

CHAPTER TWELVE

SALVATION OF LITTLE CHILDREN:
COMFORTING DOCTRINE RESTORED

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One of the greatest blessings of all mortality is having a body that can produce children. A desire of most men and women is to bring forth young ones, to raise up their own, basking in the warmth of the unique love shared between parents and child. From time to time, however, tragedy strikes. A little child is lost to death, and grief-stricken parents plead, "Where is my baby? Who is taking care of her? Will I ever be permitted to see my little one again?" Restored truth reveals comforting answers.

Unfortunately, many saddened parents, confounded by false doctrine about the fate of children after death, fear that their children are condemned by tradition-bound philosophies of men that provide no hope of heaven for children taken by early death. Such dark teachings cannot be part of Heavenly Father's great plan of happiness. They leave the grieving parents as cold as the tomb itself. Such was the case of Louise Graehl.

Louise and George Graehl, who were not yet members of the Church, married in 1844 and operated a confectionary store in Geneva, Switzerland. Louise wrote: "Ten years had passed since our marriage when we lost a sweet little girl, Emma, just fifteen months old. At the funeral I had a visit from the minister of the [church] in which we lived and another minister of the Christian Church, who

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came to comfort us, but they could not tell me if my sweet baby was saved, for *they said there was no provision in the Bible for the salvation of children*, but that we may hope that the Lord would take care of them. This time I felt indignant at their speech for in my heart I was sure that my little angel was all right and that those ministers knew nothing."¹

The Prophet Joseph Smith and his beloved wife, Emma, suffered through similar experiences. The couple gave birth to nine children and adopted the infant twins of John and Julia Murdock after Julia died during childbirth. Six of the Smith's children suffered infant death.² The couple's hearts must have nearly burst. What could be more difficult for a mother and father? In the face of these tragic events, traditional religions of their day could not balm the wounded heart but instead deepened the wound. False doctrines of annihilation, original sin, and infant baptism prevailed.

ANNIHILATION, ORIGINAL SIN, AND INFANT BAPTISM

To be annihilated is "the act of reducing to nothing, or nonexistence . . . so that the name can no longer be applied to it."³ According to a theological commentary published in 1830, annihilation is "the act of reducing any created being into nothing. . . . It requires the infinite power of God to effect it."⁴ Annihilation doctrine finds its roots in an incomplete interpretation of the biblical passage "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Many other scriptures sustain that truth (see Mark 16:16; Matthew 3:15; Luke 7:30; 2 Nephi 31:4–11). The philosophies of men allege that *everyone* born to man must be baptized. Their logic follows that when a child is born and dies without having been baptized, the gates of heaven slam shut. This was the message of the ministering religious leaders to Louise Graehl at the death of her little Emma. In this view, the unbaptized, irrespective of age, are eternally expelled from the presence of Heavenly Father, and they may be subjected to something worse—annihilation.

The belief was controversial. To believe in annihilation one must also uphold the theory of creation *ex nihilo*—to create something out of nothing—which Reverend Baden Powell of Oxford University taught "is not a doctrine of scripture."⁵ Conventional theology held

that someone who was not baptized was annihilated or returned to the nothing from which God created him.

Joseph Smith explained away ex nihilo theory. He revealed that “man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be” (D&C 93:29). Annihilation doctrine is preceded by, and predicated upon, the widely accepted doctrine of original sin—a major contributor to the suggestion that unbaptized children are lost for eternity.

Original sin philosophy is a painful and condemning fiery dart in the quiver of most Christian religions. It is one that President Joseph Fielding Smith called “as *damnable a doctrine* as was ever taught among the children of men, for little children are not tainted with sin.”⁶ Original sin doctrine proposes that because of the transgression of Adam and Eve, babies are born wounded and scarred with the sins of their first parents, whose sins exclude them from attaining salvation.

“Original sin,” according to Catholic theology, is “the hereditary stain with which we are born on account of our origin or descent from Adam,” “the privation of sanctifying grace in consequence of the sin of Adam,” and “the privation of justice that each child contracts at its conception.”⁷ Further, “those who die in original sin, without ever having contracted any *actual sin*, are deprived of the happiness of heaven.”⁸ Protestant doctrine agrees.

John Calvin wrote that sin is inherited. “We believe that all the posterity of Adam is in bondage to original sin, which is a hereditary evil.”⁹ One religion applied the doctrine to a universal scale: “The Church of England, for instance, teaches that original sin ‘is the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is ingendered of the offspring of *Adam*; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God’s wrath and condemnation.’”¹⁰

Judaism also accepts inherited sin doctrine, but prescribes an antidote. In some Jewish sects, the rite of “circumcision [provides] a means of escaping damnation”¹¹ from hereditary sin.¹² Coupled together, the tenets of annihilation and original sin beget a troubling and controversial doctrine, a practice that purports to be the cure-all

for original sin and a sure protection from annihilation. The idea of infant baptism undermines Heavenly Father's plan of salvation by placing restrictive boundaries on the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ.

For centuries, babies have been baptized in an effort to save them from the effect of original sin. William H. W. Fanning explains the position of the Roman Catholic Church. "Christ makes no exception to this law [baptism] and it is therefore general in its application, embracing both adults and infants. . . . St. Augustine (III, *De Anima*) says: 'If you wish to be a Catholic, do not believe, nor say, nor teach, that infants who die before baptism can obtain the remission of original sin.'"¹³ Most religions of Joseph Smith's day agreed that when a child died without baptism, it was doomed. The unsettling teachings that disheartened Louise Graehl in 1854 continued into the twentieth century, when Joseph Fielding Smith served as a missionary. He said:

I remember when I was in the mission field in England, there was an American family there. . . . One evening as we sat in their home, the man's wife turned to me and said: "Elder Smith, I want to ask you a question." Before she could ask her question, she began to cry. I did not know what the matter was. She sobbed, and when she had composed herself enough to ask the question, she told me this story:

When they went over to England, they had the misfortune of losing a little baby. They were attending the Church of England. They went to the minister and wanted to have that baby laid away with a Christian burial, as they had been attending the church. The minister said to her: "We can't give your child a Christian burial because it was not christened. Your baby is lost." That was a rather blunt way to put it, but that is the way she told the story; and that woman's heart had been aching and aching for two or three years. So she asked the question of me: "*Is my baby lost? Will I never see it again?*"¹⁴

Sister Graehl, along with the good sister whom Elder Smith met and perhaps millions of other mothers and fathers of deceased children, kneel in need of comfort. They need the sure comfort that only the plan of happiness can provide.

Truth restored to Joseph Smith holds that every mortal inherits

seeds of mortality as a result of the Fall (see 2 Nephi 2:21). Every one of Heavenly Father's spirit children departs from His presence some time between conception and mortal birth (see Abraham 3:22–23; D&C 138:55–56; D&C 93:29). Each life experience will include temptation, pain, illness, trials, and tribulations (see 1 Nephi 12:17; Alma 7:11; Ether 12:6). Within a lifetime, each mortal being will violate a law of heaven or earth (see Alma 12:14). Eventually, all men will die (see 2 Nephi 9:6). Because of the original sin of Adam, all mankind experience both the pangs and the blessings of mortality (see Moses 5:1, 10–11). This, however, is not the “damnable doctrine” to which President Smith referred. His reference is to the false precept that each child born to man is sullied by the sin of Adam. The Prophet taught, “We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression” (Articles of Faith 1:2). Thankfully, the heavens are open (see Joseph Smith—History 1:17). The Savior restored one of heaven's most soothing doctrines to His prophet of the dispensation of the fulness of times—the comforting doctrine of the salvation of little children.

THE SALVATION OF CHILDREN TAUGHT BY THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Prophet Joseph and Emma Smith were no strangers to the grief of laying children in the grave. They lost five of their own flesh and one adopted son to early death. One can only imagine the relief the Smiths must have felt as they read from the Book of Mormon the restored words of an angel who spoke to King Benjamin. The angel taught the king about the certainty of the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Then he applied this saving doctrine to little children: “His blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam. . . . And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins. . . . For behold he judgeth, and his judgment is just; and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy. . . . [They are saved] in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:11–18).

What a magnificent revelation! Restored doctrine, new to Joseph Smith, was revealed to the world. Three important doctrines taught

by King Benjamin directly oppose the false doctrines of original sin, infant baptism, and annihilation.

First, because of the Atonement, no baptism is required to remit any effect Adam's transgression could possibly have on his progeny. The Atonement covers all sins of the repentant, and Adam certainly was repentant (see Moses 5:4–9). Parents can be assured that when a child dies, he or she is sanctified by the Atonement. The little one will not perish. Truth revealed to the world by King Benjamin through the Prophet Joseph is that there is no original sin in effect.

Second, Joseph Smith directly struck down the devilish but prevalent doctrine that infants are not redeemable without baptism. In addition, the doctrine of the age of accountability is foreshadowed. "If it were *possible* that little children could sin," spoke the angel, the Atonement covers the sin (Mosiah 3:16; emphasis added). Since the Atonement cancels out original sin, and because children *cannot* sin, infant baptism is unnecessary. In fact, the Prophet additionally taught, "The doctrine of baptizing children, or sprinkling them, or they must welter in hell, is a doctrine not true, not supported in Holy Writ, and is not consistent with the character of God. All children are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and the moment that children leave this world, they are taken to the bosom of Abraham."¹⁵ This stands alone as doctrine unique to the Restoration. In an earlier revelation, Joseph instructed further, "Little children are holy, being sanctified through the atonement of Jesus Christ" (D&C 74:7). He taught that there is simply no accountability assigned to children because of the atoning sacrifice of the Savior. Therefore, infant baptism is not a ritual recognized by heaven.

Finally, the restored doctrine destroys the frightening theory of annihilation. "The infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy" (Mosiah 3:18) because of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. If there is no original sin, there is no need for infant baptism, and annihilation is annihilated. The Book of Mormon does not stop there.

The ancient prophet Abinadi stood before wicked King Noah. He testified of the Redeemer and of the first resurrection, or the resurrection of the just. These are they who will be exalted, or who will receive eternal life, which is living with God. Abinadi stated simply, "Little children also have eternal life" (Mosiah 15:25). Even though Book of Mormon people had the words of King Benjamin and

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Abinadi available to them, it appears that some disputed about infant baptism. Joseph Smith found supporting evidence in the last of the plates of gold, “from which fact we infer that disputation upon this subject had arisen among the Nephites.”¹⁶ The prophet Mormon wrote on this subject at great length to his son Moroni.

There have been disputations among you concerning the baptism of your little children.

And now, my son, I desire that ye should labor diligently, that this gross error should be removed from among you. . . .

Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. . . . Little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them; and the law of circumcision is done away in me. . . .

I know that it is solemn mockery before God, that ye should baptize little children. . . .

And their little children need no repentance, neither baptism. . . .

But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world; . . . they are all alike and partakers of salvation. . . . Little children cannot repent; wherefore, it is awful wickedness to deny the pure mercies of God unto them, for they are all alive in him because of his mercy.

And he that saith that little children need baptism denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption. . . .

For behold that all little children are alive in Christ, and also all they that are without the law. For the power of redemption cometh on all them that have no law; wherefore, he that is not condemned, or he that is under no condemnation, cannot repent; and unto such baptism availeth nothing—

But it is mockery before God, denying the mercies of Christ, and the power of his Holy Spirit, and putting trust in dead works. (Moroni 8:5–6, 8–9, 11–12, 17, 19–20, 22–23)

True doctrine was now restored. The words of Mormon are consistent with those of King Benjamin. We learn that little children are not capable of committing sin (8:8); that original sin is removed through the atoning sacrifice (8:8); that children should be baptized

when they are accountable for their actions (8:10); that all little children are alive in Christ (8:12); and that infant baptism is a solemn mockery before God and denies the tender mercies of Christ (8:23).

Having translated the Book of Mormon, the Prophet went to work on restoring lost scripture in the Bible. Abraham, like Mormon, fought against the practice of infant baptism. Furthermore, he knew the age of accountability.

THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE BIBLE

The Lord told Abraham, “My people have gone astray from my precepts, and have not kept mine ordinances, which I gave unto their fathers.” They were not observing the law of baptism and had “taken unto themselves the washing of children, and the blood of sprinkling.” Finally, they believed that “the blood of the righteous Abel was shed for sins,” as though Abel were the Messiah (see Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 17:3–7).

After Jehovah bound Abraham to Him by covenant, He revealed that “children are not accountable before me until they are eight years old” (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 17:11). The age of accountability and the age for children to be baptized was now deeply rooted in the mind and heart of the Prophet of the Restoration. Restored doctrine flowered into official Church doctrine when he taught the Saints that “parents [who] have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when *eight years old*, the sin be upon the heads of the parents” (D&C 68:25; emphasis added; see also 18:42 and 20:71 and Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 17).¹⁷

TEACHINGS FROM THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

For at least 3,800 years the Lord has spoken directly to man about the fate of children after death. He spoke to Abraham in about 2000 B.C., having previously spoken to his fathers before him. He taught King Benjamin about this doctrine in 124 B.C. Between A.D. 400 and 421, He spoke to the prophet Mormon. On September 26, 1830, the resurrected Christ again revealed the correct doctrine of the

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salvation of little children through the Prophet Joseph: “Behold, I say unto you, that little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten; wherefore, they cannot sin, for power is not given unto Satan to tempt little children, until they begin to become accountable before me” (D&C 29:46–47). Furthermore, He revealed additional comforting doctrine regarding those who are not accountable because of mental handicap, saying, “And he that hath no understanding, it remaineth in me to do according as it is written” (D&C 29:50; see also Mosiah 3:11). But where will these precious ones reside?

From a truly remarkable vision, Joseph Smith described the place of highest redemption, the celestial kingdom, and some of its inhabitants. That which Joseph saw was not the celestial kingdom as it existed the day the vision was received; it was a vision of how the lives of the Prophet’s family members would be after the resurrection. He saw God the Father and the Son, streets of gold, Father Adam, Abraham, his own father and mother, and his *unbaptized* brother Alvin, who had been dead for twelve years (see D&C 137:1–6).¹⁸ Next, Joseph learned how it was possible that this twenty-five-year-old adult, Alvin, who was well beyond the age of accountability at the time of his death, could be in the holiest place in all creation: “All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God; also all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom; for I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts” (D&C 137:7–9).

The doctrine of comfort continues in the following verse: “I also beheld that all children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven” (D&C 137:10). This truth was revealed again—children are saved, not just in a mysterious heavenly place but in the celestial kingdom!

Armed with the good news of the restored gospel, the Prophet preached at several funerals and ministered to his faithful friends.

MINISTERING BY APPLYING TRUE DOCTRINE

Eleven years had passed since the death of their adopted son, one-year-old Joseph Smith Murdock. During that time, Joseph and Emma lost other children. They would lose yet another to stillbirth. Nine months before the stillborn son was delivered, the Prophet delivered a Sabbath-day address in Nauvoo. In the sermon he spoke to the parents of deceased three-year-old toddler Marian Lyon, explaining why some children die in infancy.

In my leisure moments I have meditated upon the subject, and asked the question, why it is that infants, innocent children, are taken away from us, especially those that seem to be the most intelligent and interesting. The strongest reasons that present themselves to my mind are these: This world is a very wicked world; and it is a proverb that the "world grows weaker and wiser;" if that is the case, the world grows more wicked and corrupt. In the earlier ages of the world a righteous man, and a man of God and of intelligence, had a better chance to do good, to be believed and received than at the present day: but in these days such a man is much opposed and persecuted by most of the inhabitants of the earth, and he has much sorrow to pass through here. The Lord takes many away, even in infancy, that they may escape the envy of man, and the sorrows and evils of this present world; they were too pure, too lovely, to live on earth; therefore, if rightly considered, instead of mourning we have reason to rejoice as they are delivered from evil, and we shall soon have them again.¹⁹

Two years later at the funeral of King Follett, Joseph taught that parents of deceased children will have the privilege of raising their children to full stature in the Resurrection: "Will mothers have their children in eternity? Yes! Yes! Mothers, you shall have your children; for they shall have eternal life, for their debt is paid. There is no damnation awaiting them for they are in the spirit. But as the child dies, so shall it rise from the dead, and be forever living in the learning of God. It will never grow [in the grave]; it will still be the child, in the same precise form [when it rises] as it appeared before it died out of its mother's arms."²⁰

Sister Isabella Horne reported that she witnessed the Prophet

ministering to the wife of John Taylor, a future president of the Church.

In conversation with the Prophet Joseph Smith once in Nauvoo, the subject of children in the resurrection was broached. I believe it was in Sister Leonora Cannon Taylor's house. She had just lost one of her children, and I had also lost one previously. The Prophet wanted to comfort us, and he told us that we should receive those children in the morning of the resurrection just as we laid them down, in purity and innocence, and we should nourish and care for them as their mothers. He said that children would be raised in the resurrection just as they were laid down, and that they would obtain all the intelligence necessary to occupy thrones, principalities and powers. The idea that I got from what he said was that the children would grow and develop in the Millennium, and that the mothers would have the pleasure of training and caring for them, which they had been deprived of in this life.²¹

The doctrine that little children inherit salvation stretches from eternity to eternity. The worthy in Christ "shall receive a crown in the mansions of my Father, which I have prepared for them" (D&C 59:2), which the Lord spoke to Joseph Smith. This truth lived in the days of Adam, and it is true today. True principles find application across generations of time.

Mike Stanley was a high-school-aged intern who worked at a hospital in Provo, Utah, in 1985. He relates an experience that demonstrates the stark, contrasting realities of those who have the blessings of restored truth and those who are deprived of them.

One afternoon an infant was rushed into the emergency room. Unfortunately, the child had already passed away as a victim of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). The parents came in to view the body of their baby. Their grief was obvious and justified. A dark and gloomy feeling prevailed in the hospital room. The family's preacher was summoned to the hospital to console the parents. They chatted first at the bedside and then in a nearby conference room for a lengthy period of time. The weeping continued, and the family was inconsolable. As I pondered the events, I realized why they were so distraught. According to their understanding,

because the child had not been baptized, he was now a child of the devil. Their hopes and dreams for their baby would be left unfulfilled not only in this life but also in the life beyond.

Later the same day, another infant was brought into the emergency room. A similar scene unfolded. This child, also a victim of SIDS, was pronounced dead by the attending physician. The parents were brought into the room. Tears of grief accompanied sorrow. But even in that moment of tragedy, theirs was a feeling not limited to loss but also of hope and light. The feeling was not tangible but was vividly real and comforting, especially when contrasted with the earlier events of the day. A short time later, this Latter-day Saint family's bishop arrived. I do not know or recall the content of their conversations with this priesthood leader. I do know, however, that the feeling in the room was vastly different than what I had witnessed before, for theirs was an understanding of a merciful plan. Even as a teenager, I recognized the comforting spirit that can accompany and console the aching heart.²²

Family bonds stretch and grow far beyond death. "Families can be together forever,"²³ the hymn proclaims. That is Heavenly Father's plan. His little children are eternally a part of it. They shall live and shall inherit celestial glory! This doctrine stands as one of the sweetest, most comforting of all restored doctrines. It stands as a witness of the divine mission of Joseph Smith.

NOTES

1. Carol Cornwall Madsen, *Journey to Zion: Voices from the Mormon Trial* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 508–9; emphasis added. Louise Charlotte Leuba Graehl claimed to have been the first female convert baptism in Geneva. She continued to write of that experience. "Sometime after this [the passing of little Emma] Mr. Roulst, one of our acquaintances, came and spoke to me about a new religion that he had just embraced. He seemed to be full of joy and said many things about the great light he had received; but I must confess that I paid very little attention to all that he said for I had known him only as a man of the world and I thought it very funny to have him speak that way about religion. At that time I did not care for any religion anyhow. However, he continued to talk and one day he brought me some pamphlets to read. They were on

the first principles of the Gospel, and I was astonished in reading them, for they threw a new light on the Scriptures that I had read so often, but not understood before. I was baptized into the Latter-day Saint Church on the 7th of June, 1853, being the first woman in Geneva to join the church, and my husband was baptized one month later.”

2. Robert J. Matthews, “A Walk through the Bible with the Prophet Joseph Smith,” in *Thirty-first Annual Joseph Smith Memorial Sermon, Logan Institute of Religion* (Logan, UT: Logan LDS Institute of Religion, 1973), 1–2. Only five of eleven of Joseph and Emma Smith’s children survived to the age of accountability. This is a brief summary of the chronology of their children which is taken largely from Matthews’s paper.

Alva (or Alvin) born and died on June 15, 1828, Harmony, Pennsylvania.

Louisa, born April 30, 1831, Kirtland, Ohio—a fraternal twin, lived about three hours.

Thaddeus, born April 30, 1831, Kirtland, Ohio—a fraternal twin, lived about three hours.

Joseph Smith Murdock, born April 30, 1831, Kirtland; adopted; died a few days after March 25, 1832.

Julia Murdock, born April 30, 1831, Kirtland; adopted; died in 1880 at the age of forty-nine near Nauvoo, Illinois.

Joseph Smith III, born November 6, 1832, at Kirtland. This was the first of the Prophet’s natural children to live to maturity. He died in 1914 at the age of eighty-two.

Frederick Granger Williams, born June 20, 1836, at Kirtland; died April 13, 1862.

Alexander Hale Smith, born June 2, 1838, at Far West, Missouri; died in 1909.

Don Carlos Smith, born June 13, 1840, at Nauvoo; died in 1841 at the age of fourteen months.

“A boy,” born December 26, 1842. He did not survive his birth.

David Hyrum Smith, born November 17, 1844 at Nauvoo, five months after the Prophet’s martyrdom. He died in 1904 at the age of sixty.

3. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, Facsimile Edition (New York: S. Converse, 1828; reprint, republished in Facsimile Edition by Foundation for American Christian Education, San Francisco, Thirteenth Printing, August 2000).
4. Charles Buck, “Annihilation,” in *A Theological Dictionary*, Woodward’s New Edition.
5. Rev. Baden Powell of Oxford University wrote these thoughts for

- Kitto's *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature*, according to Joseph Fielding Smith in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 350–51n5.
6. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation, Volume Two*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 2:49; emphasis in the original.
 7. S. Harent, "Original Sin," in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann and others (New York: Robert Appleton, 1911), 11:312–15. Harent further explained that original sin is "the hereditary stain that is dealt with here" and that "Adam by his fault transmitted to us not only death but also sin." According to conclusions of the Council of Trent, "original sin is described not only as the death of the soul (Sess. V, can. ii), but as a 'privation of justice that each child contracts at its conception' (Sess. VI, cap. iii). But the council calls 'justice' what we would call sanctifying grace (Sess. VI). . . . St. Augustine already cited, 'the deliberate sin of the first man is the cause of original sin.' This principle is developed by St. Anselm: 'the sin of Adam was one thing but the sin of children at their birth is quite another, the former was the cause, the latter is the effect' (De conceptu virginali, xxvi)." Harent continued his own commentary, declaring, "The crime of a father brands his yet unborn children with shame, and entails upon them a share of his own responsibility. . . . Original sin is a real sin which deprives the soul of sanctifying grace. It has the same claim to be a sin as has habitual sin."
 8. William H. W. Fanning, "Baptism," in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann and others (New York: Robert Appleton, 1907), 2:266; emphasis added.
 9. Byron R. Merrill, "Original Sin," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1052; from R. Reed, *The Gospel as Taught by Calvin* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1979), 33.
 10. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 550. Herein, Elder McConkie references the *Book of Common Prayer*, The Anglican Church of Canada, 662–63; emphasis in original.
 11. Merrill, "Original Sin," 1052; from Samuel Cohon, *Essays in Jewish Theology* (Cincinnati, OH, 1987), 265.
 12. Circumcision might absolve male children from original sin, but how does one deal with the female infant? The practice and procedure has been modified over the years. "The ceremony is clearly a male ritual, and has become more and more so through the years. Originally the [male] child was held by his mother during the operation. . . . It was the practice for centuries . . . [to offer] a prayer for the mother's recovery from childbirth. . . . But by the sixteenth cen-

ture, at the very latest, the mother had been relegated to a back room, or even to a different building, her home, while the men attended the ceremony at the synagogue.

“The result of all this is a certain ambivalence about the ritual today, especially among circles of liberal Jews who value gender equality. On the one hand, it is nearly unthinkable after all these centuries not to have your son circumcised. But on the other hand, the fact that only boys can be circumcised and the evolution of the ritual into a men-only affair make it equally impossible for these modern Jews to go through the rite as it has come down to us.

“Some liberal Jews, therefore, have altered the traditional rite. The Reform movement, for example, emphasizes the *brit* (the covenant aspect) and plays down the *milah* (the actual operation of circumcision). There is a single eighth-day liturgy for boys and for girls, a common ‘Covenant Ceremony’ in which boys and girls are inducted into the ‘covenant of Abraham and Sarah.’ The only difference is that in the boy’s rite, as the liturgical words are recited, a mohel or physician performs the operation” (Rabbi Morris N. Kertzer, *What Is a Jew?* First Touchstone Edition [New York: Touchstone, 1993], 241–42).

13. Fanning, “Baptism,” 2:258–74. Fanning continues, “St. Ambrose (II De Abraham., c. xi) speaking of the necessity of baptism, says: ‘No one is excepted, not the infant, not the one hindered by any necessity.’” He goes on, saying, “Catholic theologians are unanimous, consequently, in declaring that infants dying without baptism . . . are certainly excluded from heaven.” One of authority must perform baptism. “The Roman Ritual declares: ‘The legitimate minister of baptism is the parish priest.’” But, so unforgiving is the belief that infants must be baptized that “the Ritual also says that the father or mother should not baptize their own child, except in danger of death when no one else is at hand who could administer the sacrament [baptism]. . . . The authoritative decision of the Church, however, is plain. Pope Urban II (c. Super quibus, xxx, 4) writes: ‘It is true baptism if a woman in case of necessity baptizes a child in the name of the Trinity.’ The Florentine decree for the Armenians says explicitly: ‘In case of necessity, not only a priest or a deacon, but even a layman or woman, nay *even a pagan or heretic may confer baptism.*’ The main reason for this extension of power as to the administration of baptism is of course that the Church has understood from the beginning . . . the absolute necessity of baptism for the salvation of souls” (emphasis added).
14. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:52; emphasis in original.
15. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1908),

4:554; emphasis added. This address was delivered in the grove west of the Nauvoo Temple on March 20, 1842. The body of the deceased child of Windsor P. Lyon was lying in a coffin before the congregation. The Prophet felt inspired to depart from his prepared remarks and spoke the foregoing.

16. James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, 12th ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924), 127. Also, "The Nephite prophet Mormon denounced the practice of infant baptism, which had apparently crept in among his people, and declared that anyone who supposed that little children need baptism would deny the mercies of Christ, setting at naught the value of his atonement and the power of his redemption" (Carl S. Hawkins, "Baptism," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:93–94).
17. "Genesis Chapter 17, of the Inspired Version [Joseph Smith Translation] explains that the age of accountability is set at 8 years. This was made known in the Inspired Version at a date earlier than it is recorded in D&C 68:25. It seems unmistakable, that this important principle was revealed to Joseph Smith while translating Genesis 17, in connection with the 8 days of age when circumcision was performed" (Matthews, "Walk through the Bible," 7).
18. Section 137 was given to Joseph by vision on January 21, 1836. It was truly a vision of the future. Joseph Smith Sr. was in the upper room of the Kirtland Temple with the younger Joseph when he received the vision. Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph's mother, was also alive and was elsewhere in the village. Alvin had not yet received ordinances by proxy. (Baptism for the dead was introduced at Nauvoo in 1840.) Yet all three were shown in the celestial kingdom, surrounded in glory (see Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler, *Revelations of the Restoration* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000], 1138–39).
19. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:553. This paragraph is taken from the same address referenced in footnote 18.
20. Joseph Smith, *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Alma P. Burton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1956), 138–39.
21. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:556.
22. This account is paraphrased from a personal letter dated December 23, 2004, to the author from Michael D. Stanley, director of the LDS Institute of Religion in Visalia, California. It is his story and is used and edited with his permission.
23. "Families Can Be Together Forever," *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 300.