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[This is an updated look at the Adam-god theory. For access to the previous chapter posted, [click here](#)]



## Six Reactions to the Adam-God Theory

*By Brian C. Hales, June 17, 2006,*

In 1852, Church President Brigham Young first expressed publicly some ideas regarding the identity of Adam that were new to Church members. Specifically, President Young stated that Adam "is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do."<sup>[1]</sup> While he never explained to his listeners how his views related to the scriptures or the recorded teachings of Joseph Smith regarding the first man, President Young mentioned Adam on several other occasions. Of the 1500 known recorded discourses of Brigham Young, twenty can be associated with the topic of Adam-God.<sup>[2]</sup> Several of his comments seem to represent a new viewpoint, previously unknown within the Church.

It is not the intent of this article to examine those quotations or to interpret their meaning. Several other authors have compiled the references and added their own perspective and commentary.<sup>[3]</sup> The ideas they promote might be referred to as the "Adam-god

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theory" or "Adam-god doctrine." It seems to me that after reviewing the citations and noting the ambiguities that exist in the records, identifying a definite Adam "doctrine" is currently impossible. Even among supporters, different interpretations exist, suggesting that it is better termed a "theory."<sup>[4]</sup>

Among the proponents of the Adam-god theory (hereafter abbreviated AGT), four elements seem to be consistently promoted: (1) Prior to their appearance in the Garden of Eden, Adam was a resurrected being having obtained their exaltation on a previous world. (2) As an exalted being using the powers of procreations (D&C 132:19-20), Adam fathered all of the spirits that who were destined to come to this earth.<sup>[5]</sup> (3) Accordingly, Adam is the father of Jesus Christ's spirit and (4) also his body.<sup>[6]</sup>

Over the decades since Brigham Young's death, perhaps the most common reaction among Church members to Brigham's teachings about Adam is to consider them a non-issue. The general membership seems have generally ignored them; it is probable that among the 12 million members, a majority have never heard of them. Among individuals, whether believers, unbelievers, anti-Mormons, or Mormon fundamentalists, who seriously consider President Young's comments, six distinct reactions seem to be the common.

### **The Orthodox Teachings About Adam**

Before outlining the six reactions, we must understand the sources of resistance and controversy regarding the Adam-god theory. LDS Church members and Christians generally have been conditioned by a traditional set of beliefs regarding Adam. Those beliefs are found prominently in the Bible and they do not designate Adam as God. Latter-day scriptures (Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price) and the recorded teachings of Joseph Smith also seem to support this view. This "Orthodox Teachings about Adam" (hereafter abbreviated OTA) states that Adam is our spirit-sibling. He came to earth, underwent a probationary state just as we are doing, and was dependent upon the atonement of Jesus Christ for his own salvation, making him inferior to Christ.

Here are a few obvious examples:<sup>[7]</sup>

But God hath made known unto our fathers that all men must repent.

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, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you. (Moses 6:50-52.)

In this account, God talks with Adam and refers to the fact that He “made the world, and men before they were in the flesh.” God also mentions His “Only Begotten Son,” naming him: “Jesus Christ.” These declarations seem incompatible with the AGT but are quite supportive of the OTA.[\[8\]](#)

The Old Testament tells us that “Jehovah God” (or “Yahweh God”) cast Adam out of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23, Hebrew text) suggesting the Jehovah is superior to Adam. We also read that “Jehovah” (or “Yahweh”) gave the ten commandments to Moses (Exodus 20:2).[\[9\]](#) The Book of Mormon identifies the Being that gave the law. After his resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to the Nephites and explained: “Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel” (3 Nephi 15:5; see also 11:14). The most obvious identity of Jehovah (who is superior to Adam) from these scriptures is Jesus Christ.[\[10\]](#)

King Benjamin in his meaty discourse at the temple prophesied of the coming of Christ using these words:

For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases...

And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary. (Mosiah 3:5, 8.)

Similarly, the prophet Abinadi refers to the coming Savior as both “God” and as the “Father” (Mosiah 15:1-2). The brother of Jared prayed to the “Lord” and received a visitation from Jesus Christ who introduced Himself saying: “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people.

Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son” (Ether 3:14).

In the Doctrine and Covenants section 78 we find that a Being called the “Holy One of Zion” who appointed “Michael your prince” and is directing him (vv. 15-16). Throughout the scriptures, the term “Holy One” is used to refer to Christ and not one else.<sup>[11]</sup> Another example is found in D&C 88:114 tells how Michael will fight the battle of the “great God” and verse 115 states: “For Michael shall fight their battles, and shall overcome him who seeketh the throne of him who sitteth upon the throne, even the Lamb.”<sup>[12]</sup> By most accounts, the “Lamb” could only be Christ suggesting a subordinate role for Adam in that battle. In other scriptures Adam is called a “prince” and “archangel” (D&C 27:11, D&C 107:54-55, D&C 29:26, D&C 88:112).<sup>[13]</sup> In contrast, Christ is called the King of Kings (1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 17:14, 19:16).<sup>[14]</sup> In a Kingdom, which is greater – a king or a prince?

Besides these references, I believe that the most obvious meaning of virtually every scripture in the Standard Works supports the OTA. This reality creates some discomfiture for Adam-god theorists. Joseph Musser explained: “In expression used in scriptural passages, taken literally as the English language is understood, an entirely erroneous idea may obtain [*sic*] and such error may easily be transmitted through the ages.”<sup>[15]</sup> Craig Tholson excuses the usefulness of the scriptures saying: “It is apparent to us that the interchangeability of the roles and titles of Deity make it treacherous to try to prove which God is which from the scriptures.”<sup>[16]</sup>

Likewise, I believe that all of Joseph Smith’s references to Adam supports the OTA. For example, he taught that Adam received his authority from Christ: “This then being the nature of the priesthood, every man holding the presidency of his dispensation and one man holding the presidency of them all even Adam and Adam receiving his presidency and authority from Christ, but cannot receive a fulness, until Christ shall present the kingdom to the Father which shall be at the end of the last dispensation.”<sup>[17]</sup> Respecting authority, Joseph Smith noted that “Christ is the Great High Priest, Adam next.”<sup>[18]</sup> Some have suggested that the Prophet was stating that Adam was “next” because he was superior to Jesus, making our Savior second to Adam in the priesthood.<sup>[19]</sup> However, this is not so, Joseph Smith also identified who was second to Adam:

The Priesthood was first given to Adam: he obtained the First Presidency and held the keys of it, form generation to generation; he obtained it in the creation before the world was formed as in Gen. 1:26-28. He had dominion given him over every living creature. He is Michael, the Archangel, spoken of in the scriptures. Then to Noah



who is Gabriel, he stands next in authority to Adam in the Priesthood.  
[\[20\]](#)

These statements show that Christ is the "Great High Priest" and that Adam is "next" and that Noah "stands next in authority to Adam in the Priesthood." Joseph also taught "that marriage was an institution of heaven, instituted in the Garden of Eden"[\[21\]](#) suggesting that Adam and Eve were not married prior to arriving in the Garden and therefore, could not be the parents of our spirits.[\[22\]](#)

Joseph Smith also taught: "Daniel 7 speaks of the Ancient of days, he means the oldest man, our Father Adam, Michael; he will call his children together and hold a council with them to prepare them for the coming of the Son of Man. He, (Adam) is the Father of the human family and presides over the Spirits of all men, and all that have had the keys must stand before him in this great council. This may take place before some of us leave this stage of action. The Son of Man stands before him and there is given him glory and dominion. Adam delivers up his stewardship to Christ, that which was delivered to him as holding the Keys of the Universe, but retains his standing as head of the human family."[\[23\]](#)

In summary, no matter our personal feelings regarding the validity of the AGT or the OTA, a contradiction appears to exist. How do we react to this apparent contrast?

Reaction #1: **We could say the Church is false.** For decades anti-Mormons have utilized Brigham Young's Adam-god quotations in an effort to discredit him and the Church. Chris Vlachos summarized: "The Mormon Church must base the truth of her claims on the authenticity of Brigham's calling.... As we consider Brigham Young's claim that Adam is God, it becomes clear that he was a false, uninspired prophet... To charge the prophet with advancing false doctrine was in reality undermining the entire truth and foundation of their relation. God's prophets cannot advance false doctrine. Therefore, to acknowledge that the prophet Brigham was indeed advancing false doctrine would be to acknowledge that he was not divinely led."[\[24\]](#) The most disruptive and perhaps dramatic response is to conclude that Brigham Young contradicted the scriptures and hence, could not be a true prophet. This is the basic stance of several individuals who have written "anti-Mormon" tracts using the AGT as a primary topic.[\[25\]](#)

Reaction #2. **We could say Brigham Young was misquoted.** A second reaction is to try to excuse the discussion by saying Brigham Young was misquoted. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith reported: "In all probability the sermon was erroneously transcribed!"[\[26\]](#) Similarly Elder John A Widstoe implied Brigham had been misquoted.

In contrast, Rodney Turner who wrote his Masters Thesis entitled: "The Position of Adam in Latter-day Saint Scripture and Theology" concluded: "Was Brigham Young Misquoted? It is the writer's opinion that the answer to this question is a categorical no."<sup>[27]</sup>

Notwithstanding, recently Elden Watson, compiler of the *Manuscript Addresses of Brigham Young, 1801-1877*, six volumes, observed that with respect to the discourse quoted above, (JD 1:50-51), a comparison of the stenographer's account (as printed in the *Journal of Discourses*) to the notes taken by Wilford Woodruff (as found in his journal entry for the date) reveals at least two potential gaps.<sup>[28]</sup> Wilford Woodruff recorded information in his long-hand entry that is not found in the stenographer's report. The information provided by Woodruff potentially changes the meaning of Brigham's Adam teachings that day and suggests that perhaps President Young was not misquoted as much as he might have been inadequately recorded.

While inconclusive, it is possible that Joseph Fielding Smith and John A. Widstoe were not simply whitewashing the issue, but genuinely believed that recorded discrepancies existed in the texts citing by supporters of the AGT.

**Reaction #3. We could say Brigham Young was referring to two Adams, God the Father Adam (senior) and his spirit son Adam (junior).** In the same article cited above, Elden Watson explains a concept that is intriguing, if not compelling.<sup>[29]</sup> Watson writes:

Brigham Young believed that one of the names of God, our Heavenly Father is Adam, and in many of President Young's discourses he referred to God the Father using that name. There are therefore two Adams, and although President Young did not use the designation, it will be simpler for us in the following discussion to distinguish between the two individuals by referring to them as Adam Sr. (When referring to God, our Heavenly Father) and Adam Jr. (When referring to the embodied archangel, Michael, who partook of the forbidden fruit, fell, and became the father of Cain, Able and Seth etc.). It follows that there are also two Eves, and although in English the designation is never used with women, we shall distinguish between them as Eve Sr. and Eve Jr. This understanding allows us for the first time to correctly interpret a well known biblical passage...

In interpreting Brigham Young's comments, one must therefore determine by the context of the discourse whether he was speaking of Adam Sr. or Adam Jr. This simple process will relieve 98% of the difficulties encountered in understanding Brigham Young's discourses on the topic of

Adam.<sup>[30]</sup> The same process applies to an interpretation of the statements of many of his close contemporaries such as Heber C. Kimball and Orson Hyde.<sup>[31]</sup>

Watson recognized some of the problems with this approach and explained:

The almost universal question asked by those hearing of two Adams for the first time is: "If there are two Adams, why didn't Brigham Young just say so instead of leaving his talks so confusing?" There are two distinct answers to this question...

Actually Brigham Young and others did on many occasions distinguish, or at least try to distinguish, between Adam Sr. and Adam Jr. He did not use those particular designations, but that is because it was not the vernacular of the time. The terms Jr. and Sr. were legal terms, and were frequently used in writing, but they were not common terms employed while speaking. Brigham Young did on occasion refer to the Prophet as Joseph Smith Jun., but he never did refer to the father of the Prophet as Joseph Smith Sen. In every instance in speaking of the father of the Prophet, he used the more common term, "Father Smith"...

After years of working with Brigham Young's discourses, it has become apparent that Brigham Young avoided the topic of Adam God unless he was prodded in that direction. There were brethren among the General Authorities of the church who occasionally taught wrong doctrine on the subject, and Brigham Young seldom broached the topic except in those instances when there had been some incorrect information taught, either in discourses or in writings by the Church leaders. On those occasions, Brigham Young generally got up, said what he had to say in order to correct the false information, and then either quit speaking or switched to another topic. He did not try to make the concept crystal clear, nor did he ever attempt to establish it as a Church doctrine.

<sup>[32]</sup>

The idea that Brigham Young might be flip-flopping between Adam Senior (God the Father) and Adam Junior (our spirit sibling) without always making a clear distinction between the two addresses one of the most disturbing aspects of the AGT. The AGT teaches that Adam was an exalted resurrected being prior to his coming to this earth and that he fathered all of the spirits that were to come here.<sup>[33]</sup>

Exalted beings in LDS theology are described as being incorruptible (2 Nephi 9:13, Mormon 6:21) and eternally immortal

(Alma 11:45). After their resurrection, they are made “equal in power, and in might, and in dominion” with God (D&C 76:95) and “all that [God] hath shall be given unto him” (D&C 84:38). “All things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's” (D&C 76:59). “Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them” (D&C 132:20).

According to the AGT, the distance Adam fell was much much greater than the scriptures seem to attest. Adam was not simply a spirit son of Heavenly Father who fell from a terrestrial Garden of Eden into a telestial world to experience mortal probation.<sup>[34]</sup> He was a glorified, resurrected, exalted, celestialized, being who after arriving naked (Genesis 2:25) in the Garden of Eden, had a veil placed over his mind, causing him to forget his pre-mortal identity and all pre-mortal memories.<sup>[35]</sup>

Eventually Adam was tempted by the devil (D&C 29:40).<sup>[36]</sup> The AGT's description of the interaction of Adam and the devil is interesting because in LDS theology, Satan is Lucifer, one of God's own spirit offspring.<sup>[37]</sup> If Adam is God and the father of all pre-mortal spirits, then Lucifer, Satan, the devil, was tempting his own father. The devil successfully enticed Eve (his spirit mother) and indirectly prevailed over Adam as both partook of the forbidden fruit. This transgression caused Adam to be “subject to the will of the devil” (D&C 29:40) making this previous god “subject to the will” of his own spirit son. Adam was then “cast out” (D&C 29:41) and “driven out” (2 Nephi 2:19) of the Garden and “shut out” from his Father's presence (Moses 5:4).

Adam existed on earth for 930 years (Moses 6:12) where he was admonished to repent (Moses 5:8, 6:51-52, D&C 29:42). Apparently Adam also required the atonement (Moses 5:7-8, 6:52), baptism (Moses 6:64-65), and the gift of the Holy Ghost (Moses 5:9, 6:66).<sup>[38]</sup>

So much of the history of Adam in the Garden of Eden, his interaction with the devil, the fall, and subsequent earth life seems inconsistent with exaltation. Perhaps all of this is simply what Nephi called the “condescension of God” (1 Nephi 11:16). But Nephi's vision said nothing of Adam's fall, only of the fatherhood of Christ's physical body.

The “Two-Adam theory” as promoted by Elden Watson and others<sup>[39]</sup> relegates the seemingly unexalted, unglorifying, corruptible experiences to the lesser of the two Adams.<sup>[40]</sup> It also



eliminates the notion that exalted beings will someday undergo veiling, tempting by spirit offspring, and mortal corrupting that our scriptures clearly describe for Adam, the first man.

**[For further discussion see:**

**<http://www.eldenwatson.net/7AdamGod.htm> ]**

Reaction #4. **We could say the Adam-God Theory (AGT) is True and the Orthodox Teachings about Adam (OTA) are false.** This is the position of most Mormon fundamentalists and other proponents today.<sup>[41]</sup> Culley K. Christensen wrote: “The Adam-God doctrine was taught not by Brigham Young alone, but was infused into every avenue of gospel and doctrinal input... [It] was intended to become an expansion on the concept of God and to be an integral part of every saint’s belief in God. It permeated every facet of Mormon ideology.”<sup>[42]</sup>

In support they quote from Brigham Young’s first exposition mentioned Adam “is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do.”<sup>[43]</sup> Later in that discourse Young states: “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.*”<sup>[44]</sup>

While none of Joseph Smith’s recorded teachings support the AGT, Brigham Young implied on several occasions that the Prophet was the actual author.<sup>[45]</sup> Elden Watson observed: “Brigham Young’s concepts of Adam and God do not appear to have gone through a growth, or learning process. Instead they emerge full blown, early in the 1850’s, which would indicate that he did not develop the knowledge by himself, but was taught it by someone else, either directly or through revelation. He credits much of his understanding about God and Michael etc. to the Prophet Joseph Smith.”<sup>[46]</sup> Craig Tholson concludes: “It is Joseph who introduced the new doctrine on Adam and Brigham was only being faithful to that with which Joseph had entrusted him.”<sup>[47]</sup>

Proponents support their claims by asserting that the AGT was taught in the “lecture at the veil” in LDS temples in the nineteenth century.<sup>[48]</sup> Unfortunately, this claim is based upon a misunderstanding. The text to the “Lecture at the Veil” is kept secure within temple walls and has never been released. Proponents of the AGT observed that on February 7, 1877, L. John Nuttall attended the temple and then later recorded Brigham Young’s teachings in his journal. Proponents of the AGT have labeled Nuttall’s notes as the official “lecture at the veil.” A closer reading of Nuttall’s journal shows that after leaving the temple that day, he went home and later attended a meeting at Brigham Young’s residence.

His notes published by AGT supporters are from the evening meeting and may have nothing to do with the veil lecture. In addition, the lecture was usually twenty to thirty minutes long and Nuttal's journal entry could be read in less than five. [\[49\]](#)

**Reaction #5. We could say the Orthodox Teachings about Adam (OTA) are true and the Adam-God Theory (AGT) is false .** In the Priesthood Session of General Conference in 1976, Church President Spencer W. Kimball taught: "We hope that you who teach in the various organizations, whether on the campuses or in our chapels, will always teach the orthodox truth. 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 of past generations. 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." [\[50\]](#)

Shortly after President Kimball's statement, Elden Watson was privileged to meet with the Church President to ask more precisely what he meant. "In a private interview President Kimball made the following clarifications: He said that he did not say that President Brigham Young did not make the statements which are attributed to him, nor did he claim that they were falsely reported. Neither did he say that Brigham Young taught false doctrine. What he did say and what he meant is that the Adam-God theory is false, and the Adam-God theory is that interpretation which is placed on Brigham Young's words by present day apostates and fundamentalists - their understanding of what Brigham Yong meant is false." [\[51\]](#)

President Kimball distinguished between the Adam-god Theory and the teachings of Brigham Young, calling the former "false" without elaborating on the meaning of President Young's references. Decades earlier, Elder John A. Widstoe, of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, did similarly: "Those who peddle the well-worn Adam-God myth, usually charge the Latter-day Saints with believing that: (1) Our Father in heaven, the Supreme God to whom we pray, is Adam, the first man; and (2) Adam was the father of Jesus Christ. A long series of absurd and false deductions are made from these propositions. Those who spread this untruth about the Latter-day Saints go back for authority to a sermon delivered by President Brigham Young 'in the tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, April 9th, 1852.' (Journal of Discourses, 1:50.) Certain statements there made are confusing if read superficially, but very clear if read with their context. Enemies of President Brigham Young and of the Church have taken advantage of the opportunity and have used these statements repeatedly and widely to do injury to the reputation of President Young and the Mormon people. An honest reading of this sermon and of other reported discourses of President Brigham Young proves that the great second President of the Church held no

such views as have been put into his mouth in the form of the Adam-God myth.<sup>[52]</sup>”

Regardless, other individuals of various theological backgrounds have proposed that Brigham did teach the AGT. Rodney Turner concluded: “In the mind of President Young, there was apparently nothing contradictory nor ‘mysterious’ in his claim that two heavenly being, endowed with the glory of the Gods, could, under certain circumstances, and for a pre-arranged purpose, assume an inferior, and in the eyes of many, an almost degraded position.”<sup>[53]</sup>

If true, then declaring the AGT false is tantamount to declaring Brigham Young as teaching false ideas.<sup>[54]</sup> This is the view that I personally espoused when speaking to the Allred Mormon Fundamentalist Group on March 17, 2001 in the Rulon C. Allred building at their Bluffdale complex. I was then reflecting some comments of Elder Bruce R. McConkie, which were made in a private letter to Eugene England dated February 19, 1981.<sup>[55]</sup> That letter states:

If what I am about to say should be taken out of context and published in Dialogue or elsewhere, it would give an entirely erroneous impression and would not properly present the facts. As it happens, I am a great admirer of Brigham Young and a great believer in his doctrinal presentations. He was called of God...

Nonetheless, as Joseph Smith so pointedly taught, a prophet is not always a prophet, only when he is acting as such. Prophets are men and they make mistakes. Sometimes they err in doctrine. This is one of the reasons the Lord has given us the Standard Works. They become the standards and rules that govern where doctrine and philosophy are concerned...

Yes, President Young did teach that Adam was the father of our spirits, and all the related things that the cultists ascribe to him. This, however, is not true. He expressed views that are out of harmony with the gospel. But, be it known, Brigham Young also taught accurately and correctly, the status and position of Adam in the eternal scheme of things. What I am saying is that Brigham Young, contradicted Brigham Young, and the issue becomes one of which Brigham Young we will believe. The answer is we will believe the expressions that accord with the teachings in the Standard Works...

President Joseph Fielding Smith said that Brigham Young will have to make his own explanations on the points there involved...

I repeat: Brigham Young erred in some of his statements on the nature and kind of being that God is and as to the position of Adam in the plan of salvation, but Brigham Young also taught the truth in these fields on other occasions. And I repeat, that in his instance, he was a great prophet and has gone on to eternal reward... [56]

Notwithstanding Elder McConkie's plain declaration, it appears that prior to his death, his feelings may have changed. Elden Watson reported:

In October of 1982 a letter was made public which had been written on February 19, 1981 by Bruce R. McConkie in response to some questions which had been asked him by Eugene England. In this response Br. McConkie told Brother England that Brigham Young had apparently taught that Adam [Jr.] was God, but that he was simply wrong. When this letter was printed and distributed by an anti-Mormon group, we went to Br. McConkie and told him that we had been teaching differently than him, and we did not want to be teaching anything that was incorrect. We told Br. McConkie that if we were wrong, we wanted to know, and we would quit teaching it. After considerable discussion Br. McConkie told us to keep teaching what we had been teaching, because it was he that was wrong. He said if he had known of our views, he never would have said what he did in his letter to Eugene England, and we had his permission to tell anyone we wanted that Br. McConkie had said he was wrong in saying that Brigham Young had taught that Adam was God. [57]

Proponents of the OTA might observed that on a few occasions, Brigham Young taught plainly that Adam was not God the 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 Eloheim.** [58] You are all well acquainted with Him, for there 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 to-day 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.** [59]



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 whom 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.<sup>[60]</sup>

Additionally, the only General Authorities that openly supported Brigham Young's teachings were Heber C. Kimball and Franklin D. Richards.<sup>[61]</sup> Future Church Presidents John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Lorenzo Snow remained silent.<sup>[62]</sup>

**Reaction #6. We could patiently await the day when all things will be revealed.** On several occasions I have heard about individuals who have been excommunicated over the Adam-god theory. When I hear of such stories, I puzzle. Personally, I cannot identify how knowing the exact name of God and even the details of His nature change the way I worship, the way I pray, my hope of exaltation, or the focus of my faith. To find members who are so selective in their beliefs and so adamant and impatient in their declarations, that they are excommunicated is very unfortunate.

In many ways, the scriptures and the teachings of Joseph Smith (and some of discourses of Brigham Young) give us pieces of a puzzle that together provides us with an understanding of the identity of Adam (OTA). However, it appears that on a few other occasions, Brigham Young provided us with other puzzle pieces that just don't seem to fit, neither the interlocking edges nor the overall panorama that restored gospel principles creates. Adam-god proponents seem comfortable ripping out the scripture based pieces and forcefully introducing a few of Brigham's quotations. Since Brigham Young never defended the AGT, nor did he provide us with explanations so his listeners might correlate his ideas with scriptures and the Prophet's teachings, substituting Brigham's AGT puzzle pieces leaves many gaps. AGT supporters seem eager to rush in with their own views and their self-generated pieces, but they don't agree amongst themselves and the overall gospel picture formed doesn't seem to make sense.

It may be that the puzzle pieces given to us by President Brigham Young indeed fit the puzzle in some unobvious way. Maybe the picture is three-dimensional and we just don't know it yet. Perhaps, the puzzle pieces are inadequately cut, suffering from inadequate detailing by the President himself. In the Doctrine and Covenants we are promised that "the day shall come when you shall comprehend even God, being quickened in him and by him" (D&C 88:49) and that at a future time "nothing shall be withheld, whether

there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest. All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth” (D&C 121:28-29).

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[1] JD 1:50.

[2] “Reports, synopses and reviews of over 1500 of his talks are on record (by comparison, the *Journal of Discourses* contains 324 of these talks.) Elden Watson, “DIFFERENT THOUGHTS - #7:ADAM – GOD,” May 1998, 2002, <http://www.wasatchnet.net/users/ewatson/7AdamGod.htm>. Last retrieved March 25, 2006. A unnamed author of *The Unknown God*, a Mormon fundamentalist publication (<http://www.cafepress.com/messengerbooks.14374659> - last retrieved march 25, 2006) lists 32 references to Brigham Young discourses that mention Adam. Sixteen of these are from the *Journal of Discourses*. Of the thirty-two, I believe that twenty-two contain ambiguous statements regarding Adam that could be interpreted to support either the AGT or the OTA. The other ten provide more specific details supportive of the AGT, but only three of those ten was published during Brigham Young’s lifetime (*Deseret New Weekly*, October 8, 1854, June 8, 1873 and JD 4:217).

[3] See Joseph W. Musser, *Michael – Our Father and our God*, Salt Lake City: Truth Publishing, 1938; Ogden Kraut, *Michael-Adam*, Salt Lake City: Pioneer, 1972; Culley K. Christensen, *Adam-God Maze*, Scottsdale: Independent Publishers, 1981; Craig L. Tholson, *Adam-God*, 1991, Drew Briney, *Understanding Adam-God Teachings*, self-published 2005 and David John Buerger, "The Adam-God Doctrine." *Dialogue* 15 (Spring 1982): 14-58,

[http://content.lib.utah.edu/cgi-bin/docviewer.exe?  
CISOROOT=/dialogue&CISOPTR=20104](http://content.lib.utah.edu/cgi-bin/docviewer.exe?CISOROOT=/dialogue&CISOPTR=20104)

[4] In his landmark paper "The Adam-God Doctrine." *Dialogue* 15 (Spring 1982): 14-58, David John Buerger considers Brigham Young’s teachings about Adam as a “doctrine” (as noted in the title of his article). Notwithstanding, Buerger admits that Brigham did not provide crucial details that might have allowed his teachings to complement, rather than contrast, previous teachings about Adam as provided by Joseph Smith and the Scriptures.

[5] Wilford Woodruff speculated: “I suppose we may say that at least one hundred thousand millions [one hundred billion] were cast down from heaven to earth” (*Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 239) leaven

two hundred billion to be born here for a total of three hundred billion destined for this planet. Orson Pratt shared this view saying that regarding “the two-thirds who kept their first estate. Their numbers, probably, cannot be less than two hundred thousand millions, leaving, as an approximate estimate, *one hundred thousand millions* [one hundred billion] *of rebellious spirits* or devils who were cast out from Heaven and banished to this creation, having no privilege of fleshly tabernacles.” (JD 13:63; italics added.)

[6] For more details regarding the AGT from different supporters see Christensen, *Adam-God-Maze*, 25-28; Tholson, *Adam-God*, 284-87, Joseph W. Musser, *Michael, Our Father and God*, Salt Lake City: Truth Publishing, 100.

[7] I believe that while many verses may be somewhat ambiguous, the most obvious meaning of every scripture supports the Orthodox Teachings about Adam. By adding, footnotes, asterisks, and most commonly, bracketed clarifying text, proponents of the Adam-god Theory are able to convert scriptural references to support their beliefs.

[8] Interestingly, proponents of the AGT seldom, if ever mentioned these verses. Craig Tholson writes: “The Book of Moses is a primary source of confusion concerning the Adam-God doctrine. Critics have misinterpreted the Book of Moses in an effort to contradict the Adam-God doctrine. The reason for this lies in the fact that the Gods who are therein described, and quoted, are not the same Being” (*Adam-God*, 340).

[9] The King James Version translates Jehovah as LORD. See *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, Brooklyn: Watchtower and *The Jerusalem Bible*, New York: Doubleday, 1966 for more literal translation of the Hebrew for YHWH.)

[10] Despite the Savior’s declaration found in the Book of Mormon, AGT supporter Culley K. Christensen remarked: “The suppression of the Adam-God doctrine [after Brigham Young’s death] created a theological void concerning the God of Israel. A stopgap measure began to emerge around the turn of the century which has become formally adopted as church doctrine. This stopgap measure is the doctrine that Jesus Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament... With the publication of *Jesus the Christ* by James Talmage (a major proponent of the doctrinal change) the Savior had become firmly traditionalized as the Jehovah of the Old Testament.” (*Adam-God Maze*, 239, 245. See also page 256.) Similarly, Craig Tholson asserted: “Joseph did not teach that Jehovah is Jesus Christ, but a patriarchal superior to Christ.” (*Adam-God*, 210.)

[11] It seems obvious that most references to the “Holy One” refer to Christ (see Isaiah 49:7, 1 Nephi 20:17, 2 Nephi 6:9). See comments by AGT supporter Culley K. Christensen, *Adam-God Maze* 291-92 and Craig Tholson, *Adam-God*, 276-77, 279-80.

[12] Interestingly, AGT proponent Culley K. Christensen quotes D&C 88:112-115 to support a superior position of Adam over Christ. But then Christensen stops quoting, without citing verse 115. *The Adam-God Maze*, 73.

[13] See also Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 38.

[14] See also Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 47.

[15] *Michael, Our Father and Our God*, 82.

[16] Craig Tholson, *Adam-God*, 342.

[17] *The Words of Joseph Smith*. 40. See also *Teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 169.

[18] *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 158.

[19] Culley Christensen wrote concerning Joseph Smith's plain teaching that Adam was next (inferior) to the Savior: “It should be noted that Joseph is talking here about the order of priesthood descent and not the stature or relationship of Adam to Christ. In tracing priesthood descent, Joseph begins with Peter, James and John, who received their priesthood from Christ; then from Christ (who is the Great High Priest) the priesthood keys are **next** traced to Adam. This quotation, because of its poor grammatical structure has been a source of confusion and misunderstanding to many.” (*The Adam-God Maze*, p. 88.) To buoy up his argument, Christensen is also critical of Joseph's grammar.

[20] Words of Joseph Smith, 8. Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 157.

[21] *History of the Church*, 2:320.

[22] See discussion in Rodney Turner, “The Position of Adam in Latter-day Saint Scripture and Theology” (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1953, 95-108. Fundamentalist author Gilbert Fulton, who wrote the four volume, *Most Holy Principle*, agreed with Joseph Smith: “The eternity of the marriage covenant, as taught by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, does not necessarily include plural marriage, commonly called polygamy. It is a sacred principle by which a man and a woman may be united



together through a divinely revealed ceremony, the pair being joined for time and all eternity, that which is thus "sealed on earth" being "sealed in heaven." Though death may part them, the resurrection will reunite them, no more to be separated. This was the union divinely sealed between Adam and Eve, before death entered into the world by sin. They were immortals and the twain were made one. That which was lost in the fall is restored by the atonement. Adam and Eve stand together at the head of their posterity forever." (3:324).

[23] *Words of Joseph Smith*, 8-9. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 157. Joseph's words subordinate the position of Adam to Jesus Christ and have prompted some intriguing views from AGT supporters. Joseph Musser circumvented the obvious problem by describing offices, which are held by different Gods at different times: "What is the true meaning [of the various identities] then? **Offices** or **titles** are referred to. Christ is an office, as is Michael, Adam, Jehovah, Elohim, I AM, Man of Holiness, Ahman, etc." (*Michael, Our Father and Our God*, 94. Emphasis in original.) Musser then reasoned that Adam was to deliver up his stewardship, not to Jesus Christ, but to some other God holding the office of "Jehovah-Christ." AGT supporter Culley K. Christensen takes a different approach. Like Musser's explanation it involves redefining the entities involved, but in a different way through the use of brackets: "The Son of Man [Jesus Christ] stands before him [Adam], and there is given Him [Jesus] glory and dominion. Adam delivers up his stewardship to Christ, that which was delivered to him [Adam] as holding the keys of the universe, but retains his [Adam's] standing as head of the human family." (*The Adam-God Maze*, 80.) Two points are worth noting concerning these interpretations. First, it seems that both Christensen and Musser differ significantly from each other concerning their understanding of Joseph Smith's meaning in the passage cited above. Musser creates the office of Jehovah-Christ while Christensen simply changes the obvious objects of the pronouns employed. In light of the fact that these two defenders of the theory disagree so notably suggests a second important point, that it is unlikely that anyone listening to Joseph Smith teach that day understood his teachings as Christensen or Musser have asserted. See also Tholson, *Adam-God*, 30-31

[24] Chris Alex Vlachos, "Brigham Young's False Teaching: Adam is God," *Journal of Pastoral Practice*, Volume III, Number 2, 1979, 93-119, reprint pagination 1-27, pp. 4, 6, 18-19.

[25] See also; John Farkas, *Adam-God Teachings – A Theory or a Doctrine?*, 1991.

[26] *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:96. See also Mark E. Petersen, *Adam, Who is He?*, 1976, 16-17.

[27] Rodney Turner, "The Position of Adam in Latter-day Saint Scripture and Theology" (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1953, 45.

[28] Elden Watson, "DIFFERENT THOUGHTS - #7:ADAM – GOD," May 1998, 2002, <http://www.wasatchnet.net/users/ewatson/7AdamGod.htm>. Last retrieved March 25, 2006.

[29] AGT supporter Culley K. Christensen dismisses the "two Adam theory" saying: "The most recent attempt to harmonize Brigham Young's teachings with our more contemporary concepts has resulted in the invention of an intermediary Adam to whom all concepts of deity are ascribed. Thus, a distinction is made between a mortal Adam and a glorified, resurrected Adam. This may be called the two Adam theory. In the mind of this author, it reflects the frustration modern theorists have in acquiescing to the teachings of Brigham Young." (*Adam-God Maze* 298, see 297-317.)

[30] Regarding the remaining two percent, Watson explained: "Those problematic discourses of Brigham Young which are not so simply resolved are all caused by either incomplete or inaccurate reporting, but may be easily discussed by giving examples illustrative of four broad categories: 1. Interpreting, rather than quoting, Brigham Young; 2. Grammatical difficulties; 3. Brigham Young's choice of words; [and] 4. Incorrect Reporting. (Elden Watson, "DIFFERENT THOUGHTS - #7:ADAM – GOD," May 1998, 2002, <http://www.wasatchnet.net/users/ewatson/7AdamGod.htm>. Last retrieved March 25, 2006.)

[31] Elden Watson, "DIFFERENT THOUGHTS - #7:ADAM – GOD," May 1998, 2002, <http://www.wasatchnet.net/users/ewatson/7AdamGod.htm>. Last retrieved March 25, 2006.

[32] Elden Watson, "DIFFERENT THOUGHTS - #7: ADAM – GOD," May 1998, 2002, <http://www.wasatchnet.net/users/ewatson/7AdamGod.htm>. Last retrieved March 25, 2006.

[33] Wilford Woodruff speculated that perhaps three hundred billion spirits were destined for this planet. One third of those were cast out in the pre-mortal war in heaven: "I suppose we may say that at least one hundred thousand millions [one hundred billion] were cast down from heaven to earth" (*Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 239). Orson Pratt further elaborated: "We may form some little calculation of the vast numbers thus thrown out of Heaven, when we consider that they were one-third of all the spirits that were born, intended for this creation. Only two-thirds

kept their first estate, and they have the great privilege of coming here to this creation and taking bodies of flesh and bones, tabernacles wherein their spirits may dwell, to prepare themselves for a more glorious state of existence hereafter. If, then, only two-thirds of the hosts of Heaven are to come to our earth to tabernacle in the flesh, we may form some idea of the vast number who fell. Already our earth has teemed for six thousand years with numberless millions of human beings whose spirits existed before the foundation of the world... These are the two-thirds who kept their first estate. Their numbers, probably, cannot be less than two hundred thousand millions, leaving, as an approximate estimate, *one hundred thousand millions* [one hundred billion] *of rebellious spirits* or devils who were cast out from Heaven and banished to this creation, having no privilege of fleshly tabernacles. (JD 13:63; italics added.)

[34] See Articles of Faith 10.

[35] See the discussion in Christensen, *The Adam-God Maze*, 69, 308.

[36] Brigham Young explained on October 8, 1876: “I shall... refer to our first parents, Adam and Eve, who are found in the Garden of Eden, tempted and overcome by the power of evil, and consequently subject to evil and sin, which was the penalty of their transgression. They were now prepared, as we are, to form bodies or tabernacles for the reception of pure and holy spirits.” (JD 18:258.)

[37] George Laub, a Church member in 1844, recorded the following teaching of Joseph Smith regarding Lucifer’s position as the “next heir” to Christ (original spelling retained): “*But Satan or Lucifer being the next heir and had allotted to him great power and authority even prince of power of the air He spake immediately and boasted of himself saying send me I can save all [he] even those who sinned against the holy ghost and he accused his brethren and was hurled [hurled] from the council for striving to break the law immediately and there was a warfare with Satan and the gods and they hurled Satan out of his place and all them that would not keep the law of the council But he himself being one of the council would not keep his or their first estate for he was one of the Sons of perdition and consequently all the Sons of perdition become devils &c.*” (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, George Laub Journal: 7 April 1844, 362; italics added.) See discussion in Christensen, *Adam-God Maze*, 299.

[38] AGT supporter Culley K. Christensen wrote: “Adam was not baptized for forgiveness as he was a perfect man (D&C 107:43) [which states: “Because he (Seth) was a perfect man, and his likeness was the express likeness of his father, insomuch that he seemed to be like unto his father in all things, and could be distinguished from him only by his age.”] Perfect men have little need to repent of sin. Adam, like Christ, was baptized to submit to the law to fulfill all righteousness and like Christ be a perfect example to his posterity in the ordinances.” (*Adam-God Maze* 293.) Using this logic, it is unclear whether Seth was also baptized “to fulfill all righteous” and to “be a perfect example.”

[39] See Turner, “Position of Adam,” 51-60.

[40] Orson Pratt recognized this weakness of the AGT and complained: “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...” (David John Buerger, “The Adam-God Doctrine,” *Dialogue*, Vol.15, No.1, 28.)

[41] See Joseph W. Musser, “Michael, Our Father and Our God,” *Truth* 3 (June 1937)1:2, *Michael, Our Father and Our God*, Salt Lake City: Truth Publishing, 1938; Ogden Kraut, *Michael-Adam*, n.d., Salt Lake City: Pioneer Press, 1972; Robert Openshaw, *The Notes: Or Selected References on the Fulness of the Gospel for Saints and Other Interested Students*. Vol. 1. Pinesdale, Montana: Bitterroot Publishing, 1980, 1-61; Fred Collier, “President Brigham Young’s Doctrine on Deity: An Organized Collection of His Own Statements,” Parts I, II, III, *Doctrine of the Priesthood*, September 1987, January and February 1988, Vol 4 no. 3, Vol 5, nos. 1 and 2; “Unpublished Adam-God Discourses of Brigham Young 1852-1877,” *Doctrine of the Priesthood*, September 1974, Vol 2 no. 1; *President Brigham Young’s Doctrine on Deity: An Organized Collection of His Own Statements*, vol. 1, Fred Collier ed., Salt Lake City: Collier Publishing, 1999; no author, *The Unknown God*, Messenger publications, 2004, (available at <http://www.cafepress.com/messengerbooks.14374659> Last retrieved March 25, 2006.)

[42] Christensen, *Adam-God Maze*, 108-09.

[43] JD 1:50.



[44] JD 1:51; italics added. See Culley K. Christensen, *Adam-God Maze*. Scottsdale, AZ: Independent Publishers, 1981, 20.

[45] Turner, "Position of Adam," 47-50; Christensen, *Adam-God Maze*, 131-50; no author, *The Unknown God*, (<http://www.cafepress.com/messengerbooks.14374659>. Last retrieved March 25, 2006), 103-05

[46] Elden Watson, "DIFFERENT THOUGHTS - #7:ADAM – GOD," May 1998, 2002, <http://www.wasatchnet.net/users/ewatson/7AdamGod.htm>. Last retrieved March 25, 2006.

[47] Tholson, *Adam-God*, 32.

[48] Christensen, *Adam-God Maze*, 115-117; Craig Tholson spend an entire chapter discussing Nuttal's journal entry, treating it as if it were the temple "lecture at the veil." *Adam-God*, 137-44. See also *The Unknown God*, no author, 53, 64, 99-100.

[49] See discussion at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam-God\\_theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adam-God_theory).

[50] Spencer W. Kimball, "Our Own Liahona," *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 77.

[51] Elden Watson, "DIFFERENT THOUGHTS - #7:ADAM – GOD," May 1998, 2002, <http://www.wasatchnet.net/users/ewatson/7AdamGod.htm>. Last retrieved March 25, 2006.

[52] Widstoe, John A. *Evidences and Reconciliations; Aids to Faith in a Modern Day*. Arranged by G. Homer Durham. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960,68.

[53] Rodney Turner, "The Position of Adam in Latter-day Saint Scripture and Theology," Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1953.

[54] See Carl Broderick, Jr., "Another Look at Adam-God," *Dialogue*, Vol.16, No.2, 4-7.

[55] At BYU on June 1, 1980, regarding the seven deadly heresies of Mormonism, Elder McConkie commented: "Anyone who has received the temple endowment, and who yet believes the Adam-God theory, does not deserve to be saved" ("The Seven Deadly Heresies." BYU, June 1, 1980, taped account).

[56] Letter from Bruce R. McConkie to Eugene England, February 19, 1981. <http://www.mrm.org/multimedia/text/mcconkies-letter.html>. Last retrieved March 25, 2006.

[57] Elden Watson, "DIFFERENT THOUGHTS - #7:ADAM – GOD," May 1998, 2002, <http://www.wasatchnet.net/users/ewatson/7AdamGod.htm>. Last retrieved March 25, 2006.

[58] Brigham Young also taught: "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." (JD 1:51).

[59] JD 4:216; emphasis mine.

[60] Journal of Discourses, Vol.13, p.311 - p.312, Brigham Young, April 17, 1870.

[61] Turner, "Position of Adam," 61-64; Christensen, *The Adam-God Maze*, 114-115; Tholson, *Adam-God*, 93-97, 103-06; Musser, *Michael Our Father and Our God*, 47-50, 62-65.

[62] Turner, "Position of Adam," 67-70; Tholson, *Adam-God*, 98. Joseph Musser conceded: "While in the writings and expressions of President John Taylor we have discovered no direct statement confirming the 'Adam-God' doctrine taught by Brigham Young" (*Michael Our Father*, 115).

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