Adoption Into the Family of God:
The Process By Which God’s Offspring Become Gods and Goddesses

How Heavenly Father Became Part of the Class (Family) of the Gods

Joseph Smith (1805-44)

I will go back to the beginning before the world was, to show what kind of being God is. What sort of a being was God in the beginning? Open your ears and hear, all ye ends of the earth, for I am going to prove it to you by the Bible, and to tell you the designs of God in relation to the human race, and why He interferes with the affairs of man.

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), pp. 342-362; Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007], p. 40; emphasis added)

Brigham Young (1891-77) President

[T]he Father, after He had once been in the flesh, and lived as we live, obtained His exaltation, attained to thrones, gained the ascendency over principalities and powers, and had the knowledge and power to create—to bring forth and organize the elements upon natural principles. This He did after His ascension, or His glory, or His eternity, and was actually classed with the Gods, with the beings who create, with those who have kept the celestial law while in the flesh, and again obtained their bodies. Then He was prepared to commence the work of creation, as the Scriptures teach. (Journal of Discourses, 26 vols. [1855-86], 4:218; emphasis added)

Heavenly Father Made It Possible for His Spirit Offspring to Obtain Godhood in the Same Way He Had Obtained

Joseph Smith (1805-44)

- "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). ... God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits [i.e., unorganized intelligences] and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. The relationship we have with God places us in a situation to advance in knowledge. He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with himself, so that they might have one glory upon another, and all that knowledge, power, glory, and intelligence, which is requisite in order to save them in the world of spirits. (Teachings Of Presidents Of The Church: Joseph Smith [2007], p.210)

- It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did ... The Scriptures inform us that Jesus said, As the Father hath power in Himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down His body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again. ... How consoling to the mourners when they are called to part with a husband, wife, father, mother, child, or dear relative, to know that, although the earthly tabernacle is laid down and dissolved, they shall rise again to dwell in everlasting burnings in immortal glory, not to sorrow, suffer, or die any more; but they shall be heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. What is it? To inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a God, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before. What did Jesus do [and likewise what all God’s children must do]? Why; I do the things I saw my Father do when worlds come rolling into existence. My Father worked out his kingdom with fear and trembling, and I must do the same; and when I get my kingdom, I shall present it to my Father, so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt him in glory. He will then take a higher exaltation, and I will take his place, and thereby become exalted myself. So that Jesus treads in the tracks of his Father, and inherits what God did before; and God is thus glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of all his children. (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), pp. 342-362)
The Phrase “Sons of God” Has Reference to Those Who Obtain Godhood in the Celestial Kingdom

D&C 76:50-70 speak of the those who have obtained the celestial glory. Verse 58 states the following:

Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—(D&C 76:58)

Joseph Fielding Smith (1876-1972) - President

- Now they who enter into the terrestrial kingdom, and they who enter into the telestial kingdom will not be sons of God in the sense in which this term is used here. Of course we are all the children of God, every soul on the earth; we are His offspring, but in the great kingdom that shall be established in exaltation, all who receive exaltation will become sons of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ and entitled to all the privileges and all the blessings of the Fathers kingdom. What a wonderful privilege that is! This blessing will not come to the inhabitants of the telestial and the terrestrial worlds. (Conference Report, April 1942, p. 28; emphasis added)

- We are taught that we are the offspring of God, yet only those who obey will be called the sons of God and the children of God. (Doctrines of Salvation, sel. Bruce R. McConkie [1954-56] 3:250)

No Family Organization Outside of Celestial Kingdom

Joseph Fielding Smith (1876-1972) - President

We should remember, as Latter-day Saints, that outside of the celestial kingdom, there is no family organization. That organization is reserved for those who are willing to abide in every covenant and every obligation which we are called upon to receive while we sojourn here in this mortal life. (Conference Report, Oct. 1948, p. 153)

The Object of Our Existence: To Become Sons and Daughters of God

Joseph F. Smith (1838-1918) - President

The object of our earthly existence is that we may have a fulness of joy, and that we may become the sons and daughters of God, in the fullest sense of the word, being heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, to be kings and priests unto God, to inherit glory, dominion, exaltation, thrones and every power and attribute developed and possessed by our Heavenly Father. This is the object of our being on this earth. In order to attain unto this exalted position, it is necessary that we go through this mortal experience, or probation, by which we may prove ourselves worthy, through the aid of our elder brother Jesus. (Teachings Of Presidents Of The Church: Joseph F. Smith [1998], p. 95; emphasis added)

Power to Become Sons of God Obtained Through Christ

- But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. (John 1:12)

- And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled. (3 Nephi 9:17)

- And after that he came men also were saved by faith in his name; and by faith, they become the sons of God. Moroni. (Moroni 7:26)

- Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. (Moroni 7:48)

- But verily, verily, I say unto you, that as many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name. (D&C 11:30)

- Who so loved the world that he gave his own life, that as many as would believe might become the sons of God. Wherefore you are my son; (D&C 34:3)

- I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on my name, that they may become the sons of God, even one in me as I am one in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one. (D&C 35:2)

- AND it came to pass that Enoch continued his speech, saying: Behold, our father Adam taught these things, and many have believed and become the sons of God, and many have believed not, and have perished in their sins, and are looking forth with fear, in torment, for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God to be poured out upon them. (Moses 7:1)

Adopted into the Family of God Is Necessary to Become As God

John Taylor

A man, as a man, could arrive at all the dignity that a man was capable of obtaining or receiving; but it needed a God to raise him to the dignity of a God. For this cause it is written, “Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we
know that when he shall appear we shall be like him.”

And how and why like Him? Because, through the
instrumentality of the atonement and the adoption, it is
made possible for us to become of the family of God,
and joint heirs with Jesus Christ; and that as He, the
potential instrument, through the oneness that existed
between Him and His Father, by reason of obedience to
divine law, overcame death, hell and the grave, and
sat down upon His Father’s throne, so shall we be able
to sit down with Him, even upon His throne. (Mediation
and Atonement [1882], pp. 145-146; emphasis added)

Adoption to the Family of God
Through Christ

Bruce R. McConkie (1915-85) - Quorum of the Twelve
Apostles

We are well aware that all men are the children of
God, the offspring of the Father, his sons and his
daughters. . . What is not so well known is that nearly
all the passages of scripture, both ancient and modern,
which speak of God as our Father and of men on earth
being the sons of God, have no reference to our birth in
preexistence as the children of Elohim, but teach rather
that Jehovah is our Father and we are his children.

In setting forth that all men must be born again to
gain salvation, we have seen that this means they must be
"born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen
state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of
God, becoming his sons and daughters." (Mosiah
27:25.) Whose sons and whose daughters do we
become when we are born again? Who is our new
Father? The answer is, Christ is our Father; we become
his children by adoption; he makes us members of his
family. . .

But there is more than this to the doctrine of
becoming sons of God. Those who so obtain are
adopted also into the family of Elohim. They become
his adopted sons so that they can receive, inherit, and
possess along with his natural Son.

To envision what is meant by being sons of God,
meaning the Father, let us follow Paul's reasoning in
two passages of superlative insight and inspiration. To
the Romans our apostolic friend of old wrote: "For as
many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons
of God." Standing alone, this could be taken to mean
that by faith the saints become the sons of the Lord
Jesus. But the perspective begins to change when our
apostolic colleague says: "Ye have received the Spirit
of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." That is, we
call upon our Eternal Father in a familiar and friendly
way, as children here call to their fathers with whom
they maintain a familiar intimacy. Having attained this
state of friendship with the Eternal One, "The Spirit
itself beareth witness with our spirit," Paul continues,
"that we are the children of God." He has now laid the
groundwork. A pronouncement of deep and wondrous
import is immediately forthcoming. "And if
children"—note it well—"then heirs; heirs of God, and
joint-heirs with Christ." (Rom. 8:14-17.) . . .

The reasoning is perfect. The Father had a Son, a
natural Son, his own literal Seed, the Offspring of his
body. This Son is his heir. As an heir he inherits all
things from his Father—all power, all might, all dominion,
the world, the universe, kingship, eternal exaltation, all
things. But our revelations speak of men being exalted
also and of their ascending the throne of eternal power.
How is it done? Paul has explained it perfectly. They
are adopted into the family of the Father. They become
joint-heirs with his natural Son . . .

They constitute the sole and only way the eternal
increase of an Eternal Father can become like their
great Progenitor. As pertaining to this earth, they were
revealed first to father Adam. He was baptized, born
again, received the priesthood, and kept the
commandments. As a result thereof, "a voice out of
heaven" proclaimed: "Thou art one in me, a son of God;
and thus may all become my sons." (Moses 6:65-68.)
"Our father Adam taught these things," the scripture
says, "and many have believed and become the sons
of God, and many have believed not, and have
perished in their sins." (Moses 7:1.) (The Promised
Messiah [1981], pp. 351-357; emphasis added)

Power to Become Sons of God Come
Through Obedience to the Gospel

Bruce R. McConkie (1915-85) - Quorum of the Twelve
Apostles

By obedience to the fulness of gospel law, righteous
men are adopted into the family of God so that they
also become heirs, Joint-heirs with Christ (Rom.
8:14-18; Gal. 3:26-29; 4:1-7), inheritors of all that the
Father hath. (D. & C. 134:33-41.) In his famous King
Follett Sermon, speaking of those who "shall be heirs
of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ," the Prophet
asked what their glory should be. Answering his own
query, he described joint-heirship as inheriting "the
same power, the same glory and the same exaltation,
until you arrive at the station of a God, and ascend the
throne of eternal power, the same as those who have
gone before." (Teachings, p. 347.)

A joint-heir is one who inherits equally with all other
heirs including the Chief Heir who is the Son. Each
joint-heir has an equal and an undivided portion of the
whole of everything. If one knows all things, so do all
others. If one has all power, so do all those who inherit
jointly with him. If the universe belongs to one, so it
does equally to the total of all upon whom the joint
inheritances are bestowed.

Joint-heirs are possessors of all things. (D. & C.
50:26-28.) All things are theirs for they have exaltation.
Adoption Comes Through Ordinances,
Including Temple Ordinances

Joseph Fielding Smith (1876-1972) - President

The Lord has given unto us privileges, and blessings, and the opportunity of entering into covenants, of accepting ordinances that pertain to our salvation beyond what is preached in the world; beyond the principles of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance from sin, and baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost; and these principles and covenants are received nowhere else but in the temple of God.

If you would become a son or a daughter of God and an heir of the kingdom, then you must go to the house of the Lord and receive blessings which there can be obtained and which cannot be obtained elsewhere; and you must keep those commandments and those covenants to the end.

The ordinances of the temple, the endowment and sealings, pertain to exaltation in the celestial kingdom, where the sons and daughters are. The sons and daughters are not outside in some other kingdom. The sons and daughters go into the house, belong to the household, have access to the home. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Sons and daughters have access to the home where he dwells, and you cannot receive that access until you go to the temple. Why? Because you must receive certain key words as well as make covenants by which you are able to enter. If you try to get into the house, and the door is locked, how are you going to enter, if you haven't your key? You get your key in the temple, which will admit you. (Doctrines of Salvation, sel. Bruce R. McConkie [1954-56] 2:40-41)

Adam is the Head of the Human Family

Joseph Smith (1805-44)

He (Adam) is the father of the human family, and presides over the spirits of all men, and all that have had the keys must stand before him in this grand council. ... The Son of Man stands before him, and there is given him glory and dominion. Adam delivers up his stewardship to Christ, that which was delivered to him as holding the keys of the universe, but retains his standing as head of the human family. (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [2007, p.101-13)

Orson F. Whitney (1855-1931) - Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Joseph Smith also declares that Adam presides over all the gospel dispensations, including this, the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times. Each has its own immediate presiding authority; but the great head of the human family, the prince and patriarch of our race, presides over them all. (Conference Report, April 1927, p. 98)

Adam Was the First to Become a Son of God Through Ordinances

Moses 6:64-68

And it came to pass, when the Lord had spoken with Adam, our father, that Adam cried unto the Lord, and he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water.

And thus he was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man.

And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying: Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost. This is the record of the Father, and the Son, from henceforth and forever;

And thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity.

Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons.

Ezra Taft Benson (1899-1994) - President

When our Heavenly Father placed Adam and Eve on this earth, He did so with the purpose in mind of teaching them how to regain His presence. Our Father promised a Savior to redeem them from their fallen condition. He gave to them the plan of salvation and told them to teach their children faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance. Further, Adam and his posterity were commanded by God to be baptized, to receive the Holy Ghost, and to enter into the order of the Son of God.

To enter into the order of the Son of God is the equivalent today of entering into the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which is only received in the house of the Lord. (*What I Hope You Will Teach Your Children About the Temple,* Temples of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, pp. 42-43; also, Ensign, Aug. 1985, p. 8; emphasis added.)

Theodore M. Burton (1907-1989) - Assistant to the Twelve Apostles; Seventy

Thus Adam was sealed a son of God by the priesthood, and this promise was taught among the fathers from that time forth as a glorious hope to men and women on the earth if they would listen and give
Power of Elijah—
Linking the Family of God Back to Adam

Joseph Smith (1805-44)
[Quotes Malachi 3:5-6 about Elijah’s return.] I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands. It is sufficient to know, in this case, that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other—and behold what is that subject? It is the baptism for the dead [and other temple ordinances]. For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect. Neither can they nor we be made perfect without those who have died in the gospel also; for it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. (D&C 128:18)

Joseph Fielding Smith (1876-1972) - President
Through the restoration of the priesthood held by Elijah, knowledge has been given to the Church that each family unit, where the parents have been married for time and for eternity, shall remain intact through all eternity. Moreover, each family unit is to be linked to the generation which went before, until all the faithful, who have proved their title to family membership through obedience to the gospel, shall be joined in one grand family from the beginning to the end of time, and shall find place in the celestial kingdom of God. In this way all who receive the exaltation become heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ in the possession of eternal family relationships. (Doctrines of Salvation 3 Vols., ed. Bruce R. McConkie [1954-56], 2:67)

Being Linked Back to Adam, We Are Linked
 to the Family of God

Joseph F. Smith (1838-1918) - President
The same principles that apply to the living apply also to the dead. ... And so we are baptized for those that are dead. The living cannot be made perfect without the dead, nor the dead be made perfect without the living. There has got to be a welding together and a joining together of parents and children and children and parents until the whole chain of God’s family shall be welded together into one chain, and they shall all become the family of God and His Christ. (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith [1998], p. 411).

Joseph Fielding Smith (1876-1972) - President
Every married man stands at the head of his household, that is, his immediate family. Thus I, for instance, will stand at the head of my family group by virtue of the sealing for time and eternity, and my children will belong to me. I will belong to my parents in their family group. My father likewise, with his brothers and sisters, will belong to his father’s unit in that family group, and his father to his father before him—all linked together generation to generation like a chain. So it will be of the righteous from the days of Adam down-Adam standing at the head as Michael, having authority and jurisdiction over his posterity in this large family group who have kept the commandments of God.

Now that is the order of the priesthood. Of course there will be chains that will be broken, links that will be missing, because we can not force people into the kingdom. Those who are unworthy to be joined in this grouping of families will have to stand aside, and those who are worthy will be brought together and the chain will go on just the same.

Eventually, when this work is perfected, and Christ delivers up to his Father the keys and makes his report, and death is destroyed, then that great family from the days of Adam down, of all the righteous, those who have kept the commandments of God, will find that they are one family, the family of God, entitled to all the blessings that pertain to the exaltation. (Doctrines of Salvation 3 Vols., ed. Bruce R. McConkie [1954-56], 2:67-68)

There is Only One Family of God

Joseph Fielding Smith (1876-1972) - President
When everything gets finished, we will all be one family—every member of the Church a member of one family, the family of God. And we will all be subject to our first progenitor, Adam, Michael, the archangel, who has been appointed and given authority under Jesus Christ to stand at the head and preside over all his posterity. We are one family. And we all have to be joined to that family. So it is not merely enough that we be baptized for our dead or for ourselves, but also we have to be sealed to our parents. We must have the parents sealed to their parents and so on, as far back as we can go, and eventually back to Adam. (Doctrines of Salvation 3 Vols., ed. Bruce R. McConkie [1954-56], 2:173-174)
Genealogy is Essential To Each Person’s Salvation for We Cannot Be Saved Without Our Kindred Dead

The following introduction to the genealogy revelation is found in Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff ([2004], pp. xxxiii-xxxiv):

About three months before the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred, he delivered a discourse to a large assembly of Saints. Elder Wilford Woodruff, who recorded a synopsis of the discourse, said that the Prophet spoke on "one of the most important and interesting subjects ever presented to the Saints." As part of this sermon, the Prophet testified of the eternal nature of families. He spoke of the need to be sealed to our parents and to continue that sealing ordinance throughout our generations:

“This is the spirit of Elijah, that we redeem our dead and connect ourselves with our fathers which are in heaven and seal up our dead to come forth in the first resurrection, and here we want the power of Elijah to seal those who dwell on earth to those which dwell in heaven. ... Go and seal on earth your sons and daughters unto yourself and yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory.”

For the next few decades, the Latter-day Saints knew that there was to be "a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children" (D&C 128:18). However, their procedures were not completely set in order; as President Woodruff observed, the Prophet Joseph had not lived long enough to "enter any further upon these things." Acting according to "all the light and knowledge [they] had," they often had themselves sealed, or "adopted," to Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, or other Church leaders of their day rather than to their own fathers and mothers. As President of the Church, President Woodruff referred to this practice, saying: "We have not fully carried out those principles in fulfillment of the revelations of God to us, in sealing the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. I have not felt satisfied, neither did President Taylor, neither has any man since the Prophet Joseph who has attended to the ordinance of adoption in the temples of our God. We have felt that there was more to be revealed upon this subject than we had received. ... I have prayed over this matter, and my brethren have. We have felt, as President Taylor said, that we have got to have more revelation concerning sealing under the law of adoption. Well, what are these changes? One of them is the principle of adoption. In the commencement of adopting men and women in the Temple at Nauvoo, a great many persons were adopted to different men who were not of the lineage of their fathers, and there was a spirit manifested by some in that work that was not of God. ..President Young was not satisfied in his mind with regard to the extent of this matter; President Taylor was not.

When I went before the Lord to know who I should be adopted to (we were then being adopted to prophets and apostles), the Spirit of God said to me, “Have you not a father, who begot you?” “Yes, I have.” “Then why not honor him? Why not be adopted to him?” “Yes,” says I, “that is right.” I was adopted to my father, and should have had my father sealed to his father, and so on back; and the duty that I want every man who presides over a temple to see performed from this day henceforth and forever, unless the Lord Almighty commands otherwise, is, let every man be adopted to his father. When a man receives the endowments, adopt him to his father; not to Wilford Woodruff, nor to any other man outside the lineage of his fathers. That is the will of God to this people. I want all men who preside over these temples in these mountains of Israel to bear this in mind. What business have I to take away the rights of the lineage of any man? What right has any man to do this? No; I say let every man be adopted to his father; and then you will do exactly what God said when he declared he would send Elijah the prophet in the last days. Elijah the prophet appeared unto Joseph Smith and told him that the day had come when this principle must be carried out. Joseph Smith did not live long enough to enter any further upon these things. His soul was wound up with this work before he was martyred for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ. He told us that there must be a welding link of all dispensations and of the work of God from one generation to another. This was upon his mind more than most any other subject that was given to him. (Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 vols., comp. James R. Clark [1965-75], 3:254-5; see also The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff [1946], p.155; Teaching of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff [2004], pp. xxxiii-xxxiv)
Being Linked Through Our Ancestors Back to Adam, We Are Linked to the Family of God

Theodore M. Burton (1907-1989) - Assistant to the Twelve Apostles; Seventy

When the living are sealed, they may act as proxies for those who are dead, for as Peter taught:
"For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Peter 4:6.)

It was for this purpose that Jesus Christ preached to the spirits in prison, that they might be converted and be willing to accept the sealings performed in their behalf by their living descendants. Unless the family of the righteous are thus sealed together from father to son and from mother to daughter back to Adam and from Adam to Christ and from Jesus Christ to God the Eternal Father, the purpose of earth life has been missed, and life itself has been a waste.

By the power of this priesthood restored by the Prophet Elijah, it is now possible for a man to prove his love for his wife and family by living righteously enough to be worthy to take them with him into a temple of the Lord and have them sealed to him, not for this life alone, but by this great sealing power to have that union sealed in the heavens for all eternity. When the poet sang of a love which would last until the "stars grow old and the sun grows cold," he was not singing of a love that was only to last "until death do you part," but of a marriage that would last throughout the eternity of time, never withering, never dying, never growing old or commonplace.

By the same token, then, our hearts being turned to the promises made to the fathers, we are also turned to the fathers themselves. Should they languish in a spirit prison or be held back from spiritual growth because they were born at a time when this sealing power was not on the earth? As God is a just God and one who loves his children, there has to be some ordinance performed in order to make them legitimate; and that ordinance, the Prophet Joseph revealed, was the ordinance of adoption; that is, that which covers the ordinance or law, although we do not use the word adoption when we seal children to parents; we call that sealing. (Collected Discourses. 5 vols., ed. Brian H. Stuy [B. H. S. Publishing Woodland Hills, UT], Vol.4; April 8, 1894)

Sealing of Children

James E. Talmage (1862-1933) - Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Children born to parents thus married under the celestial law are heirs to the Priesthood; 'children of the covenant' they are called; no ordinance of adoption or sealing is required to give them place in the blessed posterity of promise. (The House of the Lord [1976], p.88.)

George Q. Cannon (1827-1901) - First Presidency

It is not necessary, where parents are thus sealed together by the authority of the Holy Priesthood for time and for eternity, that their children should be adopted or be sealed to them. They are legitimate heirs of the Priesthood and of the blessings of the new and everlasting covenant. But not so with those who have been born outside of this covenant. There has to be some ordinance performed in order to make them legitimate; and that ordinance, the Prophet Joseph revealed, was the ordinance of adoption; that is, that which covers the ordinance or law, although we do not use the word adoption when we seal children to parents; we call that sealing. (Collected Discourses. 5 vols., ed. Brian H. Stuy [B. H. S. Publishing Woodland Hills, UT], Vol.4; April 8, 1894)