

Brigham Young's Teachings on Adam

Matthew B. Brown

Delivered at the 2009 FAIR Conference, Sandy, Utah.

On the 9th of April 1852 President Brigham Young stepped up to the pulpit in the old tabernacle on Temple Square and informed a group of Elders, who had gathered there for General Conference, that he was going to straighten them out on an issue which they had been debating about. The topic of disagreement centered upon who was the Father of Jesus Christ in the flesh—Elohim or the Holy Ghost.¹ President Young surprised the people who were in attendance by announcing that it was neither one of them. He said,

Now hear it, O inhabitants of the earth, Jew and Gentile, Saint and sinner! When our father Adam came into the Garden of Eden he came into it with a celestial body and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is Michael, the archangel, the 'Ancient of Days' He is our Father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do. . . . When the Virgin Mary conceived the child Jesus, the Father had begotten Him in His own likeness. He was not begotten by the Holy Ghost. And who is the Father? He is the first of the human family; and when he took a tabernacle it was begotten by his Father in heaven . . . from the fruits of the earth the first earthly tabernacles were originated by the Father

Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh by the same character [who] 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.

These statements were published soon afterward in the Church's newspaper in England² and also in the periodical called the *Journal of Discourses*.³ Brigham Young repeated these ideas and expounded upon them during the next 25 years. His viewpoints have been variously classified as doctrine, theory, paradox, heresy, speculation, and some of the mysteries. For the purposes of this paper I have decided to collectively label them as 'teachings' because I believe that they embody characteristics of all of the categories just mentioned.

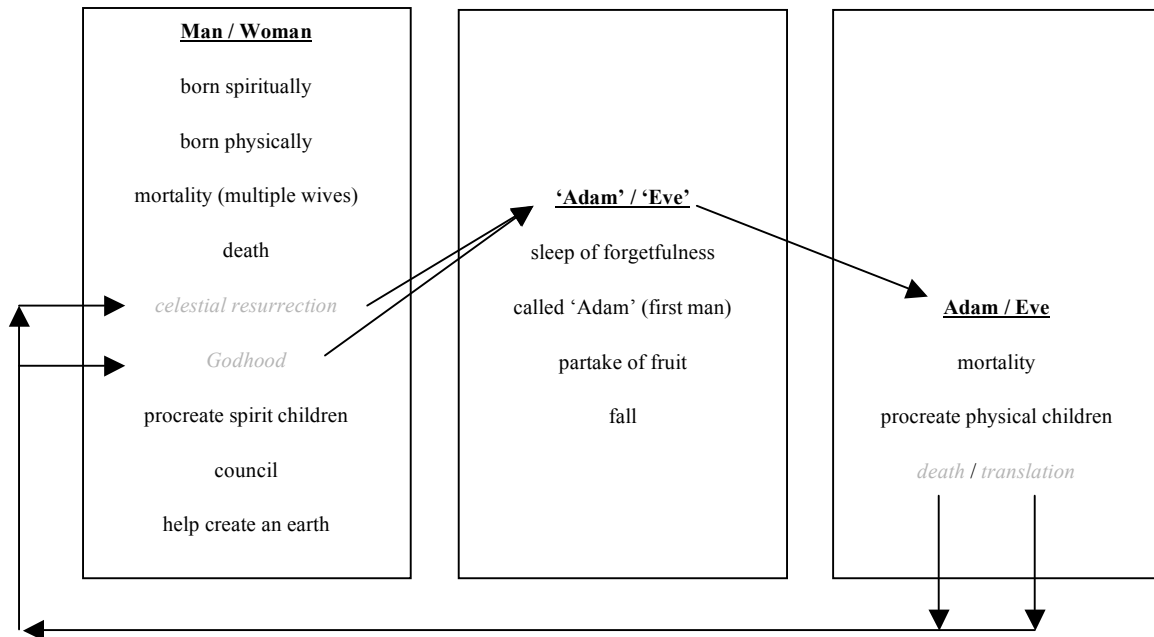
There is a considerable amount of mythology that has arisen around Brigham Young's Adam-God teachings, among critics and Latter-day Saints alike. The purpose of this paper is to

try and dispel several of those myths by presenting some historical information pertaining to the Adam-God teachings and also to explain what happened to this ideology during the nineteenth century.

One Eternal Round

The first item of business in evaluating Brigham Young’s teachings about Adam is to map out the pattern of his thoughts on the topic between the years 1852 and 1877 (the year of his death). Even though 1852 is emphasized in this paper as the formal starting point for what is commonly known as the Adam–God Theory it is clear that various components that were incorporated into it were circulating among the Saints at earlier periods of Church history.⁴ It is also evident from Brigham Young’s statement in 1852 that he had been contemplating these ideas for some time before he gave his General Conference address.⁵

There was an overarching theme that President Young used to describe his Adam-God ideas: “One Eternal Round.” The following chart illustrates, in linear fashion, from column 1 to column 2 to column 3, the underlying pattern of President Brigham Young’s version of “One Eternal Round” and the Adamic life cycle.



President Brigham Young spoke about Adam enough times between the years 1852 and 1877 to provide a fairly clear understanding of the concepts which have been used to construct the above chart. What follows are representative quotations from President Young that can be found within his Adam-God discourses and which lay out the details of his thinking on many, but not all, Adam-God concepts.

Mortality and Resurrection: Brigham Young taught that the man known in the Bible as Adam “was not made of the dust of the ground of this earth, but he was made of the dust of the earth where he lived.” This is another way of saying that on this different planet Adam was “born in the flesh.” And in this otherworldly location, said President Young, Adam received the priesthood, honored his calling, believed in his Savior, obeyed his Lord, married several wives, abode his creation, died, and was resurrected to celestial glory by somebody who had previously been through the resurrection process.⁶

Crown of Exaltation: According to Brigham Young, after the resurrection of the man known as Adam he was “crowned with glory, immortality and eternal lives; with thrones, principalities, and powers: and it was said to him, ‘It is your right to organize the elements, and to your creations and posterity there shall be no end. But you shall add kingdom to kingdom and throne to throne, and still behold the vast eternity of unorganized matter.’”⁷

Spirit Children: The man Adam and his wives were then “Gods” who had “the power . . . of propagating their species in spirit; and that [was] the first of their operations with regard to organizing a world.”⁸ “Spirits,” said Brigham Young, “were begotten, born and educated in the celestial world and were brought forth by [persons who possessed] celestial bodies.”⁹ President Young also asserted that “Adam is the Father of our spirits” and declared that “our spirits and the spirits of all the human family were begotten by Adam, and born of Eve.”¹⁰ Each person who is crowned in the celestial kingdom, said Brigham Young, becomes a “father . . . [and] god. . . . Each [such] person will reign over his posterity. Adam . . . is the Father of All Living, and Eve is the Mother of All Living, pertaining to the human family. [Adam] is their King, their Lord, [and] their God.”¹¹

The Creation: Next came the creation of the heavens and the earth. President Young taught that “Father Adam came here and helped to make the earth [I]t was said to him by Eloheim, ‘Go ye and make an earth’ He came and formed the earth Adam found [the earth] in a state of chaos, unorganized and incomplete. . . . Adam came here and got it up in a shape that would suit him to commence business,” said Brother Young. “Adam . . . was the first man on the earth, and its framer and maker. He, with the help of his brethren, brought it into existence.”¹²

Habitation Pre-Planning: Brigham Young averred that “Adam’s [F]ather came to him [before he went to occupy the earth] saying, ‘Here is the wife you have had so long. Now you are going to have one wife to take with you to yonder earth and if any of your other wives ever go to an earth to become the Mother of All Living—to become an Eve—it will be to another earth, not to that one.’”¹³

Garden and Fall: “An Adam . . . and . . . [an] Eve” must go down to begin populating each new earth, said President Young.¹⁴ Indeed, the second leader of the LDS Church taught that “every world has had an Adam, and an Eve: named so, simply because the first man is always called ‘Adam’ and the first woman ‘Eve.’”¹⁵ He also taught that “every earth has its Redeemer, and every earth has its tempter.” In addition, the inhabitants of these various worlds “pass through all the ordeals that we are passing through.”¹⁶ President Young claimed that Adam was no stranger to the Garden of Eden when he arrived on the earth for the purpose of occupying it because he himself had supposedly “planted” that paradisiacal locale.¹⁷ And he was reportedly not oblivious to what he would experience when he began his residency. Brother Brigham

continues, “when [Adam] came here [to this earth] he came with an understanding that he would . . . go to sleep . . . and forget the past and commence anew.”¹⁸ Furthermore, said President Young, “In my fullest belief, it was the design of the Lord that Adam should partake of the forbidden fruit, and I believe that Adam knew all about it before he came to this earth.”¹⁹

Physical Children: Since the point of going to the new earth is to create physical bodies to house spirit children Adam “commenced the work of creating earthly tabernacles, precisely as he had been created in this flesh himself, by partaking of the course material that was organized and composed this earth, until his system was charged with it. Consequently, the tabernacles of his children were organized from the course materials of this earth.”²⁰ So said President Brigham Young.

Death or Translation: Now we reach the first point of contradiction. President Young at first taught that the end of the Adam–God cycle (before it started all over again) was death and burial. He mentioned this detail in his General Conference address dated 8 October 1854.²¹ If this was indeed the case then the man Adam would need to be resurrected again in order to regain the celestial glory which he had lost through the process of ‘reduction.’ The problem with this line of thinking is, of course, that the Book of Mormon informs us that resurrected beings can no longer die (see Alma 11:42–43, 45). It may be that somebody pointed this fact out to Brother Brigham and so he was obliged to modify his scheme. By 7 February 1877 Brigham Young was teaching that “when Adam and Eve got through with their work in the earth, they did not lay their bodies down in the dust, but returned to the spirit world from whence they came.”²² In other words, Adam experienced some kind of translation or was assumed back into heaven and then the whole cycle repeated itself.

Definitions

Now that the Adam–God ideology has been outlined it will be helpful to take a closer look at some of the terms associated with it and determine how Brigham Young and his associates applied them.

A logical place to start is with the word ‘G/god.’ Mormons in the twenty-first century would apply this lower-case title to an exalted being of the celestial order (see D&C 76:58)—with the understanding that it can designate certain premortal spirits (see Ether 3:13–16) as well as resurrected individuals (see D&C 132:19–20, 37). The capitalized word is typically reserved by Latter-day Saints for members of the Godhead or presiding quorum of Deities.

Brigham Young and some of his contemporary Church leaders held to an expanded view of the term ‘G/god,’ however. In their system of classification a ‘G/god’ could include someone who organizes the elements or creates²³ but also someone (either mortal or otherwise) who is the leader of a group.²⁴ The prophet Moses is someone who falls into this category. He was the earthly leader of the Israelites and was a mortal who had been granted the ability to organize or control the elements. In the Book of Moses chapter 1 verse 25 Moses’ God says to him, “Moses, . . . I, the Almighty, have chosen thee, and thou shalt be made stronger than many waters; for they shall obey thy command as if thou wert God.” In the 7th chapter and first verse of the book of Exodus it is also reported: “And the Lord said unto Moses . . . ‘I have made thee a god to

Pharaoh.” Here, then, are instances where the Lord not only bestowed the title of “god” upon a mortal leader but also granted him a portion of god-like power. This perspective helps one to better understand the statement made by the Prophet Joseph Smith on 8 April 1844 wherein he said to the Saints, “God . . . will make me be god to you in His stead.”²⁵ Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball saw no problem in applying the same standard. Brother Kimball’s reasoning ran along these lines: “Brother Brigham was my God . . . Brother Joseph was his God. The one [who] gave Joseph the keys of the kingdom was his God which was Peter. Jesus Christ was his God.”²⁶ Brigham Young used the same style of interpretation. He noted that Joseph Smith had said he was “a God” to the Saints and Brigham pointed out that Jesus Christ was “a God” both before He came to the earth and also while He was here, and Moses was “a God” to the children of Israel. Then President Young made an important clarification about his way of thinking. He said, “and in this manner you may go right back to Father Adam.”²⁷

It becomes apparent after examining the Adam–God documents that Brigham Young was expressing a few biblical scriptures in a specialized way. In 1 Corinthians 8:5–6, for instance, it is said that there are “gods many” but “to us there is but one God.” This sentiment is rephrased in Hebrews 4:13 which speaks of “Him with whom we have to do.” This was the main theme of the first Adam–God discourse given by President Young on 9 April 1852. Consideration must also be given to the statement recorded in John 17:3 that “this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God.” In Brigham Young’s view “no man can enjoy or be prepared for eternal life without that knowledge”; they must, therefore, “become acquainted with our Father and God.”²⁸

The question to ask now is this: ‘How did Brigham Young come to the conclusion that Adam was *the only God with whom we have to do*?’ There are several answers to this question but one of them is that he relied upon information found in section 107 of the Doctrine and Covenants.²⁹ In verses 53 through 55 of that section it is made known that the Lord appointed Adam “to be at the head” of a multitude of nations.³⁰ These people would be Adam’s posterity. He would be “a prince over them forever.”

And Brigham Young drew upon another section of the Doctrine and Covenants to justify his stance. On 8 June 1873 he said, “Our Father Adam is the man who stands at the gate and holds the keys of everlasting life and salvation to all his children who have or whoever will come upon the earth.”³¹ This is a very close paraphrase of D&C 78:16. There it is stated that Jesus Christ gave unto Michael or Adam subordinate “keys of salvation” and appointed him as our “prince.”

Here, then, is evidence of Brigham Young utilizing canonical texts to establish the exalted status of Adam in relation to his descendants. He is “at the head”; he holds salvific “keys”; He is called a “prince.” In the nineteenth century a ‘prince’ was defined as a ruler, a king, or a governmental sovereign.³²

It is important to point out here that even though some of Brigham Young’s critics claim that he was teaching God the Father or Elohim came down to the earth to take on the role of Adam this was never the intent of Brigham Young. In Brigham Young’s mind Elohim did not equal Adam.³³

This distinction was, in fact, emphasized for Brigham Young when he went to the upper room of Joseph Smith's Red Brick Store in Nauvoo, Illinois on 4 May 1842 and became a recipient of the endowment rites. Here he not only had the separate identities of Elohim and Adam reinforced before him but—as stated in the fifth volume of the *History of the Church*—he (along with apostle Heber C. Kimball) learned at that time about “the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days” or Adam.³⁴

Then after the Nauvoo Temple was finished to the point where endowments could be given to the Saints in late 1845 Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball became temple workers. They both played dramatic roles that cemented in their minds that Elohim and Michael or Adam were not the same person.³⁵ They were separate and distinct entities and Elohim was in a higher state of authority than Michael. It should also be remembered that Orson Pratt became a participant in presenting the dramatic portions of the Nauvoo endowment.³⁶ His understanding of these and other matters would play a central role in how he would eventually react to President Young's later teachings about the man Adam.

Perspectives

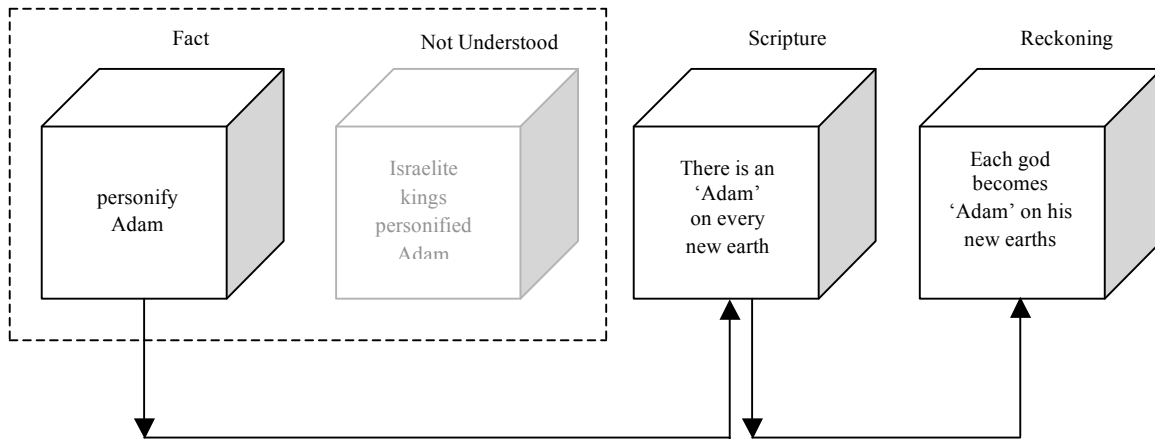
One of President Young's points of focus in his April 1852 Adam–God sermon was on how Jesus Christ's physical body was created. He did not believe that there was any other way to create a physical body than the method that he was familiar with.³⁷ Because of this perspective Brigham Young also discounted the biblical story of Eve being literally created from Adam's rib. He joked on one occasion, “Moses made the Bible to say . . . [that Adam's] wife was taken out of his side; was made of one of his ribs. I do not know anything to the contrary of my ribs being equal on both sides. The Lord knows if I lost a rib for each wife I have, I should have had none left long ago.” President Young thought he saw in the story of Eve's creation a camouflaged reference to procreation.³⁸

This leads to the story of the creation of Adam as recounted in the Bible. It is not difficult to guess what Brigham Young's perspective was on this issue. On 23 October 1853 he said,

Supposing that Adam was formed actually out of clay, out of the same kind of material from which bricks are formed; that with this matter God made the pattern of a man, and breathed into it the breath of life, and left it there, in that state of supposed perfection. He would have been an adobe to this day.³⁹

President Young announced to the Saints who were assembled in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in the Fall of 1853, “You believe Adam was made of the dust of this earth. This I do not believe, though it is supposed that it is so written in the Bible; but it is not, *to my understanding*. . . . I do not believe that portion of the Bible as the Christian world do. I never did, and I never want to. What is the reason I do not? Because I have come to understanding, and banished from my mind all the baby stories my mother taught me when I was a child.”⁴⁰

This leads to another important insight. On 29 January 1860 the First Presidency of the LDS Church—consisting of Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, and Daniel H. Wells—issued a formal statement against some of Elder Orson Pratt’s teachings. And in this public rebuttal they said, “With regard to . . . Adam’s having been formed ‘out of the ground’ and ‘from the dust of the ground,’ etc., it is deemed wisest to let that subject remain without further explanation at present.”⁴¹ This was a perfect opportunity for the uppermost presiding quorum of the Church to make a formal declaration with regard to Adam–God ideas. But they chose not to. This course of action hints at the status of the Adam–God teachings among the nineteenth century Saints and their leaders.



As long as the subjects of ‘perspective’ and ‘dust’ are being investigated it might prove useful to refer to this cube chart. This illustration may help to explain one of the reasons why Adam–God teachings emerged in the first place. On the far left it is indicated that Brigham Young was in possession of a fact. He knew that under certain circumstances there was a personification of the man Adam.⁴² The next cube is shaded lighter because it is a piece of information that Brigham Young may not have possessed, but which is definitely connected with the first cube. In the kingship initiation rituals of ancient Israel the king personified Adam. The third cube represents a scriptural idea that President Young had access to; the idea that every new earth has its ‘Adam’ (see Moses 1:33–35; 4:26). Cube four represents one of the components of the Adam–God Theory: the idea that each god becomes the ‘Adam’ on the new earths which he himself creates. It is possible that Brigham Young mentally added together idea number one and idea number three and came up with idea number four. If Brigham had been aware of idea number two he may have drawn a different conclusion about Adam than he did.

We now turn to a pertinent apologetic issue. Critics enjoy pointing out that on several occasions Brigham Young claimed that his teachings on Adam came to him through revelation. Since this section of this paper is dealing with ‘perspectives’ it is only proper that President

Young be allowed to provide an idea of what he thought about, and how he experienced, the revelatory process.

First of all, the question will be posed: ‘How did Brother Brigham compare himself, as a revelator, with his predecessor?’ There are two quotations that are of interest here. The second President of the LDS Church said, “I wish to ask every member of this whole community if they ever heard [me] profess to be a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator as Joseph Smith was. [I] professed to be an apostle of Jesus Christ.”⁴³ In the second quote Brigham Young says that he “did not receive [revelations] through the Urim and Thummim as Joseph [Smith] did.”⁴⁴ Hence, it can be ascertained that, at least in one sense, Brigham Young did not receive communications from heaven in the same direct manner that Joseph Smith did. And it is relevant to mention here that Brigham Young did, in fact, own a seerstone that was once utilized by Joseph Smith.

Next, there is this lengthy quote from President Young which is well worth considering in its entirety. He rhetorically asked himself,

“Well, Brother Brigham, . . . have you had revelations?” Yes, I have them all the time. I live constantly by the principle of revelation. . . . I have never received one particle of intelligence [except] by revelation, no matter whether [my] father or mother revealed it, or my sister, or [my] neighbor.

No person receives knowledge [except] upon the principle of revelation, that is, by having something revealed to them. “Do you [Brother Brigham] have the revelations of the Lord Jesus Christ?” I will leave that for others to judge. If the Lord requires anything of this people, and speaks through me, I will tell them of it; but if He does not, still we all live by the principle of revelation. Who reveals? Everybody around us; we learn [from] each other. I have something which you have not, and you have something which I have not. I reveal what I have to you, and you reveal what you have to me. I believe that we are revelators to each other.⁴⁵

Interestingly, there is some evidence that the ‘revelation’ claims for Adam–God ideology did not originate with Brigham Young, but rather with his close friend and associate Heber C. Kimball. There is one well-documented instance where Brother Kimball claimed that some of the concepts connected with the Adam–God Theory were revealed to him.⁴⁶ There are also two other statements that need to be taken into careful consideration. The first comes from Thomas Stenhouse’s book. It reads: “Brother Heber had considerable pride in relating to his intimate friends that he was the source of Brigham’s revelation on the ‘Adam deity.’”⁴⁷ Since Mr. Stenhouse was an apostate from Mormonism at the time he wrote this, some people might tend to discount his assertion. But the second statement seems to lend credence to it. This one comes from Elder Orson Pratt. He said that the notion of “Adam being our Father and our God . . . [was] advanced by Bro[ther] Kimball in the stand [or at the pulpit], and afterwards approved by Bro[ther] Brigham.”⁴⁸

There is one other thing to consider when it comes to Brigham Young's 'perspectives.' Again, the quotation comes straight from him. And again, it is vital to consider—and remember. He said,

“In my doctrinal teachings I have taught many things not written in any book, ancient or modern. And yet, notwithstanding the many things I have told the people, I have never looked into the Bible, the Book of Mormon, or the Doctrine and Covenants, or any of our Church works to see whether they agreed with them or not. When I have spoken by the power of God and the Holy Ghost it is truth, it is scripture, and I have no fears but that it will agree with all that has been revealed in every particular.”⁴⁹

Joseph's Doctrine

Between 4 April 1860 and 16 December 1877 Brigham Young made at least seven statements wherein he either claimed outright that Joseph Smith had taught Adam–God concepts or implied as much. It is noteworthy that President Young did not introduce this particular idea into the public arena until almost exactly eight years after he first advanced his Adam–God teachings. The first time the claim is known to have been made was at the Church Historian's office during a meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. It is recorded that Brigham Young said on that occasion:

“It was Joseph's doctrine that Adam was God [etc.] when in Luke Johnson's.”⁵⁰

It turns out, upon closer examination, that this brief, cryptic remark may be a key component in solving part of the puzzle of the origin of Adam–God beliefs. Section 78 of the Doctrine and Covenants was revealed to Joseph Smith on 1 March 1832. The header of section 78 in the D&C says that the revelation was given in Hiram, Ohio but this is actually not correct. It is known that Joseph Smith was living at the Luke Johnson residence when he received several D&C revelations that immediately precede and follow section 78 but it is also known that the Prophet made a short trip to Kirtland, Ohio during this time period and it was there that he actually received section 78.⁵¹ Nevertheless, some nineteenth century Church authorities believed that D&C 78 was received while the Prophet was living on the Johnson property and it was so labeled in some printings of the Doctrine and Covenants.⁵² The reason why D&C 78 is so important to the discussion at hand is because the Lord speaks about Adam within it. It is said in verse 16 that Jesus Christ,

hath appointed Michael your prince, and established his feet, and set him upon high [—which is kingship language]⁵³ and given unto him the keys of salvation under the counsel and direction of the Holy One [or Jesus Christ].

Here we learn that Michael, who is Adam, is subordinate to the Savior but he has also been “appointed” as a “prince.” D&C 27:11 not only repeats the idea that Adam is “the prince of all” but also says that he is “the father of all” (a distinct Adam-God Theory component). D&C 78:16 specifies that Adam has been given “the keys of salvation” for all, under Jesus Christ’s direction.

This idea leads to the Kirtland Temple in the state of Ohio. On the 21st of January 1836 Joseph Smith saw an important vision while inside of this sanctuary. Part of this vision has been recorded in the 137th section of the Doctrine and Covenants—but not all of the parts of that manifestation can be found within that record. Yet some of the scriptural elements of this vision have relevance to the Adam-God Theory. In D&C 137 Joseph Smith describes the gate leading into the celestial kingdom (see v. 2), he sees the Father and the Son seated upon a throne inside of that kingdom (see v. 3), and Adam is identified as a separate individual residing within that kingdom (see v. 5).⁵⁴ Heber C. Kimball—a staunch supporter of Adam-God ideology—provides additional details about what the Prophet saw during the vision. Brother Kimball reports that Adam was closely associated with Beings who were recognized as Gods and also said,

Joseph [Smith] saw until [the Twelve Apostles] had accomplished their work, and arrived at the gate of the celestial city; there Father Adam stood and opened the gate to them, and as they entered he embraced them one by one He then led them to the throne of God, and then the Savior embraced each one of them and crowned each one of them [as kings and priests] in the presence of God. [Joseph] saw that they all had beautiful heads of hair . . .⁵⁵

Notice that the Twelve Apostles who were admitted through the gate would have included Elder Brigham Young and Elder Heber C. Kimball. This vision would, therefore, have held especial interest for both of them. Indeed, it appears that elements of this vision were incorporated into Adam-God comments made by Brigham Young. He stated during an Adam-God sermon on 8 October 1854 that those who make it back home to the celestial kingdom will “embrace” Adam when they get there.⁵⁶ And on 7 October 1857 he said during some Adam-God comments that those who “pass” by the prophets and apostles in the next life will eventually “see the white locks [or hair] of Father Adam.”⁵⁷ On 18 June 1873 Brigham Young, in yet another Adam-God discourse, said, “Our Father Adam is the man who stands at the gate and holds the keys of . . . salvation”—thus combining a theme from Joseph’s vision with a theme found in the D&C 78 material on Adam.

One way to determine if (as Brigham Young claimed) the Prophet Joseph Smith was really teaching Adam-God concepts is to examine his discourses. Talks with heavy doses of ‘Adam’ material were delivered by him around 8 August 1839 and on 5 October 1840 and on 7

April 1844. While some of the content of these talks could be classified as ‘in-the-ballpark’ as far as the Adam–God Theory goes it should also be noted that there are similarities, but not exact parallels, to what Brigham Young taught.⁵⁸

It should also be mentioned that Helen Mar Kimball (daughter of Heber C. Kimball and one of Joseph Smith’s plural wives) claimed in an 1882 publication that Joseph Smith was the real “author” of the Adam–God Theory, not Brigham Young. Helen listed the same talks that are mentioned above as her evidence and so it seems prudent to carefully scrutinize Helen’s assertion. It seems very relevant that she was the person who tried to make the point since it was her father, Heber C. Kimball, who reportedly instigated some of the Adam-God concepts. Perhaps Brother Kimball’s viewpoints on Adam coalesced while notes on Joseph Smith’s discourses were being amalgamated to form some of the texts for the Nauvoo period of the *History of the Church*.⁵⁹

Another way to determine if Joseph Smith was teaching Adam–God ideology, or not, is to evaluate the content of his writings and the writings upon which he put his stamp of approval. It has already be shown that there is some Adam-related material on the pages of the Doctrine and Covenants but there are also texts of this nature found in the Book of Moses, the Book of Abraham, the Lectures on Faith (which is a repeat of the Book of Moses material), and the Articles of Faith. It would appear that the teachings on Adam in the Book of Moses are especially relevant when it comes to the debate on the validity or illegitimacy of Adam–God concepts.⁶⁰

Reactions

There is a small, but significant, amount of historical information available on how people within the LDS Church reacted after Brigham Young stepped down from the tabernacle pulpit in April of 1852. It is interesting that there was quite a range of response from leaders and laymen alike.

Other than the feeling of “surprise” among a number of Saints⁶¹ there were some who imagined that since the President of the Church had been the speaker his ideas must be “the word of the Lord.”⁶² They interpreted “obedience” as a good Mormon to mean that, “If I am told that Adam is our Father and our God, I just believe it.”⁶³

On the other end of the spectrum, some of the Saints were genuinely disturbed by what they heard. It gave them feelings of fear and engendered “great trouble of mind.”⁶⁴ It was acknowledged by a contemporary Church publication that some of them may have thought that what was being put forward was “blasphemous.”⁶⁵

There was also some denigration that occurred among the membership. Some of the Saints who were on the believing side of the fence accused unbelievers of “weakness, ignorance, and folly”⁶⁶ and also asserted that they were “lacking faith.”⁶⁷

And there were a number of ecclesiastical officers who did not meet in council between 1852 and 1854 because of what was being taught about Adam at Church headquarters.⁶⁸ Some

people who had been investigating the Church even refused to join with the Latter-day Saints until this particular teaching was “removed.”⁶⁹

The negative reactions were not confined to just the lay members and local leadership, either. Apostle Orson Pratt was strongly opposed to Brigham Young’s teachings on the man Adam. There is some evidence that Apostle Amasa Lyman also voiced his disapproval but Elder Pratt was definitely the champion of the anti-Adam-God cause. His opposition was based partly upon scriptural grounds. He said that when he read the revelations delivered from God through the Prophet Joseph Smith their content did not comport with what President Young was teaching.⁷⁰ On 5 April 1860 Elder Pratt even enlisted the Book of Moses to argue against what he saw as teachings about Adam that were outside the boundaries of orthodoxy.⁷¹ Unfortunately, he only had the 1851 version of the *Pearl of Great Price* to work with. It did not contain a full text of the Book of Moses. The entire text of that book was not published until 1867 but because it came through the break-off Reorganized church President Young would not have been likely to accept its authenticity. The full version of the Book of Moses would have effectively discounted several Adam–God Theory elements. It is noteworthy that the year after Brigham Young died John Taylor directed none other than Orson Pratt to publish the full Book of Moses in the first American edition of the *Pearl of Great Price*. It was canonized as a standard for doctrinal judgment just two years later.

The records of the past indicate that Brigham Young’s teachings on Adam were met with steady opposition throughout the 1850s, 60s, and 70s; they were not automatically accepted by the general Church populace. Brother Young even complained on occasion about the amount of non-acceptance that was taking place. But the negative reaction seems to have caused the Church President to have a reaction of his own; one which, in the end, was beneficial to historians: he got more precise in describing the character of his Adam–God teachings.

This is probably the most important point that can be made with regard to this intriguing, complex, and somewhat perplexing subject.

When Brigham Young first introduced the public to his Adam–God teachings in April of 1852 he claimed that they would prove a person’s “salvation or damnation.”⁷² Just two and a half years later his rhetoric changed dramatically. In General Conference, once again, he gave an Adam–God talk but this time he said, “I propose to speak upon a subject that 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, or that they should give themselves any trouble about them whatever.” After specifying that “these are my views with regard to the gods, and eternities” and saying, “I will tell you what I think about it” he used a very significant term—thirteen times. He said, “I will tell you what I reckon.” His exact words were: “I will tell you what I think about it, and as the [Southerners] say, ‘I reckon.’ And as the Yankees say, ‘I guess’; but I will tell you what I reckon.”⁷³ It should be pointed out here that Brigham Young was a northern Yankee from New York state—not a Southerner. He may have deliberately chosen to employ the term ‘reckon’ instead of ‘guess.’

And what did Brigham Young admit that he was guessing about in this sermon? The very elements of the Adam–God Theory that are the most problematic. Here is what he said:

- “I reckon that Father Adam was a resurrected being, with his wives.”⁷⁴

- “I reckon our spirits and all the spirits of the human family were begotten by Adam, and born of Eve.”⁷⁵

- “I reckon that Adam . . . himself planted [the Garden of Eden].”⁷⁶

The bottom line is that the core principles of the Adam–God Theory were simply Brigham Young guessing or reckoning.⁷⁷

One thing that is certain about Brigham Young’s ‘Adam’ ideology is that some of it originated with the House of the Lord.⁷⁸ And that is where the Adam–God saga headed towards its end also. In February of 1877 President Young took steps to ensure that his personal views on Adam would be taught during a summary lecture that was given to patrons inside of the St. George Temple (though the comments he inserted were interpretive in nature). It seems very significant that this lecture material is prefaced—in L. John Nuttal’s diary—by reminiscences about Nauvoo. President Young remembered that when the sanctuary rites were administered by Joseph Smith in May of 1842 he was there and was given a charge by the Prophet to arrange and systematize what he had been taught and experienced that day. He did just that when the Nauvoo Temple began to fully operate in late 1845 and he even gave explanatory lectures to patrons inside of that hallowed structure⁷⁹—but not exactly like what he explained in St. George. It is not clear what President Young’s motivation was for what he did in southern Utah in 1877 and he did not leave behind an explanation for it before he died, only six months later.

The Lord Steadies the Ark

On 17 June 1866 President Brigham Young—in speaking at the Salt Lake City tabernacle about the earthly kingdom of God and those individuals who serve within it—reminded the Latter-day Saints that when any jostling of the kingdom occurs they can count on divine intervention because “it is the Lord’s work” and “the Lord steadies the ark.”⁸⁰

It should be emphasized that when it comes to the Lord’s kingdom it is He who decides who will preside over it and guide it on the earth. And Brigham Young was no exception. Elder Orson Hyde openly testified that in February of 1848 he and other members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles were meeting together at Council Bluffs, Iowa, in his own home, when they both heard and felt the voice of God sanction the appointment of Elder Brigham Young as the new President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁸¹

And yet, such a divine appointment does not make any mortal man or woman super-human. And Brigham Young was no exception. A little less than five months after the second President of the LDS Church passed away Elder George Q. Cannon wrote the following: “Some of my brethren, as I have learned since the death of President Brigham Young, did have feelings concerning his course. They did not approve of it, and felt oppressed, and yet they dare not exhibit their feelings to him, he ruled with so strong and stiff a hand, and they felt that it would be of no use. In a few words, the feeling seems to be that he transcended the bounds of the authority which he legitimately held. . . . [S]ome even feel that in the promulgation of doctrine he took liberties beyond those to which he was legitimately entitled.”⁸²

On another occasion Brother Cannon pointed out that, like Joseph Smith, Brigham Young was a mortal who was not immune from weaknesses and “he was not infallible.”⁸³ When Charles W. Penrose was serving as a member of the First Presidency he responded to a letter of inquiry which contained a long list of questions about the Church. Among them was this one: “Do you believe that the President of the Church, when speaking to the Church in his official capacity, is infallible?” His response was simple and clear. “We do not believe in the infallibility of man. When God reveals anything it is truth, and truth is infallible. No President of the Church has claimed infallibility.”⁸⁴

It was near the end of the nineteenth century, during the Presidency of Wilford Woodruff, that Church members were given specific counsel with regard to the standing of President Brigham Young’s teachings on Adam. Following is part of a letter written on 7 January 1897 by Joseph F. Smith (a member of the First Presidency). In it he stated,

President Woodruff . . . partially outlined what I should say. . . . I am happy to know that he and I are in accord on the subject. . . . [In his April 1852 discourse] Pres[ident] Young no doubt expressed his personal opinion or views upon the subject. What he said was not given as a revelation or commandment from the Lord. The doctrine was never submitted to the councils of the Priesthood nor to the Church for approval or ratification and was never formally or otherwise accepted by the Church. It is therefore in no sense binding upon the Church nor upon the consciences of any of the members thereof.⁸⁵

The very next year on November 28th President Cannon informed attendees at the Church’s first Sunday School convention: “Concerning the doctrine in regard to Adam and the Savior, the Prophet Brigham [Young] taught some things concerning that; but the First Presidency and the Twelve do not think it wise to advocate these matters. . . . If we confine ourselves to the facts as they are written in the word that the Lord has given unto us, we will do well.”⁸⁶ During all the time that the Adam–God Theory was being advocated there was never any consensus about it among the top two Priesthood quorums of the Church.⁸⁷ Now, however, a consensus had finally been reached among those who presided over and administered the kingdom. And the consensus was against the Adam–God Theory.

Summary and Conclusion

Brigham Young was the legitimate successor of the Prophet Joseph Smith but he was not a perfect or infallible man. President Young learned some things about Adam from the written and unwritten teachings of Joseph Smith and he (and apparently Heber C. Kimball) used this knowledge to form assumptions about Adam and also about those Saints who achieve exaltation. This mixture of ideology became an unofficial ‘One Eternal Round’ view of existence. President Young made errors in formulating his ideology because he was evidently not aware of how the Adam-related material restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith functioned in an ancient world

setting. Some of Brigham Young's assumptions about Adam are not compatible with canonized scripture and so those particular teachings are not binding upon any Latter-day Saint.

In conclusion it is only fitting to allow President Brigham Young to have the last word. He has placed the burden squarely upon the shoulders of the Saints when it comes to accepting only those teachings which are cemented in veracity. He said, "How can you know whether [the members of the First Presidency] lead you correctly or not? Can you know by any other power than that of the Holy Ghost? I have uniformly exhorted the people to obtain this living witness, each for themselves, then no man on earth can lead them astray."⁸⁸ "I say to you, live so that you will know for yourselves whether I tell the truth or not. That is the way we want all Saints to live. Will you do it? Yes, I hope you will—every one of you."⁸⁹

NOTES

Author's Note: The presentation of Brigham Young's teachings in this paper in no way implies an endorsement of the views expressed. While Joseph F. Smith was serving as a member of the First Presidency in the late nineteenth century he provided a viewpoint that is especially applicable to the content of the present article. He said, "While I am not authorized to sit in judgment upon Pres[iden]t Young, I am at liberty to test the truth of his words or utterances by the revealed and accepted word of God. Anything uttered by man which is contrary to the Divine law must fall, while that only which is in harmony with it can remain, or stand" (Letter, Joseph F. Smith to A. Saxey, 7 January 1897, 2–3, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah).

1. Brigham Young said that at an LDS Church "conference [in April 1852] . . . a dispute arose among some of our best Elders as to who was the Father of the Son of Man pertaining to the flesh. Some contended it was the Holy Ghost and some that it was Eloheim" (Elden J. Watson, comp., *Brigham Young Addresses*, unpublished collection, vol. 2, 1850–1854, volume compiled in 1979, sermons individually paginated, information found on p. 4 of the 19 February 1854 sermon notes, comments made at the Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle).

2. See *Millennial Star*, vol. 15, no. 48, 26 November 1853, 769–70.

3. George D. Watt, ed., *Journal of Discourses* (Liverpool: F. D. and S. W. Richards, 1854), 1:50–51; hereafter cited as *JD*, President Brigham Young, 9 April 1852, sermon delivered in the Salt Lake City, Utah Tabernacle.

4. For instance, Hyrum Smith taught on 27 April 1843 that "this world . . . was made by the hands of God or gods"; the gods "held council together" about creating this world; this world was made out of elements which were in chaotic form; "this world was patterned after the former

world”; other worlds “are inhabited the same as this world”; other worlds “are under the same order as this earth” and are “undergoing the same change”; “there was, and is, a first man Adam” on those worlds (*Brigham Young University Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2, Winter 1978, 177; hereafter cited as *BYUS*). Orson Pratt wrote in the Spring of 1844 that mankind’s spirits were “begotten and born of God” in their first state of existence (Orson Pratt, *The Prophetic Almanac for 1845* [New York, Prophet’s Office, 1844], 7–8). Orson Pratt also taught that “Adam was placed upon the earth an immortal being. . . . [I]mmortal [B]eings . . . stood above [Adam and Eve] in authority [Some people believe that] the fruit of the tree . . . when eaten by Adam, diffused through his system the nature of mortality. This may be the case, and it may not Adam was an immortal being” (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 6, no. 10, 1 June 1845, 918–19; hereafter cited as *T&S*). On 28 December 1845 Brigham Young taught that ‘Adam’ was a name more ancient than the first man who dwelt upon this earth and was given to the first man who lived here because of his position as ‘first man’ (see George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books and Smith Research Associates, 1995], 238).

5. Brigham Young stated during his 9 April 1852 Adam-God talk, “I have given you a few leading items upon this subject, but a great deal more remains to be told” (*JD*, 1:51).

6. Eugene E. Campbell, *The Essential Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 95, 96.

7. *Ibid.*, 97.

8. *JD*, 6:275, President Brigham Young, 28 August 1852, special conference in the Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle.

9. *Ibid.*, 18:258, President Brigham Young, General Conference address, 8 October 1876, location not specified. Brigham Young claimed that “God . . . had children upon the same principle that children are now begotten” (Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833–1898 Typescript* [Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1984], 5:426, 27 January 1860, meeting of the First Presidency, Twelve, presidents of the Seventies and others in the council room of Brigham Young). God “created man [or Adam, as per Genesis 1:26–27] as we create our children; for there is no other process of creation in heaven, on the earth, in the earth, or under the earth, or in all the eternities” (*JD*, 11:122, President Brigham Young, 18 June 1865, remarks made in the Salt Lake City, Utah, Bowery).

10. Campbell, *The Essential Brigham Young*, 96, 97.

11. Elden J. Watson, comp., *Brigham Young Addresses*, unpublished collection, vol. 4, 1860–1864, volume compiled in 1980, sermons individually paginated, information found on p. 1 of the 30 November 1862 sermon notes, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle.

12. *Deseret News*, vol. 22, no. 20, 18 June 1873, 308, column 5, paragraph 3, President Brigham Young, 8 June 1873, Salt Lake City, Utah, New Tabernacle. On 8 October 1854 Brigham Young taught that Eloheim instructed Yahovah/Jehovah and Michael to organize the elements and create a world and then adorn it with various forms of life—as had been done previously (see Campbell, *The Essential Brigham Young*, 94). Brigham Young explained that “this earth was organized by Elohim, Jehovah and Michael, who is Adam” (vault MSS 790; Journals of L[eonard] John Nuttall, 1857–1904, 19th Century Western and Mormon Americana;

L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, entry for 7 February 1877). President Young asked, “Where was Michael [or Adam] in the creation of this earth? Did he have a mission to the earth? He did. Where was he? In the Grand Council, and performed the mission assigned him there” (*JD*, 5:331, President Brigham Young, 7 October 1857, observations made in the Salt Lake City, Utah, Bowery).

13. Elden J. Watson, comp., *Brigham Young Addresses*, unpublished collection, vol. 5, 1865–1869, volume compiled in 1982, sermons individually paginated, information found on p. 2 of the 25 August 1867 sermon notes, Provo, Utah, Bowery.

14. *JD*, 6:275, President Brigham Young, 28 August 1852, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle.

15. Campbell, *The Essential Brigham Young*, 93.

16. *JD*, 14:71–72, President Brigham Young, 10 July 1870, remarks delivered in the Ogden, Utah, Tabernacle. President Young claimed that Adam “was the person who brought the animals and the seeds from other planets to this world” (*ibid.*, 3:319, President Brigham Young, 20 April 1856, discourse delivered in the Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle).

17. Elden J. Watson, comp., *Brigham Young Addresses*, unpublished collection, vol. 2, 1850–1854, volume compiled in 1979, sermons individually paginated, information found on page 11 of the 8 October 1854 sermon notes, Salt Lake City, Utah, outdoor meeting.

18. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, 1865–1869, volume compiled in 1982, sermons individually paginated, information found on p. 1 of the 25 August 1867 sermon notes, Provo, Utah, Bowery.

19. *JD*, 2:302, President Brigham Young, 3 June 1855, talk given in the Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle. Directly after this quote President Young indicates his belief that Adam had to go through the Fall process because he could not ascend to “thrones and dominions” and “principalities and powers” until he first “descend[ed] below all things” (*ibid.*). Since Brigham Young believed that the exalted would add “throne to throne” (see endnote #7 and its associated quotation) and also believed in the “one eternal round” principle (see his 8 October 1854 sermon) it may have seemed natural in his mind to postulate the necessity of multiple falls, which would facilitate multiple ascensions and thus a multiplication of thrones.

20. *JD*, 4:218, President Brigham Young, 8 February 1857, discourse delivered in the Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle.

21. “Adam . . . lived upon an earth . . . died upon an earth, and then [was] resurrected”; “Did not Adam die? Yes, he died . . . Adam [died]. How? Just as you and I have to die and be laid away in the bowels of Mother Earth” (Campbell, *The Essential Brigham Young*, 96, 98).

22. Vault MSS 790; Journals of L[eonard] John Nuttall, 1857–1904, 19th Century Western and Mormon Americana; L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, entry for 7 February 1877.

23. “Classed with the Gods, with the beings who create . . . those who have kept the celestial law while in the flesh and again obtained their bodies [through resurrection]” (*JD*,

4:217, President Brigham Young, 8 February 1857, discourse delivered in the Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle).

24. Brigham Young: “The man is the head and God of the woman Joseph [Smith] will stand at the head of this Church and will be [the] President, Prophet and God to the people in this dispensation” (Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833–1898 Typescript* [Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983], 3:131, 132, extended family meeting, 16 February 1847). “[I]n a certain capacity [Joseph Smith] was a God to us, and is to the nations of the earth, and will continue to be. . . . [H]e was the prophet of the Lord through whom God spoke to the nations and dictated laws by which they were to be governed to secure to themselves eternal life” (*JD*, 8:321, President Brigham Young, 10 February 1861, Salt Lake City, Utah, Bowery). “Suppose an angel comes to us tonight with a message from God and he tells the angels not to make himself known. . . . You may ask, ‘Who are you?’ He may not tell you who he is or he may say, ‘God sent me.’ You may say, ‘Where is that God who sent you? I don’t know or care anything about you or what you say.’ He might say to you, ‘I am a god to you.’ Moses said to Israel, ‘I am a God to you.’ Joseph [Smith] said to us, ‘I am a God to you.’ This was true and upon the same principles. I am a God to this people and so is *any man who is appointed to lead Israel or the kingdom of God*. If the people reject him they reject the one who sent him. . . . God did not say ‘worship Moses’ because he was a God to the people. . . . You might say, ‘I am your Councilor,’ ‘Dictator,’ or ‘your God.’ Either would be correct. And [your wife or son] should obey your just and righteous command. Yet they should not worship you for this would be [a] sin” (Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 5:421, emphasis added, President Brigham Young, 27 January 1860, meeting of the First Presidency, Twelve, presidents of Seventies, and others in Brigham Young’s council room). “[W]e shall then hear [Adam] say, ‘I am your father and your *leader*. . . . I have the government of the world in my hands”” (Elden J. Watson, comp., *Brigham Young Addresses*, unpublished collection, vol. 3, 1855–1859, compiled in 1980, sermons individually paginated, information found on p. 5 of the 25 April 1855 sermon notes, meeting of the Deseret Theological Institute, Salt Lake City, Utah, Social Hall).

25. Brigham H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1962), 6:319–20; hereafter cited as *HC*.

26. Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833–1898 Typescript* (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983), 4:130, Heber C. Kimball, meeting address on 10 April 1852.

27. *JD*, 4:271, President Brigham Young, 8 March 1857, discourse delivered in Salt Lake City, Utah, location not specified.

28. *Ibid.*, 4:215, President Brigham Young, 8 February 1857, discourse delivered in the Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle. It should be noted that this particular discourse seems to contain some perfectly orthodox statements about the identity of God. On page 216, for instance, President Young plainly states that “the great Eloheim” is “God our heavenly Father.” President Young also teaches here that Eloheim is the Father of our spirits and the Being to whom Latter-day Saints have been taught to pray. On page 217 of this same source, however, President Young states: “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.” Then on page 218 President Young says, “The

Savior was begotten [in the flesh] by the Father of His spirit, by the same Being who is the Father of our spirits” which—according to the President’s own words on page 216—would be “the great Eloheim.” Page 218 also preserves these important remarks: “I understand *in part*, see *in part*, and *know and am acquainted with [my Father] in part* That is *my opinion* about it, and *my opinion* to me is just as good as yours is to you” (emphasis added).

29. President Brigham Young cited D&C 107:53–55 in connection with his Adam–God ideology on 6 November 1864 (see *ibid.*, 10:355, Salt Lake City, Utah, Bowery). His Adam–God statement after citing this passage of scripture was, “So, in like manner, every faithful son of God *becomes, as it were, Adam* to the race that springs from his loins, when they are embraced in the covenants and blessings of the Holy Priesthood” (emphasis added).

30. Webster’s 1828 English dictionary defines “head” in many different ways but definition #4 seems to be the most applicable to how the term is used in D&C 107—“The first place, the place of honor, or of command” (Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* [New York: S. Converse, 1828], s.v., “head,” definition #4).

31. *Deseret News*, vol. 22, no. 20, 18 June 1873, 308, column 4, paragraph 2, President Brigham Young, 8 June 1873, Salt Lake City, Utah, New Tabernacle.

32. Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v., “prince,” definitions #1 and #2.

33. Brigham Young gave “prayer and thank[s]giving, before the great Eloheim, that He will continue the outpouring of His holy spirit upon this people” (*The Wasp*, vol. 1, no. 37, 14 January 1843, 147).

34. *HC*, 5:2.

35. Devery S. Anderson and Gary J. Bergera, eds., *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies, 1845–46: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005), 1, 5–6, 11, 12, 15, 20, 21, 109, 280.

36. *Ibid.*, 47, 49, 52, 65, 76, 242, 264, 321.

37. “I believe the Father came down from heaven, as the apostles said He did, and begat the Savior of the world, for He is the only-begotten of the Father, which *could not be if the Father did not actually beget Him in person*. . . . *I believe the Father came down in His tabernacle and begat Jesus Christ*. . . . I believe He has a tabernacle, and begat Jesus Christ . . . because the Bible expressly declares it. . . . I believe the Father begat the Son” (*JD*, 1:238, emphasis added, President Brigham Young, 24 July 1853, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle).

38. “As for the Lord taking a rib out of Adam’s side to make a woman of, He took one out of my side just as much. ‘But Brother Brigham, would you make it appear that Moses did not tell the truth?’ No, not a particle more than I would that your mother did not tell you that little Billy came from a hollow toad stool” (Campbell, *The Essential Brigham Young*, 95).

39. *JD*, 2:6, President Brigham Young, 23 October 1853, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle.

40. Ibid., 2:6, emphasis added, President Brigham Young, 23 October 1853, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle. President Brigham Young asserted on 20 April 1856 in the Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle that Adam “was made as you and I are made, and no person was ever made upon any other principle” (ibid., 3:319).

41. James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 2:222.

42. The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* reports that the endowment includes “a figurative depiction of the advent of Adam and Eve and of every man and every woman” (Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* [New York: Macmillan, 1992], 2:455).

43. *JD*, 6:319, President Brigham Young, 7 April 1852, general conference address, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle.

44. *Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minute Book*, 9 June 1873, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

45. *JD*, 3:209, President Brigham Young, 17 February 1856, discourse delivered in the Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle.

46. “The Lord told me that Adam was my father and that he was the God and father of all the inhabitants of this earth” (Memorandum, 30 April 1862, cited in Stanley B. Kimball, ed., *On the Potter’s Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books and Smith Research Associates, 1987], 176, n. 3). There is a reported instance of Heber C. Kimball supposedly writing something similar in another manuscript but since this information was relayed by J. Golden Kimball (Heber’s son) to another person it is a third-hand account.

47. Thomas B. H. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (London: Ward, Lock, and Tyler, 1874), 561 n. 2. If Heber C. Kimball was indeed the person who introduced the Adam–God idea to President Brigham Young and (as evidenced in the previous endnote) claimed divine revelation for that knowledge then there was, at the very least, a violation of the order whereby revelation is ordained to be received for the Church. Institutional revelations are never vouchsafed to a counselor in the First Presidency when the President has the capacity to receive them. Only the President of the LDS Church receives revelation for the entire institution. As Joseph Fielding Smith taught, “There is but one [person] at a time who holds the keys and the right to receive revelation for the Church, and that man is the President of the Church. . . . [W]henever [the Lord] has a revelation or commandment to give to His people . . . it will come through the presiding officer of the Church” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999], 1:283–84).

48. 5 April 1860, meeting of the Twelve at the Church Historian’s Office, Salt Lake City, Utah, cited in Gary J. Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum: Orson Pratt, Brigham Young, Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 194. There does not appear to be any rebuttal of this statement from Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, or anyone else. On 23 September 1860 Orson Pratt stated with reference to ideas about godhood, “I do not believe as Brother Brigham and Brother Kimball do in some points of doctrine and they do not wish me to acknowledge to a thing that I do not believe” (Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 5:507, Salt Lake City, Utah, Historian’s Office).

49. *Deseret News*, vol. 26, no. 18, 6 June 1877, 274, column 5, paragraph 2, discourse given by President Brigham Young, 25 May 1877, Logan, Utah, location not specified.

50. 4 April 1860, meeting at the Church Historian's Office, Salt Lake City, Utah, cited in Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum*, 181.

51. See Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 2:350.

52. For a late nineteenth century claim that D&C 78 was received at Hiram, Ohio see the header in *The Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Company, 1890), 280.

53. Being 'set on high' and having one's 'feet established' both imply enthronement—throne and footstool (cf. Ps. 110:1; Heb. 8:1, 12:2; Rev. 3:21). On 5 February 1878 Zebedee Coltrin testified that on 19 April 1834 he, Oliver Cowdery, and Joseph Smith saw a vision of "father Adam and mother Eve": white-haired, youthful looking, and enthroned (High Priest's meeting minutes, recorded by ward clerk Thomas Matley, Spanish Fork, Utah). On 11 October 1883 Zebedee Coltrin again stated that "he was with Joseph [Smith] and another man [i.e., Oliver Cowdery] in the woods praying and [the] heavens w[ere] opened and they saw a man sitting upon a throne whose hair was white as wool and a woman sitting beside of him, both dressed in white. Joseph said it was Adam and Eve" (Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1833–1898 Typescript*, 8:200–201, 11 October 1883). The School of the Prophets minute book for 1883 reports Zebedee Coltrin saying that Joseph Smith called the personages "our first parents, Adam and Eve" (cited in Larry E. Dahl and Donald Q. Cannon, eds., *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1997], 18). Taken altogether, these three sources support the conclusion that what is found in the 25 August 1890 Abraham H. Cannon journal entry is anomalous. Elder Cannon—in a third-hand recounting—wrote of this very same incident that Smith, Cowdery and Coltrin saw "the Father seated upon a throne; they prayed again and on looking saw the Mother also; after praying and looking [yet another] time they saw the Savior added to the group" (Dennis B. Horne, ed., *An Apostle's Record: The Journals of Abraham H. Cannon* [Clearfield, UT: Gnolaum Books, 2004], 152–53; none of the other, earlier, sources identify Adam and Eve as "the Father" and "the Mother" and none of them mention the appearance of the Savior during this manifestation). Joseph Smith stated that he had seen Adam several times during the Kirtland period dressed in distinctive white vestments—kingly and priestly attire (see *Juvenile Instructor*, vol. 27, no. 3, 1 February 1892, 93). Joseph Smith's Kirtland theology acknowledged "priests and kings" as being "gods" (D&C 76:56, 58). On 16 June 1844 the Prophet made the brief remark—in connection with the idea of the plurality of Gods—that "the heads of the Gods [i.e., the Godhead] appointed one God for us" (HC, 6:476). Since D&C 78:15–16 indicates that Michael or Adam was "appointed" by "the Lord God" to be a "prince" over humanity it may be that the Prophet was referring to this passage of scripture in his statement. If so, it would appear that Joseph Smith was referring to Adam as a 'G/god' on 16 June 1844. Adam's godly status was affirmed by the First Presidency of the LDS Church—consisting of Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and Charles W. Penrose—on 20 February 1912. There are "gods many," they said, and Adam "is one of the gods." His standing with regard to us is set "according to the holy patriarchal order." Yet, even in the perfection and glorification of godhood, Adam will still "carry out the behests of the great Elohim in relation to his posterity." Adam, said the First Presidency, is not "God the Eternal Father of us all." Adam worshipped the Father and so do the Latter-day Saints (Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:267).

54. “[Warren] Parrish’s transcription of [Joseph Smith’s] vision [in Joseph Smith’s journal dated 21 January 1836] seems to differentiate Adam and the archangel Michael as two separate individuals. Yet [Joseph Smith] identified Michael as Adam at least a year earlier and made the same identification four years later (Oliver Cowdery, Kirtland, OH, to John Whitmer, [Liberty, MO], 1 January 1834, in Cowdery, Letterbook, 15; Revelation, ca. August 1830, in Doctrine and Covenants 50:2, 1835 ed. [D&C 27:11]; Richards, “Pocket Companion,” 74–75; Robert B. Thompson, sermon notes, 5 October 1840, [Joseph Smith] Collection, [Church History Library])” (Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers, Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839* [Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2008], 167–68, n. 319). The text recorded by Warren Parrish may provide a clue about its incorrect content. It reads: “I saw father Adam, and Abraham and Michael and my father and mother, my brother Alvin” (ibid., 167–68). The “Mi” of “Michael” and the word “my” that follows almost immediately after it have the exact same sound. The structures within the sentence are also identical (“and Mi . . . and my”). It seems, therefore, that Warren Parrish (a relatively recent convert [20 May 1833] and newly assigned scribe for the Prophet [29 October 1835]) may have recorded a modified dittography based upon what he heard Joseph Smith say.

55. Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball, an Apostle* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1888), 106. Elder Kimball mentioned that the Twelve, in this instance, were “crowned kings and priests of God” on 17 March 1861 (*JD*, 9:41, Heber C. Kimball, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle).

56. Campbell, *The Essential Brigham Young*, 100.

57. *JD*, 5:332, President Brigham Young, 7 October 1857, Salt Lake City, Utah, Bowery.

58. It is essential to evaluate portions of four of Joseph Smith’s discourses when attempting to determine how closely Brigham Young’s teachings on Adam match—or don’t match—those of the Prophet. These discourses, and references to pertinent passages, are as follows: before 8 August 1839 (see Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, rev. ed. [Orem, UT: Grandin Book, 1991], 8–9; hereafter cited as *WJS*); 5 October 1840 (see ibid., 39–40, 42); 7 April 1844 (see ibid., 341, 344–45, 350, 357, 361); 16 June 1844 (see ibid., 378–79). Brigham Young stated that his understanding of Joseph Smith’s doctrines was based upon his own “memory” rather than on documentary sources (see Elden J. Watson, comp., *Brigham Young Addresses*, unpublished collection, vol. 5, 1865–1869, volume compiled in 1982, sermons individually paginated, information found on pp. 3–4 of the 8 October 1866 sermon notes, comments made at the Salt Lake City, Utah, Bowery). This fact probably accounts for discrepancies that exist between the teachings of both men. Two notable discrepancies are these: Brigham Young taught that Adam and Eve were married prior to entering the Garden of Eden while Joseph Smith said that they were wedded after they got into Paradise (see *HC*, 2:320). Brigham Young also asserted that Adam became a living soul (body and spirit combined) on another planet while Joseph Smith taught that God put Adam’s spirit into his body here on this earth (see *WJS*, 352, 281 nts. 3 and 4).

59. Joseph Smith’s 1839 and 1840 discourses on Adam appear to have been compiled and incorporated into the *History of the Church* sometime before Brigham Young gave his 9 April 1852 Adam–God talk (see *BYUS*, vol. 21, no. 1, Winter 1981, 112, table #4).

60. The content of the Book of Moses disallows the notion that Adam was created from the ‘dust’ of a different world. Consider the following: God told Moses that He would *only* provide him with an account of “this earth” and its inhabitants (Moses 1:35), meaning specifically the earth upon which Moses was standing (see Moses 1:40). Then God provided information to Moses about the creation sequence and therein mentioned “the earth” 19 times (Moses 2). Then God spoke of the “ground” of the “earth” in the physical sense (Moses 3:6). Then God said that He “formed man from the dust of the ground . . . and man became a living soul . . . upon the earth” (Moses 3:7). Then God said that He made every tree to grow “out of the ground” and they “became a living soul” too (Moses 3:9). Then God said that He formed every beast “out of the ground” and “they were also living souls” (Moses 3:19). In all of this, there is absolutely no hint that any other earth is being spoken of. Adam and the trees and the animals are all created out of the very same “ground” or earth and each becomes a living soul. God Himself clearly states that Adam is going to “till the ground from whence he was taken,” which ground is “the earth” outside of the boundary of the Garden of Eden (Moses 4:29; 5:1). God tells Adam, “thou shalt return unto the ground—for thou shalt surely die—for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou wast, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Moses 4:25).

61. *Millennial Star*, vol. 15, no. 50, 10 December 1853, 801; hereafter cited as *MS*.

62. *Ibid.*, vol. 16, no. 34, 26 August 1864, 534.

63. *Ibid.*, 530.

64. *Ibid.*, vol. 15, no. 51, 17 December 1853, 825. One nineteenth century commentator on Mormonism wrote: “To the credit of the Saints, be it said, they have, as a people, refused to abandon their faith in ‘the God of their fathers.’ The mass of the Mormon people do not believe the doctrine of the Adam deity but of them all only one, Orson Pratt, has dared to make public protest against that doctrine” (Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints*, 492).

65. *MS*, vol. 15, no. 50, 10 December 1853, 801. In Brigham Young’s 9 April 1852 talk he made note of the fact that some people might characterize his Adam–God teachings as “blasphemy” (*JD*, 1:51).

66. *MS*, vol. 15, no. 51, 17 December 1853, 825.

67. *Ibid.*, vol. 16, no. 31, 5 August 1854, 482.

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.*, vol. 16, no. 34, 26 August 1864, 534.

70. Orson Pratt “pursued a course of . . . unbelief in what President Young said” (Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833–1898 Typescript*, 4:407, comment by Wilford Woodruff on 11 March 1856). He said that he “could not believe that Adam was our God or the Father of Jesus Christ” (*ibid.*, 4:288, comments by Orson Pratt during a prayer meeting on 17 September 1854). He “did not believe that Father Adam had [resurrected] flesh and bones when he came to the Garden of Eden He also said that he believe[d] that Jesus Christ and Adam [were] brothers in the [s]pirit, and that Adam [was] not the God he [was] praying unto” (Thomas

E. Jeremy Sr. journal, 30 September 1852, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, cited in Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum*, 93–94]. He said, “I have heard Brother Brigham say that Adam is the Father of our spirits, and he came here with his 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’ [I]t [is] not sustained by revelation” (5 April 1860, meeting of the Twelve at the Church Historian’s Office, cited in Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum*, 197–98). He asserted that President Young had “preache[d] doctrine opposed to Joseph [Smith] and all other revelations” (5 April 1860, meeting of the Twelve at the Church Historian’s Office, cited in Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum*, 198). Indeed, Elder Pratt said that when he read Joseph’s revelations they seemed to say “directly the opposite” of what Brigham Young taught (4 April 1860, meeting at the Church Historian’s Office, cited in Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum*, 181). Elder Pratt said of President Young’s viewpoint on Adam being the Father and God of the human family, “I have no confidence in it” (5 April 1860, meeting of the Twelve at the Church Historian’s Office, cited in Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum*, 194) and he “expressed his entire disbelief” in some of the Adam–God theory’s associated ideas (Samuel W. Richards journal, p. 15 cited in Elden J. Watson, comp., *Brigham Young Addresses*, unpublished collection, vol. 3, 1855–1859, compiled in 1980, sermons individually paginated, information found under entry for 11 March 1856, Salt Lake City, Utah, upper room of the President’s office). Orson Pratt said he “did question [Brigham Young’s] judgment in arriving [at] correct conclusions in some matters of doctrine” (4 April 1860, Brigham Young Office Journal, cited in Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum*, 173, n. 9).

71. 5 April 1860 meeting of the Twelve at the Church Historian’s Office, cited in Bergera, *Conflict in the Quorum*, 197.

72. The “salvation or damnation” statement may simply be Brigham Young’s rephrased expression of the ideology found in John 17:3 (a scripture he often connected with his Adam–God teachings)—“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God.”

73. Campbell, *The Essential Brigham Young*, 86, 87, 97.

74. *Ibid.*, 97. As a member of the First Presidency Charles W. Penrose responded in print, in a Church periodical, to the following question: “Do you believe that Adam had more wives than one, either in this world or in the spiritual world?” His answer was, “We do not know of any wife of Adam excepting Mother Eve” (*Improvement Era*, vol. 15, no. 11, September 1912, 1042).

75. Campbell, *The Essential Brigham Young*, 97.

76. *Ibid.* This statement matches another one found in the same discourse: “Adam planted the Garden of Eden” (*ibid.*, 98). This is in conflict with information found in the Bible (see Gen. 2:8), the Book of Moses (see Moses 3:8), and the Book of Abraham (see Abraham 5:8) which state that it was God(s)—not specifically ‘Adam’—who “planted” the garden.

77. Statements by Brigham Young indicating that certain Adam–God Theory principles only represented his personal opinion:

24 July 1853 – “I believe the Father came down from heaven, as the apostles said He did, and begat the Savior of the world, for He is the only-begotten of the Father, which *could not be if the Father did not actually beget Him in person.* . . . I believe the Father came down in His

tabernacle and begat Jesus Christ. . . . I believe He has a tabernacle, and begat Jesus Christ . . . because the Bible expressly declares it. . . . I believe the Father begat the Son” (JD, 1:238, emphasis added, President Brigham Young, 24 July 1853, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle).

23 October 1853 – “You believe Adam was made of the dust of this earth. This I do not believe, though it is supposed that it is so written in the Bible; but it is not, *to my understanding*” (*JD*, 2:6, emphasis added, President Brigham Young, 23 October 1853, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle).

8 October 1854 – “I propose to speak upon a subject that does not immediately concern yours or my welfare. . . . I will tell you what I believe . . . I do not pretend to say that the items of doctrine, and ideas I shall advance are necessary for the people to know, or that they should give themselves any trouble about them whatever These are my views with regard to the gods, and eternities I will tell you what I think about it, and as the [Southerners] say, ‘I reckon,’ and as the Yankees say, ‘I guess’; but I will tell you what I reckon. I reckon I reckon I reckon it. And I reckon and I reckon I reckon I reckon I reckon I reckon I reckon tell you what I reckon” (Campbell, *The Essential Brigham Young*, 86, 87, 90, 97, 98, 99, 100).

25 April 1855 – “apparently I understand It appears to me I understand . . . who [Jesus Christ] came from this is for you to believe or disbelieve as you please, for if I were to [express my thoughts] I have no doubt but there would be many that would say, ‘Perhaps it is so and perhaps it is not’ If I should undertake to tell the people what I believe in my heart and what seemeth to me (I do not say it is so) but what seemeth to me to be eternal truth, how would they know unless they had the spirit of revelation to say to them whether it was a truth or an untruth? I do not design to go into any mysteries or to take up worldly sciences [such as the ‘science of theology’ – see p. 3] to any great extent but suppose I were to take up a few of them, I should be like the rest of you: tell what I know according to what I understand and believe. And then if I am wrong I should be glad if God or some man upon the earth would correct me and set me right and tell me what it is and how it is. . . . communicate to you my ideas upon the subject. . . . as I understand pertaining to Him with whom we have to do I will tell you what I think It is a subject I am aware that does not appear so clear to our understandings at present as we could wish it . . . it is [a subject] that should not trouble us at all. . . . I tell you this as my belief about that personage who is called the Ancient of Days I do not tell it because that I wish it to be established in the minds of others To my mind and to my feelings those matters are all plain” (Elden J. Watson, comp., *Brigham Young Addresses*, unpublished collection, vol. 3, 1855–1859, volume compiled in 1980, sermons individually paginated, information found on pp. 3, 4, 5 – this was an address to the Deseret Theological Institute in Salt Lake City, Utah).

8 February 1857 – “I understand in part, see in part, and know and am acquainted with [my Father] in part That is my opinion about it, and my opinion to me is just as good as yours is to you” (*JD*, 4:218, President Brigham Young, 8 February 1857, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle).

7 October 1857 – “I believe our God to be so near to us as Father Adam those are ideas which do not concern us at present” (*JD*, 5:331–32, President Brigham Young, 7 October 1857, Salt Lake City, Utah, Bowery).

9 October 1859 – “Adam and Eve are the parents of all pertaining to the flesh, and I would not say that they are not also the parents of our spirits” (*JD*, 7:290, President Brigham Young, 9 October 1859, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle).

78. Daniel H. Wells: “The endowments plainly teach it and the Bible and other revelations are full of it” (*Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minute Book*, 9 June 1873, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah). Heber C. Kimball: “the Almighty sent Jehovah and Michael to do the work [of creation] has it not been imitated before you in your holy endowments [cf. *Ensign*, January 1986, 53]?” In this particular talk Heber C. Kimball specifies, in an orthodox manner, that “our Father and God, from whom we sprang” (i.e., the Father of our spirits) sent Adam and others to “organize an earth.” Heber also said, “God the Father made Adam the lord of this creation in the beginning”—so Heber is indicating that Adam is subordinate to God (*JD*, 10:235, Heber C. Kimball, 27 June 1863, discourse delivered in Provo, Utah).

79. Even though Brigham Young did make some comments about Adam while lecturing in late 1845 his remarks were not nearly as elaborate as the views he expressed on the subject in early 1852.

80. *JD*, 11:252, President Brigham Young, 17 June 1866, Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle.

81. See *ibid.*, 8:234, Orson Hyde, 7 October 1860, Salt Lake City, Utah, Bowery. Elder Hyde added these details about the incident: “Men, women, and children came running together where we were and asked us what was the matter. They said that their houses shook and the ground trembled and they did not know but that there was an earthquake. We told them that there was nothing the matter—not to be alarmed; the Lord was only whispering to us a little” (*ibid.*). For another incident that convinced some of the Saints that Brigham Young was Joseph Smith’s legitimate successor see Lynne W. Jorgensen, et al., “The Mantle of the Prophet Joseph Passes to Brother Brigham: A Collective Spiritual Witness,” *BYUS*, vol. 36, no. 4, 1996–97, 125–204.

82. *The Instructor*, vol. 80, no. 6, June 1945, 259, written on 17 January 1878.

83. *JD*, 24:274, George Q. Cannon, 12 August 1883, Logan, Utah, Tabernacle. Brother Cannon said in this same source that Brigham Young “was not a God he was fallible” (*ibid.*).

84. *Improvement Era*, vol. 15, no. 11, September 1912, 1045.

85. Letter, Joseph F. Smith to A. Saxey, 7 January 1897, 1–2, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

86. George Q. Cannon, ed., *Proceedings of the First Sunday School Convention of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union, 1899), 87–88.

87. Orson Hyde taught ‘The Snag’ principle thusly: “There is a way by which all revelations purporting to be from God through any man can be tested. Brother Joseph [Smith]

gave us the plan. Says he, ‘When all the quorums are assembled and organized in order, let the revelation be presented to the quorums. If it pass[es] one let it go to another. And if it pass[es] that [one], to another, and so on until it has passed all the quorums. And if it pass[es] the whole without running against a snag, you may know it is of God. But if it runs against a snag then,’ says he, ‘it wants enquiring into: you must see to it.’ It is known to some who are present that there is a quorum organized where revelations can be tested. Brother Joseph said, ‘Let no revelation go to the people until it has been tested here’” (*T&S*, vol. 5, no. 17, 15 September 1844, 649–50). President Brigham Young stressed the requirement of unanimity when it comes to legitimizing any gospel teaching. He declared, “In trying all matters of doctrine, to make a decision valid, it is necessary to obtain a unanimous voice, faith and decision. In the capacity of a quorum, the three First Presidents must be one in their voice; the Twelve Apostles must be unanimous in their voice to obtain a righteous decision upon any matter that may come before them, as you may read in the Doctrine and Covenants [107:27]. . . . Whenever you see these quorums unanimous in their declaration, you may set it down as true. Let the Elders get together, being faithful and true; and when they agree upon any point, you may know that it is true” (*JD*, 9:91–92, President Brigham Young, 7 May 1861, Salt Lake City, Utah, Mill Creek Ward).

88. *Ibid.*, 6:100, President Brigham Young, 29 November 1857, discourse delivered in the Salt Lake City, Utah, Tabernacle.

89. *Ibid.*, 18:248, President Brigham Young, 23 June 1874, Salt Lake City, Utah, 3rd Ward meeting house.