

UPDATE

CHURCH CELEBRATES PRIESTHOOD REVELATION ANNIVERSARY—BUT KEEPS IT LOW KEY

WOULD BRIGHAM YOUNG be rolling in his grave or adding his applause? A century and a quarter after his death, a group of Saints, many of African-American descent, met in the tabernacle Brother Brigham built to celebrate the priesthood and temple blessings they now enjoy. The 8 June gathering, titled “The Long-Promised Day,” was part of the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of what the Church’s website <lds.org> termed “the revelation on the priesthood”—the momentous



Gladys Knight conducts the Saints Unified Voices choir

event that lifted the ban on priesthood and temple blessings for black Latter-day Saints.

In the course of the two-and-a-half-hour evening, more than five thousand people tapped their toes and clapped

their hands as LDS convert and world-renowned singer Gladys Knight conducted “Saints Unified Voices,” a hundred-voice choir she founded. They sang soulful arrangements of Mormon hymnbook favorites including “Because I Have Been Given Much,” “I Need Thee Every Hour,” and “The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning”; classic Christian spirituals such as “Blessed Assurance”; a traditional Hawaiian song recounting the New Testament parable of the rich man, “Iesu Me Kanaka Waiwai”; and even a portion of Bill Withers’s rock and roll classic, “Lean on Me.”

During her remarks that evening, Knight said, “As I told President Hinckley, I do love the music of this church, I just think that some of it could use a little zip!” She later added that she looked “forward to the time music of other cultures will be accepted without criticism or judgment—maybe even added to the [LDS] hymnbook.” These and many of her other remarks evoked enthusiastic applause from the audience.

In addition to Knight and Saints Unified Voices, the Genesis choir and the Salt Lake-based Divine Heritage choir also participated in the evening’s musical celebrations. Following the music, Elder Merrill J. Bateman, former BYU president and now the General Authority advisor to the Genesis Group, the official Church support and outreach group for African-American Latter-day Saints, spoke about his experiences in West Africa working with struggling Saints prior to the 1978 revelation. He expressed joy over the growth and successes there since. In addressing reasons for the priesthood policy and, for many, the slow coming of “the long-promised day” when it would end, Elder Bateman suggested, “We do not know why it took so long, but we do know that salvation is for all God’s children. There are no strangers, foreigners or

second-class citizens in the kingdom of God.”

In addition to the Tabernacle celebration, the play *I Am Jane*, which tells the story of early black pioneer Jane Manning James, was staged in the LDS Regional Center in Bountiful, Utah.

The anniversary of the priesthood revelation received attention from all major Utah newspapers, and news service stories were picked up by many national papers. The 31 May issue of the *Church News* featured the anniversary on its cover and in a ten-page section that ranged from descriptions by Presidents Spencer W. Kimball and Gordon B. Hinckley about the receipt of the revelation itself, to features on the growth of the Church in Brazil, the Caribbean, and Africa, to short reflections from black Latter-day Saints sharing their conversion stories and feelings about the priesthood and Church membership.

Despite these celebratory events and the *Church News* coverage, overall, the Church kept the marking of the anniversary relatively low key. In contrast with the recent Spanish-language devotional, held in the Conference Center and attended by three apostles, the celebration of the revelation on priesthood was held in the smaller Tabernacle and was officially the June meeting of the Genesis Group, with the evening’s pro-

WHY THE PRIESTHOOD BAN?

Pronouncements by Church leaders and publications



“[A] curse [was] pronounced upon [the Black] race—that they should be the ‘servant of servants.’”

—Brigham Young, 1859



“I believe that conditions in this life are influenced and fixed by the degree of faithfulness . . . in the pre-existent state.”

—B.H. Roberts, 1895



“Let it suffice that the negro is barred from the Priesthood and the reason some day we may understand.”

—Joseph Fielding Smith, 1924



“It . . . grows out of [their] lack of spiritual valiance in their first estate.”

Bruce R. McConkie, 1958



“Negroes [are] not yet to receive the priesthood, for reasons which we believe are known to God, but which He has not made fully known to man.”

—The First Presidency, 1969



“The scriptural basis for this policy is Abraham 1:21-27.”

—The Doctrine and Covenants Student Manual, 1981



“The reasons for these restrictions have not been revealed.”

—Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 1992

ceedings conducted by its president, Darius Gray. A similar downplaying of the anniversary is evident in LDS publications: whereas the *Church News*, with a relatively small print run, contains the coverage described above, the June issue of the *Ensign*, which in its international editions reaches millions of members, does not mention the anniversary.

Except for the euphemistic Official Declaration 2 included in an appendix of the Doctrine and Covenants, and an often-quoted talk by Elder Bruce R. McConkie in the book *Priesthood*, virtually no post-1978 Church publications mention the Church's previous priesthood policy. And, as the *Church News* reports, 69 percent of current Church members joined the Church since the revelation was received. As a result, many Latter-day Saints do not even know there was ever a ban.

LDS EFFORTS BRING RELIEF TO IRAQ, ETHIOPIA

TWO LDS-SPONSORED projects are bringing relief to Iraq and Ethiopia. In California, some three hundred volunteers from both Muslim and LDS communities gathered in a Pasadena stake center cultural hall and assembled some ten thousand family hygiene kits for shipment to war-torn Iraq. The kits, which include hand soap, towels, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and combs, will be distributed by Nour International Aid and Mercy Corps International, two relief groups already on the ground in Iraq.



Another humanitarian project is bringing relief to hunger-ravished Ethiopia. At the request of the Ethiopian government, the Church sent a cargo plane containing an emergency shipment of eighty thousand pounds of Atmit, an Ethiopian por-

ridge mix based on a centuries-old recipe. An additional two hundred tons of Atmit is in production and will be shipped to Ethiopia in ocean-bound containers.

Since 1985, the Church has mounted more than 144 major disaster relief projects benefiting hundreds of thousands of people in 150 nations around the globe.

CHURCH TAKES PRECAUTIONS AGAINST SARS

AS A PRECAUTION against the deadly virus SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), LDS leaders announced they won't send missionaries to Hong Kong until they feel assured SARS has been contained and it will not pose an additional health risk. "The safety and well-being of missionaries is of highest priority and is being monitored carefully," says a 4 April statement, "particularly in those areas where incidents of SARS have been reported."

No missionaries have so far been affected by SARS. Orem resident and BYU graduate James Salisbury, 52, was infected with the mysterious disease in Shenzhen, China, where he had been working as an English teacher. Salisbury later died.

Thirteen BYU students who were planning to teach English in China as part of the International Languages Program saw the program canceled and will not make the trip.

SALT LAKE CITY COUNCIL APPROVES SHAKY PLAN FOR LDS PLAZA

THE SALT LAKE City Council has approved a plan to solve the long-standing controversy surrounding the Main Street Plaza in downtown Salt Lake City, but the ACLU's intent to sue could still stymie the deal.

A 10 June decision by the council calls for eliminating the city's easement over the LDS-owned plaza on Main Street. In exchange, the LDS Church would help the city build a community center on the underserved west side and, possibly, help

All-seeing Eye

TOPPED BY AN ANGEL

AN ANGEL MORONI statue was placed 12 May atop the Provo Temple. Even though safety and crowd-control concerns necessitated the event be carried out with no official publicity, 250 people gathered by the temple as a crane hoisted the thirteen-foot, three-hundred-pound, gold leaf statue atop the temple spire. Provo is one of three temples (Frieberg Germany and Ogden Utah are the others) who have or will have the Angel Moroni added years after their dedication. (See SUNSTONE, Oct. 2002, 78).



expand the neighboring Sorenson Multi-Cultural Center. However, the plan allows for a two-month window during which the city or the Church could back out if a new lawsuit erupts.

The current plan to exchange the land for the easement is complicated by a 23 June U.S. Supreme Court decision declining to hear the case. Last October, the Church appealed to the nation's highest court the federal court ruling declaring that as long as the city has an easement, free speech rights for pedestrians still need to be honored. It was this ruling that had cleared the way for street preachers and LDS bashers to use the plaza for their own ends (see SUNSTONE, Dec. 2002, 70–72).

Dani Eyer, executive director of the ACLU Utah Chapter, says the ACLU is studying the possibility of suing again. "The question will be, is the underlying motivation [of the city] to further accommodate discrimination by the LDS Church," Eyer told the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

LDS Church attorney Von Keetch expressed disappointment over the Supreme Court's decision not to hear the case. He hopes, along with city mayor Rocky Anderson, that the ACLU will not file another suit. But if the ACLU sues, "we'll be there to aggressively defend our property rights," says Keetch.

In 1999, the LDS Church bought a block-long portion of Main Street for \$8.1 million, built a pedestrian plaza, and imposed speech and behavior restrictions on the property; in 2000, the ACLU sued the city over the free speech restrictions. Last October, a federal court declared the restrictions unconstitutional.

PRES. HINCKLEY DEDICATES BUILDINGS IN KIRTLAND

IN 1841, JOSEPH Smith prophesied that the Lord will "build up Kirtland" (D&C 124:83). This prophecy seemed fulfilled 17–18 May as President Gordon B. Hinckley toured the historic town and dedicated six facilities recently constructed or renovated by the Church with assistance from the Mormon Historic Sites Foundation.



President Hinckley during visit to Kirtland to dedicate historic sites

The new or restored structures serve a missionary purpose and suggest a symbolic vindication for the Church in an area long ago marked by both external persecution and internal schism. "Once persecuted and driven, [Church members] are now respected and admired," said President Hinckley in his

dedicatory prayer. "A great and glorious miracle has come to pass." The dedicatory service was broadcast via satellite to meetinghouses across Ohio.

The structures include a visitors center and replicas of the one-room schoolhouse, an ashery, a sawmill, the John Johnson

Inn, and the Newel and Elizabeth Whitney home. The largest and most prominent of the facilities is the visitors center, designed in the shape of a grist mill. In the center's 120-seat theater, a newly produced movie depicts Kirtland's history.

President Hinckley's visit included a tour of the Kirtland Temple, which is owned and operated by the Community of

MORMONS IN KIRTLAND

A brief chronology

NOVEMBER 1830: Parley P. Pratt and three other missionaries stop in Kirtland on their way to preach to the Lamanites. They convert a Campbellite congregation which includes Sidney Rigdon, Newel K. Whitney, and Frederick G. Williams. In a few months, Kirtland becomes the largest branch in the Church.

JANUARY 1831: The Saints are commanded to assemble in Ohio (D&C 39:15). Joseph and Emma move to Kirtland.

MAY 1833: Plans are laid to build the Kirtland Temple.

27 MARCH 1836: At a cost of \$60,000, the Kirtland Temple is completed and dedicated (see D&C 109).

SPRING 1837: The Kirtland Safety Society fails; several apostles blame the Prophet for their losses. By June, Joseph is engulfed by critics, plaintiffs, and debtors.

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1837: Disgruntled members form the Church of Christ.

1838: In the midst of arrests, lawsuits, and dissension, Joseph and most of his followers leave Kirtland.

1841: Joseph prophesies that the Lord will "build up Kirtland" (D&C 124:83).

1880: The RLDS Church (known today as the Community of Christ) obtains clear legal title to the Temple building.

1930: The RLDS Church conducts centennial celebrations in the Kirtland Temple.

1977: Missionaries from the Utah-based Church return to Kirtland.

1979: While breaking ground for a new LDS chapel, Ezra Taft Benson declares that Joseph Smith's "prophecy [about the rebuilding of Kirtland] is fulfilled today."

16 OCTOBER 1983: The Kirtland Ohio Stake is reorganized 145 years after being disbanded.

1984: The Church restores the Newel K. Whitney store.

24 JULY 1992: The Tabernacle Choir sings in the Kirtland Temple.

17 APRIL 2000: The Church announces plans to restore a historic village around the Whitney store.

SOURCES

Church Almanac; Encyclopedia of Latter-Day Saint History; An Illustrated History of the Kirtland Temple, by Roger D. Launius; The Kirtland Temple, by Roger D. Launius; The First Mormon Temple, by Elwin C. Robison

Celluloid Watch



Coming soon to a theatre near you?

PROPHETIC VOICES. A *Deseret News* story has just reported that Hollywood dreamboat Val Kilmer has agreed in principle to play the leading role in Richard Dutcher's much anticipated film on the life of the prophet Joseph Smith. If this plan comes to fruition, it wouldn't be Kilmer's first prophetic role, as he is the voices of both God and Moses in the 1998 animated movie *The Prince of Egypt*.

As if these qualifications are not enough, Kilmer also stars in the 1997 film, *The Saint*.

PROVO'S PRIDE AND PREJUDICE. Are the mores of Provo, Utah, as conservative as those of a parochial, eighteenth-century English town? An answer will come with the release of Jason Faller's *Pride and Prejudice*, a film version of Jane Austen's classic in which the

Bennet sisters are replaced by five BYU roommates.

Producer Faller says his film fits as part of a new genre he dubs Mollywood (after the stereotypical, sweet-spirited "Molly Mormon")—a Mormon equivalent to chick flicks, first charted by the recent film version of Jack Weyland's novel, *Charly*. "It's not an inside Mormon joke," Fuller told the *Deseret News*. "It has a market."

Pride and Prejudice will feature cameo appearances by Carmen Rasmussen, the LDS teen from Bountiful, Utah, who recently competed in Fox television's immensely popular *American Idol*, as well as participants in the Miss Utah pageant and two LDS women who have appeared in recent installments of ABC's *The Bachelor*.

Christ, formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The washing and anointing ceremonies performed in the Kirtland Temple are considered a precursor to the more elaborate endowment ceremony Joseph Smith established in Nauvoo.

Between 1831 and 1837, Church activity was centered in Kirtland and surrounding areas, but in early 1838, Joseph Smith and his followers moved to Missouri. Kirtland is located twenty-two miles east of Cleveland and has a population of 6,600 people.

MHA GATHERS IN KIRTLAND

JUST A WEEK after the dedications of these new and restored sites, more than 550 historians and LDS history enthusiasts gathered near Kirtland for the thirty-eighth annual Mormon History Association Conference held 22–25 May at the Quail Hollow resort in Painesville, Ohio. Attendance was, according to MHA co-executive director Larry King, "the largest in recent years." And one that offered a wide variety of experiences. In addition to regular conference sessions, buses regularly shuttled attendees to and from Kirtland for events ranging from pre-conference tours to a full afternoon of papers and presentations at various Kirtland historic sites.

The conference opened and closed with special gatherings in the Kirtland Temple, and those lucky enough to procure tickets to these intimate meetings (the temple holds only about three hundred people), widely agreed these sessions were among the conference's best. President W. Grant McMurray of the Community of Christ (formerly the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) opened the conference with a very forthright reflection on the importance, yet changing understanding, of history in the Community of Christ. Whereas the RLDS tradition tied a great deal of its self-understanding to

its history—its origins as a break-off, rejecting polygamy and most Nauvoo-period theological developments—the Community of Christ is learning to appreciate its heritage and infuse its history and symbols with fresh meanings that help move and energize its prophetic message of "peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Seventy gave a keynote address on the meaning of Kirtland for Latter-day Saints today. Randall Balmer, professor of religion at Columbia University used examples from Brigham Young's correspondence with his sons to illustrate insights about the way faith is passed on from generation to generation. And 2003 MHA president Larry Foster gave his presidential address on his personal journey (as a non-Mormon) with LDS history. Other notable sessions dealt with the forms Joseph Smith's message and legacy might take in the twenty-first century, ongoing Mountain Meadows Massacre research, the progress of the "Papers of Joseph Smith" project, and the place of African-Americans in today's Mormonism.

Eighty people also took advantage of a special two-day post-conference bus tour to Mormon history sites in upstate New York and Eastern Canada. Next year's conference is scheduled to take place 20–23 May in Provo, Utah. For more information, visit <www.mhahome.org>.



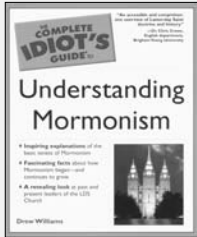
President W. Grant McMurray

CHOIR CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY, ANNOUNCES TOUR

ON THE SEVENTY-FIFTH anniversary of "Music and the Spoken Word," the Mormon Tabernacle Choir has announced its most ambitious summer tour to date, including eleven

Whoso readeth. . .

CRASH COURSE IN MORMONOLOGY. Hot off the press, Drew Williams's *Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Mormonism* (313 pages, \$18.95) is now in the bookstores. The guide is well-organized, entertaining, and easy to read. Kudos to Williams for not dodging sensitive topics such as polygamy (163–170), blacks and the priesthood (189–190, 282), and temple garments (262).

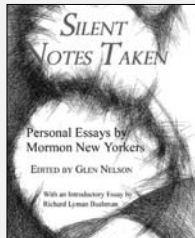


Unfortunately, the guide often seems as if it has been ghost-written by the Church's correlation department. Williams claims that "less than 2 percent of the people in the Church actually practiced plural marriage" (165), affirms that "with the exception of Mormonism, all major Christian religions can be traced to the Catholic Church" (84), and fails to explain Joseph Smith's complex role in his own demise (139–141).

Moreover, Williams writes that Utah polygamists "are not Latter-day Saints" (169), thus declining to see Mormonism as a diverse cultural phenomenon and excluding thousands of LDS people who subscribe to a different Mormon tradition.

URBAN VOICES. With an introduction by LDS historian Richard L. Bushman, a group of Eastern Saints has just published *Silent Notes Taken*, a compilation of essays, stories, and etchings documenting contemporary urban Mormon life in New York City.

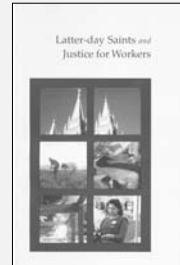
According to publisher Kent S. Larsen, the authors are "a very urban group, not one that lives in the suburbs." "We represent a voice that's not heard in the Mormon publishing world," says Larsen, "[the voice] of those outside the Mormon West."



Silent Notes Taken is published by Mormon Arts and

Letters, a book publisher recently established in New York. Future publishing projects include art prints by well-known New York LDS artists and a compilation of compositions by renowned LDS composers. To read excerpts, or for further information, visit <www.silentnotestaken.com>.

COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOR. . . A new booklet, *Latter-day Saints and Justice for Workers*, has been produced by the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, which mobilizes faith communities in support of better conditions for workers. Part of a series of educational materials on labor-related teachings of different faiths, the eight-page booklet quotes LDS scripture and modern prophets to suggest that a "firm and persistent contention for the right of labor" (Joseph F Smith) can help the poor become self-reliant and secure the temporal well-being of families. The text of the new booklet is available online at the website of Mormons for Equality and Social Justice, which helped create the booklet: <www.mesj.org>.



PRESERVING HOOP DREAMS. After having studied the life of Hispanic, black, and polygamist Mormons, BYU researcher Jessie L. Embry is ready to tackle a new project: the history of LDS All-Church events. Between 1922 and 1970, the All-Church competitions were an important part of Mormon culture, including not only basketball, but also softball, tennis, and golf tournaments, as well as dance and speech festivals.

Embry is inviting people who have been involved in these All-Church events or Church sports in general to share their stories through oral history interviews, manuscripts, autobiographies, or by email. She can be contacted by phone at (801) 422-7585 or by email at <jle3@email.byu.edu>.

major concerts from Toronto to Virginia and from Michigan to New York City.

The highlight of the tour will be a Fourth of July concert with the Boston Pops—a first for the choir. "We're just going to knock their socks off," says choir president Mac Christensen, referring to plans for the patriotic concert.



Mormon Tabernacle Choir goes on the road again

After recording more than 150 million albums for labels such as CBS Records, Columbia, and Sony, the choir now produces CDs under its own recording label.

In a related story, the Utah-based Faith Centered Music Association has announced that Jerold D. Ottley will be honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Before his 1999 re-

irement, Ottley had served for twenty-five years as Mormon Tabernacle Choir director.

HATCH'S GOD IS LOVE—AND SOMETIMES REVENGE

LDS SENATOR AND inspirational song writer Orrin Hatch is zapping mad about copyright violations. According to an Associated Press story, the writer of songs such as "My God Is Love" favors developing "zapware" technology to remotely destroy the computers of people who illegally download music from the Internet.

"I'm interested [in developing such technology]," said Hatch during a hearing on copyright abuses. According to Hatch, damaging someone's computer "may be the only way you can teach somebody about copyrights."

As it turns out, revenge on copyright violators could be too

Solar Flares

EFFORT TO STOP "PERVERSION" GOES BELLY UP. The Salt Lake County Council unanimously approved a \$2,000 grant for the Kismet Dance Company just two weeks after BYU music instructor Lloyd Miller questioned the grant by calling belly dancing a "perversion" of Middle Eastern culture. In remarks to the council, Miller stated belly dancing "is a sexually oriented business disguised as art" and declared it isn't practiced in the Middle East.

Miller's tactics seem to have backfired, as scholars raised their voices in defending the legitimacy of belly dancing and advised the council to approve the grant without further delay. Kismet Dance Company founder Yasamina Roque says since the controversy began, she has been flooded with emails from supporters. "One lady was so outraged that she sent me a \$1,000 check," says Roque.

The Kismet Dance Company has performed in many Utah venues, including BYU's Marriott Center.

STICK THIS KIND OF "CONCERN" IN YOUR EAR. Elsa Hatch has attended the American Fork Utah First Ward faith-

fully for sixty plus years—that is, until she was kicked out 18 May. Ward executive secretary Charles Gray pulled Hatch aside from Sunday School and told her not to come back until she can quiet her squeaking hearing aids. This embarrassed the ninety-four-year-old woman to tears, but Gray was unfazed. In case she did not get the message on her own, Gray also called Hatch's daughter and told her to keep her mom out of church until she gets new aids or has her current ones repaired.

Hatch's daughter complained to the stake president, who in turn called the bishop, Ross Hunter, who defended his secretary's actions. Upset, Hatch's granddaughter called Church headquarters, where the person handling the call instructed her to write a letter to her area authority.

Pursuing the story, the *Salt Lake Tribune* contacted Gray who claimed he removed Hatch because he was "concerned" she wasn't getting anything out of the meetings. He then promised he would personally see that she gets better hearing aids.

The *Tribune's* Paul Rolly and JoAnn Jacobsen-Wells surmise that perhaps ward leaders didn't want Hatch's hearing aids to interfere with their enjoying the sounds of screaming kids during worship.

harsh a proposition—even for Hatch himself. Shortly after Hatch made his comments, a Houston systems administrator discovered the Utah senator's own site at <www.hatch.senate.org> was in breach of terms and conditions in the way it used some copyrighted software. Hatch mobilized quickly to buy the proper license.

Since Hatch teamed up with LDS composer Janice Kapp Perry in 1997, he has earned \$65,986 in songwriting royalties. Those interested in listening to Hatch's music the legal way may download samples at <www.hatchmusic.com>.

MORMON ACTIVISTS RECEIVE NATIONAL AWARD

FOR THEIR WORK educating people about homosexuality, Gary and Millie Watts will receive the Virginia Uribe Award for



Creative Leadership Award-winners
Gary and Millie Watts

Creative Leadership in Human Rights. The distinction is one of thirteen awards given annually by the National Education Association.

The parents of a gay son and a lesbian daughter, the Wattses co-chair Family Fellowship, a Mormon organization whose mission is to support families with homosexual members.

Information about Family Fellowship is available at <www.ldsfamilyfellowship.org>.

WORD BAZAAR

KEEP TABS ON MORMON LITERATURE

For those interested in Mormon fiction, film, drama, memoir, and poetry, *IRREANTUM* magazine publishes original creative works, literary news, reviews, interviews, essays, and more. For a sample copy, send \$6 to:

The Association for Mormon Letters (AML)
P.O. Box 51364,
Provo, UT 84605.

For more information about the AML, visit www.aml-online.org or contact us at irreantum2@cs.com.

BOOK NOTICES

NEW BOOK! *A Stranger in Zion: A Christian's Journey through Utah Mormonism* is the story of one woman's experiences of conversion and subsequent move to Utah—how she received her call into the fold of Mormonism, and how she was called out of the Church. The book explores the dichotomies of Mormon theology and dogma; societal pressures associated with living in Utah; how Mormonism was responsible for her returning to her religious roots. \$19.95 + \$5 shipping. Contact Clare Goldsberry, 4401 E. Willow Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85032, (602) 996-6499; <clarewrite@aol.com>

Adam—God by Craig L. Tholson. Most complete treatment of the Adam—God doctrine to be published in this dispensation. Hardbound. Order from: Publishment, P.O. Box 440507, Aurora, CO 80044-0507. \$30, includes shipping.

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