presidency under Brigham Young, stated 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...” (4 J.D., p.1). However, it is not clear that Adam is the “first man” to whom Kimball makes reference. Adam’s father Elohim would also have been “the God that pertains to this earth” and existed before Adam, making Elohim the “first man” who sent his Son to redeem the world. George Q. Cannon, another member of the First Presidency, when asked by his son about the conception of Jesus by Mary, asked “what was to prevent Father Adam from visiting and overshadowing the mother of Jesus.” (March 10, 1888, “Daily Journal of Abraham H. Cannon”) (at Brigham Young University). Again, Cannon could have been referring to Elohim by the title Adam because Elohim was the first man in relation to this earth.

There were also Mormon hymns published that taught this idea. One in 1856 entitled “We Believe in Our God”, stated:

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...”

(Sacred Hymns and Spiritual Songs for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
p. 375) (Liverpool, 1856).

Another poem, subtitled “A Chorous For The Latter Times”, and published in 1861, was prefaced by the following scriptural quotation:

“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. :A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten

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thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.”⁵

The hymn itself, titled “Sons of Michael”, stated:

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,
‘Stablished now o’er sea and main!

Sons of Michael, ‘tis his chariot
Rolls its burning wheels along!
Raise aloft your voices million
In a torrent power of song
Hail our Head with music soft!
Raise sweet melodies aloft!

Mother of our generations!
Glorious by Great Michael’s side;
Take thy children’s adoration;
Endless with thy Lord preside
Lo, to greet thee now advance
Thousands in the joyous dance!

Raise a chorus, sons of Michael,
Like old Ocean’s roaring swell,
Till the mighty acclamation
Through rebounding space doth tell
That the Ancient One doth reign
In his Paradise again! [*Millennial Star* 23:15 (13 April 1861), p. 240]⁶

This hymn is still included in the current LDS hymnal but its wording has been altered from the original.⁷

⁵ <http://scriptures.lds.org/en/dan/7/9-10#9> Daniel 7:9-10

⁶ Mormon Publications: 19th and 20th Centuries, *The Latter Day Saint Millennial Star* Vol. 23, No. 15 13 April 13, 1861, p. 240.

⁷ <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/MStar&CISOPTR=22276&REC=4>

⁷ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/music/library/hymns/sons-of-michael-he-approaches?>

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Evidence against the Adam-is-God interpretation

It is evident, however that most contemporaries believed in yet another interpretation not widely referred to by modern Mormon apologists.

This theory states that as Adam stands at the head of the human family, he has become our god. For instance, “the Lord made Moses a god to Pharaoh” (Exodus 7:1) and as Paul was “as Christ Jesus” to the Galatians (4:14). In this way, Adam as our great progenitor, will preside over the human family as “father and God.”

According to some researchers, “this was the interpretation of Brigham Young’s statement advocated in 1853 by Samuel W. Richards, who, as editor of the *Millennial Star* and President of the Church in the British Isles, first published President Young’s initial sermon on the subject (*Millennial Star*, December 10, 1853).”

Franklin D. Richards who took Samuel W. Richards place also promoted this interpretation (see MS, March 31, 1855).

Other presidents of the Church have also taught this interpretation.

Furthermore, the Hebrew word “Adam” has as one of its meanings “Man” and may have been used by Young, as in his 28 December 1845 speech in the Temple, to refer to God the Father (who in the Book of Moses is described as possessing the name-title “Man of Holiness”).

Lastly, President Young’s following statements seem to identify Heavenly Father as the Parent and Creator of Adam and Eve.

The world may in vain ask the question: “Who are we?” But the Gospel tells us that we are the sons and daughters of that God who we serve. Some say, “We are the children of Adam and Eve.” So we are, and they are the children of our Heavenly Father. We are all the children of Adam and Eve, and they and we are the offspring of Him who dwells in the heavens, the highest Intelligence that dwells anywhere that we have any knowledge of. (*JD* 13:311. See also *JD* 1:238).

We have a God with ears, eyes, nose, mouth; He can and does speak. He has arms, hands, body, legs and feet; He talks and walks; and we are formed after His likeness. The good book--the Bible, tells us what kind of a character our Heavenly Father is. In the first chapter of Genesis and the 17th verse, speaking of the Lord creating men, it reads as plain as it can read, and He created man in His own image and likeness; and if He created Adam and Eve in His own image, the whole human family are like Him (*JD* 13:308-309).

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We believe in God the Father and in Jesus Christ our elder brother. We believe that God is a person of tabernacle, possessing in an infinitely higher degree all the perfections and qualifications of his mortal children. We believe that he made Adam after his own image and likeness, as Moses testifies; and in this belief we differ from the professedly Christian world, who declare that "His center is everywhere, but his circumference is nowhere." Their God has no body nor parts; our God possesses a body and parts, and was heard by Adam and Eve Walking in the garden in the cool of the day (*JD 10:230-231*).

He also identified the personage "Elohiem" (Not Michael) as "God our heavenly Father."

I want to tell you, each and every one of you, that you are well acquainted with God our heavenly Father, or the great Elohiem. You are well acquainted with Him, for these is not a soul of you but what has lived in His house and dwelt with Him year after year; and yet you are seeking to become acquainted with Him, when the fact is, you have merely forgotten what you did know... There is not a person here today but what is a son or a daughter of that Being. In the spirit world their spirits were first begotten and brought forth, and they lived there with their parents for ages before they came here. This, perhaps is hard for many to believe, but it is the greatest nonsense in the world not to believe it. If you do not believe it, cease to call Him Father; and when you pray, pray to some other character. (*JD 9:216*)

President Heber C. Kimball also distinguished between "our Father and God" and Adam.

We have been taught that our Father and God, from whom we sprang, called and appointed his servants to go and organize an earth, and, among the rest, he said to Adam, "You go along also and help all you can; you are going to inhabit it when it is organized, therefore go and assist in the good work." It reads in the Scriptures that the Lord did it, but the true rendering is, that the Almighty sent Jehovah and Michael to do the work... Father Adam was instructed to multiply and replenish the earth, to make it beautiful and glorious, to make it, in short, like unto the garden from which the seeds were brought to plant the garden of Eden... God the Father made Adam the Lord of this creation in the beginning... (*JD 10:235*).

No further clarification by Young

In any case, Young seems to have decided to let the issue rest and not to explain more. He stated:

Whether Adam is the personage that we should consider our heavenly Father, or not, is considerable of a mystery to a good many. I do not care of one moment how

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that is; it is no matter whether we are to consider Him our God, or whether His Father, or His Grandfather, for in either case we are of one species. (*JD* 4:217; see also *JD* 4:271; 7:238; 7:285; 11:43, 268).

Modern Interpretations

Denunciation

After Young's death, the Adam–God theory, as popularly understood, was slowly disregarded by most Mormons, and was never formally adopted by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as canon. As early as 1902, apostle Charles W. Penrose stated, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has never formulated or adopted any theory concerning the subject treated upon by President Young as to Adam." [Charles W. Penrose, "Our Father Adam", *Improvement Era* (September 1902): 873.]⁸ Eventually, the doctrine was denounced as false. Latter-day Saint president Spencer W. Kimball stated, "We denounce [the Adam-God] theory and hope that everyone will be cautioned against this and other kinds of false doctrine." [Conference Report, p. 115 (October 1-3, 1976)] Notice that the expression "Adam-God Theory" was not contemporary to Brigham Young's time.

In 1980, Latter-day Saint apostle Bruce R. McConkie gave a talk elaborating upon the Adam–God theory:

"There are those who believe or say they believe that 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 salvation set forth in the scriptures, and 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.

⁸ Gospelink (http://gospelink.com/library/browse?cat_id=6) reprinted in Charles W. Penrose, "Our Father Adam", *Millennial Star* (11 December 1902): 785–90. (this paragraph from p. 789),

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“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.” [BYU Devotional, June 1, 1980]

*This is what Elder McConkie said in the audio recording of this sermon. The print version has subsequently been changed to “has no excuse whatever for being led astray by it.”⁹

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Apologetics Revisited

A god – two Adams (1)

Many apologetic and devout Mormon scholars have debated Young’s precise meaning. Some think he meant that Adam was an eternal God-like being who was placed on this earth with a celestial body and the literal (physical) father of the human race (because of his parentage and immortal body Adam would thus be “a god”, and a literal Son of Eloheim born with an immortal body without blood—as opposed to Christ who was born “in the flesh” as a mortal being), who chose to partake of the forbidden fruit, Fall and mortality.

In Mormon theology, Christ is the only begotten Son of God “in the flesh.” (5 Brigham Young Addresses, ¶12 (7 October 1866)) But Adam is also considered a Son of God, and therefore a “god” in his own right, due to his actions in premortality and in the Garden of Eden. Because Adam, an immortal being, partook of the forbidden fruit he became the “first flesh” or first mortal on earth, just as God had planned. And as the “first flesh”, he is considered the mortal father of all mankind, including Jesus.

Many Latter Day Saints believe this is what Paul meant by his teaching of two Adams—that it took one “god” to bring mortality into the world (Adam), and a God (Christ) to make immortality possible. “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive... And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (1 Cor. 15, see also Romans 5:19, Luke 3:38). In essence the second Adam undid what the first Adam did - one was the father of us through mortality, and the second the Father of us all through his atonement and resurrection.

Because his actions are believed to be in accordance with the Will of God in the garden of Eden, Adam is revered in Mormonism rather than scorned for the Fall, as is prevalent today in mainstream Christianity. It has been explained that the fall had to be the result

⁹ <http://speeches.byu.edu/index.php?act=viewitem&id=658> Compare PDF text with MP3 audio at 26:48.

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of a transgression of mankind, rather than the result of an act of God, so that mankind could not blame an unjust God for their fallen state.

Our father – two Adams (2)

To complement the above view, some Mormons also claim that Brigham Young used the name “Adam” for two distinct entities. It is argued that Brigham Young often distinguished between “Father Adam”, referring to the God of the Universe, and “Adam” or “our father Adam”, referring to Adam, the first mortal man. In many of Brigham Young’s controversial discourses, including the alleged “Adam-God” discourse, he attempted to make that distinction that there were two Adams. For example, on 28 December 1845 Brigham Young made an explicit reference to a “more ancient” Adam after whom Michael received the name Adam. “Adam’s name was more ancient than he was. It was the name of a man long before him, who enjoyed the Priesthood.” (*Intimate Chronicle* (William Clayton Journal) 238-239 (28 December 1845)). On 25 April 1855 Brigham Young spoke of Adam (Michael) as having lived for a long time with another Being whom Brigham Young explicitly calls “father Adam.” “Well, you see from this that when you and I have been with and lived with the Lord, we shall know his voice. If father Adam were to come into this house and you were to see him go back and forth, would you know him? No, you would [ever] mistrust it was him unless he revealed himself. But by the time that you have lived with him [father Adam] as long as Adam had before he came here, you will know him and recognize his footsteps, but reading the history will not teach you these things.” (3 Brigham Young Addresses ¶7 (25 April 1855))

Positions of Other Latter Day Saint Movement Denominations

Apostolic United Brethren

The Apostolic United Brethren (sometimes nicknamed the AUB), A Fundamentalist Mormon group accepts the Adam-God teaching, and one of their leaders Joseph W. Musser was the first to write a book on it (called “Michael, Our Father and Our God”) in the 1930s.

FLDS

The Adam-God teaching is widely accepted as doctrine by members of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

School of the Prophets brotherhood

Robert Crossfield (also known as the Prophet Onias) claims to have received revelations that go into more depth about the Adam-God doctrine. These revelations, and many

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others, are to be found in [<http://www.2bc.info> *The Second Book of Commandments*]. This collection of revelations was first published in 1969 as the *Book of Onias*. The few members and supporters of the "School of the Prophets", set up by the authority of these revelations, are the only ones who accept Robert Crossfield as a prophet. Other Mormonism groups, Latter Day Saints in general, and the current LDS church authorities do not accept his claims.

See also

*Adam and Eve (LDS Church)

*Criticism of the Latter Day Saint movement

Other Sources:

- * Journal of Discourses (public domain), 1854-1886.
- * Manuscript Addresses of Brigham Young (covering 1839-1877), Eldon Watson, 1984.
- * Joseph W. Musser, "Michael, Our Father and Our God", Truth Publishing, 1938.
- * Rodney Turner, "The Position of Adam" (B.Y.U. Masters Thesis), 1953.
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- * Elwood G. Norris, "Be Not Deceived", 1978, ISBN 0-88290-101-X.
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- * Craig L. Tholson, "Adam-God", 1991, Publishment, ASIN B0006F6490.
- * Nate Taylor, "The Unknown God", Messenger Publications, 1997, ISBN 1-43825-122-X.
- * Drew Briney,
"Understanding Adam God Teachings", Privately published hardback book, 2005.
- * Robert J. Matthews, "Origin of Man: the Doctrinal Framework".
- * <http://www.irr.org/mit/WDIST/wdist-adam-god.html> Scanned images] of various 19th century LDS publications with statements on Adam-god from Brigham Young and other LDS General Authorities

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External Links

- <http://fairwiki.org/index.php/Adam-God> "Adam-God" article at FairWiki.org.
- <http://content.lib.utah.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/dialogue&CISOPTR=20104&CISOSHOW=19915&REC=1> article by David John Buerger, "The Adam-God Doctrine", *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* vol. XV (Spring 1982) No. 1, pp. 14-58.
- <http://mormonwiki.org/Adam-Go> Adam-God (MormonWiki.org, an evangelical encyclopedia on Mormonism)
- http://web.archive.org/web/20041016115233/www.spire.net/Historical/230_quotations/230_1.html Long list of Adam-God historical quotations
- <http://www.xmission.com/~plporter/lds/ag.htm> Another long list of Adam-God historical quotations
- <http://journals.mormonfundamentalism.org> *Journal of Discourses*
- <http://www.wasatchnet.net/users/ewatson/7AdamGod.htm> Apologetic reconciliation distinguishing "Father Adam" (God the Father) from Adam, the first man.
- <http://www.geocities.com/Drewm777/Adam-God.doc> Apologetic Paper discussing official LDS doctrine with regards to Adam-God.
- http://www.jefflindsay.com/LDSFAQ/FO_Relationships.shtml Articles about how Latter-day Saints view Adam
- <http://www.frontiernet.net/~bcmmin/adamgod.htm> A critical view of the theory.
- <http://www.2bc.info> Second Book of Commandments

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