

The Bruce R. McConkie Letter

This letter from L.D.S. Apostle Bruce R. McConkie to Eugene England of B.Y.U. was written in February of 1981 and finally surfaced in the latter part of 1982. It is important for several reasons, but probably the most important is the fact that for the first time in modern history we have an admission from a Mormon apostle (and theologian) that **Brigham Young did indeed teach that Adam is the father of our spirits!** According to current L.D.S. definition, the "father of our spirits" is our Heavenly Father.

The evidence is undeniable; for most or all of Brigham's "prophetic" career, **he had the wrong God!** Think about this. Prophets with the wrong God are **false prophets**. True churches are not built upon a foundation of false prophets. Those who follow false prophets will end up in the ditch along with the false prophet (see Matthew 15:14). As you read the letter, keep this Biblical passage in mind:

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, **Let us go after other gods, which thou has not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet**, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear Him, . . . **And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, . . .**

(Deuteronomy 13:1-5)

From what is apparently the first Adam-God sermon by Brigham on April 9, 1852 (see **Journal of Discourses**, vol. 1, pp. 50, 51) to the last (or one of the last) given June 8, 1873 (see **Deseret News**, June 18, 1873), we have a variety of discourses by Brigham which expound upon Adam-God doctrine. He claimed that it was **doctrine** (not theory) and that **God had revealed it to him**. The best that McConkie can come up with is that Brigham Young contradicted Brigham Young (although he doesn't say where). Even if this were true, why should anyone who really has a love of the truth, still sustain Brigham as having been a true prophet? Can true prophets be confused or chameleon-like on Who God really is? This is extremely basic. **Sincerity or "testimonies of the Holy Ghost" cannot change the simple truth that Brigham promoted the wrong God for over twenty years!**

Of course, Spencer W. Kimball and succeeding L.D.S. prophets would sustain Brigham as having been a true prophet even though he wasn't. What does this tell you about the "living prophet"? If you can show that one of the L.D.S. prophets was false, then all "prophets" following him must fall like a row of dominoes.

The underlining and "DO NOT REPRODUCE" marks were likely **not** part of the original letter. A son of McConkie reportedly had a copy of the letter which did not have the "DO NOT REPRODUCE" marks on it.

Because of space limitations, certain portions of the Bruce McConkie letter are omitted. A reproduction of the entire letter, along with commentary and other Adam-God material can be found in the booklet "LDS Apostle Confesses Brigham Young Taught Adam-God Doctrine" sold by Utah Lighthouse Ministry, P.O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, UT 84110 for \$2.00 (mail orders should include an additional 20¢ for postage).

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

The Council of the Twelve
47 East South Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 84143

February 19, 1981

Mr. Eugene England
C/O Honors Program
4012 Harold B. Lee Library
Provo, Utah 84602

Dear Brother England:

This may well be the most important letter you have or will receive. It is written in reply to an undated letter from you which came in an envelope postmarked, September 4, 1980. Your letter enclosed a 19-page document which you had prepared under the title, "The Perfection and Progression of God: Two Spheres of Existence and Two Modes of Discourse."

In your letter and the article enclosed with it, you set forth the thesis that although God knows all things as pertaining to our sphere of existence, there are nonetheless other spheres beyond ours in which Deity continues to advance and progress in knowledge and truth. In espousing and explaining this philosophy you suppose you are harmonizing quotations from various of the early Brethren. Some of these statements emphatically say that God knows all things and has all power and others of them say that he is advancing in knowledge and understanding and is gaining new truths.

When your letter arrived I was aware of the subject material contained in it and in the enclosed article. Because I do not engage in controversy or discussion of divergent views, either orally or in writing, I simply dropped your letter in a drawer and did not bother to read it. Some four and a half months later, in January of this year, I did read your presentation for the first time. I was not at all pleased, but still thought I would have nothing to say to you on the subject.

Over the months various hearsay reports have come to me indicating that you are presenting and championing the views you sent to me. I have now reached the conclusion that it would be wise for me to depart from my usual custom and send you an answer to your letter. I do so out of respect for your parents, G. Eugene and Dora, and for your own personal well-being and your guidance where your teachings and discussions with others are concerned.

February 19, 1981
Page 2

**DO NOT
REPRODUCE**

I shall write in kindness and in plainness and perhaps with sharpness. I want you to know that I am extending to you the hand of fellowship though I hold over you at the same time, the scepter of judgment. My office door is open to you and if you feel the need for discussion with me, my secretary will be pleased to set up a mutually convenient time or times for such.

On Sunday, June 1, 1980, I spoke at one of the multi-stake firesides in the Marriott Center on the subject, "The Seven Deadly Heresies." In that talk I said:

"There are those who say that God is progressing in knowledge and is learning new truths."

"This is false—utterly, totally, and completely. There is not one sliver of truth in it. It grows out of a wholly twisted and incorrect view of the King Follet Sermon and of what is meant by eternal progression."

"God progresses in the sense that his kingdoms increase and his dominions multiply—not in the sense that he learns new truths and discovers new laws. God is not a student. He is not a laboratory technician. He is not postulating new theories on the basis of past experiences. He has indeed graduated to that state of exaltation that consists of knowing all things and having all power."

Page 3

REPRODUCE

one he has already given to men in worlds without number?

"The saving truth, as revealed to and taught, formally and officially, by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Lectures on Faith is that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He knows all things, he has all power, and he is everywhere present by the power of his Spirit. And unless we know and believe this doctrine we cannot gain faith unto life and salvation."

"Joseph Smith also taught in the Lectures on Faith that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation. These he named as:

1. "The idea that he actually exists";
2. "A correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes"; and
3. "An actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to the divine will."

POINTS TO PONDER

With what McConkie has admitted that Brigham taught relative to Adam-God, one should wonder why in "**Mormon Doctrine**" under "Adam-God Theory" he writes:

In support of their false assumptions, they quote such statements as that of President Brigham Young to the effect that Adam is our father and our god and the only god with whom we have to do. This statement, and others of a similar nature, is perfectly consistent and rational, when viewed in full gospel perspective and understood in the light of the revelations relative to the patriarchal chain binding exalted beings together. Full and detailed explanations of all important teachings on these points are readily available. (**Doctrines of Salvation**, vol. 1, pp. 96-106).

If "full and detailed explanations of all important teachings on these points are readily available" (which would, of course, include everything Brigham had to say on the subject), then why hasn't McConkie admitted in his book what he admitted in his letter to Eugene England? Obviously "*the patriarchal chain binding exalted beings together*" and Adam being the "*father of our spirits*" **are different as night and day**. Is McConkie guilty of a cover-up? Will the next edition of "**Mormon Doctrine**" be as candid as McConkie's letter? True apostles don't "pull the wool" over their reader's eyes, especially in something as important as this (see John 8:44).

On page 3 of the letter, Joseph Smith reportedly taught that God is "omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent." If He is truly "**omnipotent**" or almighty, then He **can** create the spirit of man. Joseph Smith said "... *God never had the power to create the spirit of man at all.*" (**Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith**, p. 354). The Bible presents the truth of the matter in Zechariah 12:1. If God is **omniscient**, then He is all-knowing. The all-knowing God doesn't even know of any other Gods out there (see Isaiah 44:8). But Joseph said "*In the beginning, the head of Gods called a council of the Gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people it.*" (*ibid.*, p. 349). **Did Joseph know more than God knew?** God doesn't even **know** of any other Gods.

Although McConkie talks about God being **omnipresent** (which means that He can be everywhere at the same time), he really denies the meaning of the word in "Mormon Doctrine." Note however, that God says, "**Do not I fill heaven and earth?**" in Jeremiah 23:24 (also see 2 Chronicles 6:18). **He Himself fills heaven and earth**, not just His influence or power.

Mr. Eugene England
February 19, 1981
Page 4

**DO NOT
REPRODUCE**

paragraph: "Will he one day learn something that will destroy the plan of salvation and turn man and the universe into an uncreated nothingness? Will he discover a better plan of salvation than the one he has already given to men in worlds without number? I have been sorely tempted to say at this point that any who so suppose have the intellect of an ant and the understanding of a clod of miry clay in a primordial swamp--but of course I would never say a thing like that." I deliberately deleted the last quoted sentence because it does not come out in print the way it was expressed by voice. It was said in such a tone as to draw laughter from the congregation and is of course, a normal use of hyperbole.

In that same devotional speech I said: "There are those who believe or say they believe that Adam is our father and our God, that he is the father of our spirits and our bodies, and that he is the one we worship." I, of course, indicated the utter absurdity of this doctrine and said it was totally false.

Since then I have received violent reactions from Ogden Kraut and other cultists in which they have expounded upon the views of Brigham Young and others of the early Brethren relative to Adam. They have plain and clear quotations saving all of the things about Adam which I say are false. The quotations are in our literature and form the basis of a worship system followed by many of the cultists who have been excommunicated from the Church. I also received, of course, your material in which you quote from Brigham Young and others of the early Brethren saying that God is progressing in knowledge.

I assume that you were aware of the foregoing quotations when you wrote me in September of 1980. In the October 1980 General Conference, without as yet having read your material, I said the following:

"True religion is found only where men worship the true and living God. False religion always results from the worship of false gods. Eternal life itself, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God, is available to those and those only who know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

"It is all the rage in this modern world to worship false gods of every sort and kind. There are those who bow before idols of wood and stone, and others who list their petitions to icons and images. There are those who worship cows and crocodiles, and others who acclaim Adam or Allah or Buddha as their Supreme Being.

"There are those who apply the names of Deity to some spirit essence that is immaterial, uncreated and unknowable and

February 19, 1981
Page 5

**DO NOT
REPRODUCE**

that fills the immensity of space and is everywhere and nowhere . . . in particular present.

"And there are even those who champion the almost unbelievable theory that God is an Eternal Student enrolled in the University of the Universe where he is busily engaged in learning new truths and amassing new and strange knowledge that he never knew before."

"How belittling it is--it borders on blasphemy--to demean the Lord God Omnipotent by saying he is an idol, or an image, or an animal, or a spirit essence, or that he is ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of all truth."

"It is the first principle of revealed religion to know the nature and kind of being that God is. As for us: 'We know [and testify] that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them.' (D&C 20:17.)

"This great God, the Lord Almighty, is a personage of tabernacle. He 'has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's.' (D&C 130:22.) He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He has all power, knows all things, and, by the power of his Spirit, is in and through all things."

On Tuesday, February 17, 1981, I was the speaker at the BYU Devotional. My subject was "The Three Pillars of Eternity, under which heading I spoke of the creation, the fall and the atonement. With reference to the omnipotence and omniscience of God I said in that talk:

"Who is Elohim? He is God the Eternal Father. He is a glorified and exalted personage. He has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's. In the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name. He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He knows all things and has all power--not simply as pertaining to us or in some prescribed sphere or realm--but in the absolute, eternal, and unlimited sense. In the ultimate sense, he is the Creator. And anything you may have heard to the contrary, whether in the creeds of Christendom or the mouthings of intellectuals who, in their own eyes, know more than the Lord, is false."

Now may I say something for your guidance and enlightenment. 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.

POINTS TO PONDER

Note that McConkie admits on page 4 that there are "plain and clear quotations saying all of the things about Adam which I say are false. The quotations are in our literature..." On page 5, McConkie admits that God knows absolutely all things "not simply as pertaining to us or in some prescribed sphere or realm—but in the absolute, eternal, and unlimited sense." Therefore, when God says He doesn't know of any other God (Isaiah 44:8), He couldn't just mean that in some limited sense.

Page 6 is obviously of great importance. McConkie attempts to maintain the status of Brigham as a true prophet while denying the doctrine he taught. How anyone could truly sustain a prophet who had the wrong God as still being a true prophet involves mental gymnastics that defy logic and are spiritually suicidal.

After declaring that Brigham Young contradicted Brigham Young, McConkie addresses the problem of which Brigham Young we will believe. McConkie's "answer" is to stick with "the expressions that accord with the teachings in the Standard Works." Here McConkie parts company with another Mormon Apostle, Ezra Taft Benson, who declared at B.Y.U. on February 26, 1980 ("Fourteen Fundamentals In Following The Prophets") that "The living prophet is more vital to us than the standard works."

On page 7, McConkie throws justice out the window when he declares that Brigham "...was a great prophet and has gone on to eternal reward.", but then in the same breath states, "If we choose to believe and teach the false portions of his doctrines, we are making an election that will damn us." **So a prophet can teach damnable doctrines and still be a great prophet and have an eternal reward, but the poor devil who believes those damnable doctrines is damned!!** McConkie attempts to have his cake and eat it too, but the discerning reader is going to have a hard time swallowing this kind of thinking.

Pages 8 and 9 reveal McConkie placing the screws on England. He puts the official clamps on the tongue of his target and tightens them down with full "apostolic authority." Dire results are promised if England pursues his errant course. "And those at the head of the Church have the obligation to teach that which is in harmony with the Standard Works. If they err then be silent on the point and leave the event in the hands of the Lord." This stifling of dissenting voices (even in the face of error) is obviously dangerous to the health of any organization, and allows the development of an ecclesiastical power structure that knows little restraint and can easily breed abuses of power and deepening doctrinal darkness. I Peter 5:3 doesn't encourage lording it over the flock, but rather being examples instead. But how do you know if you're really in God's flock or not? Consider this...

J.R. Eugene England
February 19, 1981
Page 6

DO NOT
REPRODUCE

He was guided by the Holy Spirit in his teachings in general. He was a mighty prophet. He led Israel the way the Lord wanted his people led. He built on the foundation laid by the Prophet Joseph. He completed his work and has gone on to eternal exaltation.

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. If this were not so, we would believe one thing when one man was president of the Church and another thing in the days of his successors. Truth is eternal and does not vary. Sometimes even wise and good men fall short in the accurate presentation of what is truth. Sometimes a prophet gives personal views which are not endorsed and approved by the Lord.

Yes, President Young did teach that Adam was the father of the 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.

Yes, Brigham Young did say some things about God progressing in knowledge and understanding, but again, be it known, that Brigham Young taught emphatically and plainly, that God knows all things and has all power meaning in the infinite, eternal and ultimate and absolute sense of the word. Again, the issue is, which Brigham Young shall we believe and the answer is: We will take the one whose statements accord with what God has revealed in the Standard Works.

I think you can give me credit for having a knowledge of the quotations from Brigham Young relative to Adam, and of knowing what he taught under the subject that has become known as the Adam God Theory. President Joseph Fielding Smith said that Brigham Young will have to make his own explanations on the points there involved. I think you can also give me credit for knowing what Brigham Young said about God progressing. And again, that is something he will have to account for. As for me and my house we will have the good sense to choose between the divergent teachings of the same man and come up with those that accord with

February 19, 1981
Page 7

DO NOT
REPRODUCE

what God has set forth in his eternal plan of salvation.

This puts me in mind of Paul's statement: "There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." (1 Cor. 11:19.) I do not know all of the providences of the Lord, but I do know that he permits false doctrine to be taught in and out of the Church and that such teaching is part of the sifting process of mortality. We will be judged by what we believe among other things. If we believe false doctrine, we will be condemned. If that belief is on basic and fundamental things, it will lead us astray and we will lose our souls. This is why Nephi said: "And all those who preach false doctrines, . . . wo, wo, wo be unto them, saith the Lord God Almighty, for they shall be thrust down to hell!" (2 Ne. 28:15.) This clearly means that people who teach false doctrine in the fundamental and basic things will lose their souls. The nature and kind of being that God is, is one of these fundamentals. 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. What he did is not a pattern for any of us. If we choose to believe and teach the false portions of his doctrines, we are making an election that will damn us.

It should be perfectly evident that under our system of church discipline, it would be anticipated that some others besides Brigham Young would pick up some of his statements and echo them. Those who did this, also on other occasions, taught accurately and properly what the true doctrines of the gospel are. I do not get concerned when a good and sound person who, on the over-all, is teaching the truth happens to err on a particular point and say something in conflict with what he has said himself on a previous occasion. We are all mortal. We are all fallible. We all make mistakes. No single individual all the time is in tune with the Holy Spirit, but I do get concerned when some person or group picks out false statements and makes them the basis of their presentation and theology and thus ends up having a false concept of the doctrine, which in reality, was not in the mind of the person whose quotations they are using.

Wise gospel students do not build their philosophies of life on quotations of individuals, even though those quotations come from Presidents of the Church. Wise people anchor their doctrine on the Standard Works. When Section 20 says that God is infinite and eternal, it means just that and so on through all

CONCLUSION

There is one true church on earth. Referred to as the body of Christ in Colossians 1:24, it is made up of all true born-again believers in whatever denomination or group they may be in. Gaining entrance to this church is guaranteed upon receiving Christ (welcoming Him into your life) as your personal Savior. **"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, . . ."** (John 1:12). You need to give up trying to earn right standing with God. Isaiah included himself in this verse (Isaiah 64:6) when he said, . . . **all our righteousness are as filthy rags . . .** Forgiveness isn't found in an organization purporting to be the "one-true-church," or in some man-made system of good works. It is found through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:25). The true gospel is centered in the fact that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead, all according to the scriptures (see I Corinthians 15:1-4). The gospel is not a system of "laws and ordinances" (see the L.D.S. 3rd Article of Faith vs. Galatians 2:21, 3:21, 24).

Where is your hope for eternity focused today? Is it on Jesus Christ (not a spirit-brother-of-Lucifer kind of Jesus who sweated for our sins in Gethsemane)? If you have a personal relationship with the real Jesus (**"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."** -John 17:3), you've got eternal life.

Page 8

DO NOT
REPRODUCE

of the revelations. There is no need to attempt to harmonize conflicting views when some of the views are out of harmony with the Standard Works. This is what life is all about. The Lord is finding out what we will believe in spite of the allurements of the world or the philosophies of man or the seemingly rational and logical explanations that astute people make.

We do not solve our problems by getting a statement from the president of the Church or from someone else on a subject. We have been introduced to the gospel; we have the gift of the Holy Ghost; we have the Standards Works and it is our responsibility to get in tune and understand properly what the Lord has revealed and has had us canonize. The end result of this course of personally and individually pursuing light and truth is to reach that millennial state of which the scriptures say it will no longer be necessary for every man to say to his neighbor "know the Lord," for all shall know him from the greatest to the least. Joseph Smith says this will be by the spirit of revelation.

If it is true, as I am advised, that you speak on this subject of the progression of God at firesides and elsewhere, you should cease to do so. If you give other people copies of the material you sent me, with the quotations it contains, you should cease to do so. It is not in your province to set an example for the Church or to determine what its doctrines shall be. It is axiomatic among us to know that God has given apostles and prophets "for the edifying of the body of Christ," and that their ministry is to see that "we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." (Eph. 4:11-16.) This means, among other things, that it is my province to teach to the Church what the doctrine is. It is your province to do what I say or to remain silent. You do not have a divine commission to correct me or any of the Brethren. The Lord does not operate that way. If I lead the Church astray, that is my responsibility, but the fact still remains that I am the one appointed with all the rest involved so to do. The appointment is not given to the faculty at Brigham Young University or to any of the members of the Church. The Lord's house is a house of order and those who hold the keys are appointed to proclaim the doctrines.

Now you know that this does not mean that individuals should not do research and make discoveries and write articles. What it does mean is that what they write should be faith promoting and where doctrines are concerned, should be in harmony with that which comes from the head of the Church. And those at

February 19, 1981
Page 9

DO NOT
REPRODUCE

the head of the Church have the obligation to teach that which is in harmony with the Standard Works. If they err then be silent on the point and leave the event in the hands of the Lord. Some day all of us will stand before the judgment bar and be accountable for our teachings. And where there have been disagreements, the Lord will judge between us. In the meantime if we want to save our own souls we need to strive with all the power we have to be in harmony with the revelations and not to be teaching or promulgating doctrines that suit our fancy.

I advise you to take my counsel on the matters here involved. If I err, that is my problem; but in your case if you single out some of these things and make them the center of your philosophy, and end up being wrong, you will lose your soul. One of the side effects of preaching contrary to what the Brethren preach is to get a spirit of rebellion growing up in your heart. This sort of thing cankers the soul spiritually. It drives people out of the Church. It weakens their faith. All of us need all of the faith and strength and spiritual stability we can get to maintain our positions in the Church and to work out our salvation.

Now, I think I have said enough in this letter so that if you are receptive and pliable, you will get the message. If you are not, rebellion will well up in your heart. I pray for your well-being. I repeat: the door to my office is open. Perhaps I should tell you what one of the very astute and alert General Authorities said to me when I chanced to mention to him the subject of your letter to me. He said: "Oh dear, haven't we rescued him enough times already."

Now I hope you will ponder and pray and come to a basic understanding of fundamental things and that unless and until you can on all points, you will remain silent on those where differences exist between you and the Brethren. This is the course of safety. I advise you to pursue it. If you do not, perils lie ahead. It is not too often in this day that any of us are told plainly and bluntly what ought to be. I am taking the liberty of so speaking to you at this time, and become thus a witness against you if you do not take the counsel.

I repeat: I have every good wish for you, pray that the Lord will bless you and hope that things will work out properly and well in your life.

Sincerely,

Bruce R. McConkie
Bruce R. McConkie

BRM:vh

Mr. Eugene England
February 19, 1981
Page 10

P.S. I am taking the liberty of sending copies of this response to those to whom you sent your communication.

For More Information or If You Have Questions, Please Write:
Wally Tope, P.O. Box 1100, La Cañada Flintridge, CA 91011 U.S.A.