**Teachings Concerning**

**The Pre-Mortal Existence of Man**

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**The Intelligent State of Man**

D. & C. 93:29, 33-34

Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created nor made, neither indeed can be ... For man is spirit. The elements are eternal, and spirit and element inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy; and when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy.

Joseph Smith

Is it logical to say that the intelligence of spirits is immortal, and yet that it had a beginning? The intelligence of spirits had not beginning, neither will it have an end. . . . Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith [1938], p.353-354)

Joseph Fielding Smith (Quorum of the Twelve)

- If the Lord declares that intelligence, something which we do not fully understand, was co-eternal with him and always existed, there is no argument that we can or should present to contradict it. Why he cannot create intelligence is simply because intelligence, like time and space, always existed, and therefore did not have to be created. However, intelligences spoken of in the Book of Abraham were created, for these are spirit children of God, begotten sons. (Answers to Gospel Questions [1963], 3:125)

- Some of our writers have endeavored to explain what an intelligence is, but to do so is futile, for we have never been given any insight into this matter beyond what the Lord has fragmentarily revealed. We know, however, that there is something called intelligence which always existed. It is the real eternal part of man, which was not created nor made. This intelligence combined with the spirit constitutes a spiritual identity or individual. (Answers to Gospel Questions [1963], 4:127)

Neal A. Maxwell (Quorum of the Twelve)

Restoration correctives provide emancipating perspectives! The revelations, when “pressed down, and shaken together,” emphasize that man is, at once, an intelligence or spirit coeternal – but certainly not coequal – with God (see Abr. 3:18). Thus, doctrinally, we are positioned very differently, because “God is neither the source nor the cause of either moral or natural evil” [in Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 5 vols. (1992), 2:478]. God is thus the organizer of eternal intelligences, which can neither be created nor destroyed (see D&C 93:29). Furthermore, God will not coerce men since all intelligence is free to act for itself “in that sphere in which God has placed it. ... Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man” (D&C 93:30–31). [*The Richness of the Restoration,* Ensign, Mar. 1998, pp. 12-13]

**Man is the Spirit Offspring of God the Father**

Hebrews 12

9 Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Marion G. Romney (First Presidency)

In origin, man is a son of God. The spirits of men “are begotten sons and daughters unto God” (D&C 76:24). Through that birth process, self-existing intelligence was organized into individual spirit beings. (“The Worth of Souls,” Ensign, Nov. 1978, p. 14)

First Presidency Statement (Joseph F. Smith)

The doctrine of the pre-existence, revealed so plainly, particularly in latter days, pours a wonderful flood of light upon the otherwise mysterious problem of man’s origin. It shows that man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal body to undergo an experience in mortality. It teaches that all men existed in the spirit before any man existed in the flesh, and that all who have inhabited the earth since Adam have taken bodies and become souls in like manner. (Origin of Man," Messages of the First Presidency [1971], Vol.4, pp.205-206)

First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve Statement

Scriptures embodying the ordinary signification—literally that of Parent—are too numerous and specific to require citation. The purport of these scriptures is to the effect that God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title “Elohim,” is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of the spirits of the human race. Elohim is the Father in every sense in which Jesus Christ is so designated, and distinctively He is the Father of spirits. Thus we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” (Hebrews 12:9). In view of this fact we are taught by Jesus Christ to pray: “Our Father which art in

First Presidency Statement (Joseph F. Smith)  
The written standards of scripture show that all people who come to this earth and are born in mortality, had a pre-existent, spiritual personality, as the sons and daughters of the Eternal Father. (See Pearl of Great Price, Chap. 3, verses 5-7.) Jesus Christ was the first-born. A spirit born of God is an immortal being. When the body dies, the spirit does not die. In the resurrected state the body will be immortal as well as the spirit. (“Pre-existent States” January 31, 1912, Messages of the First Presidency [1971], Vol.4, p.264)

Lorenzo Snow (President)  
We were born in the image of God our Father; He begot us like unto Himself. There is the nature of deity in the composition of our spiritual organization; in our spiritual birth our Father transmitted to us the capabilities, powers and faculties which He Himself possessed -- as much so as the child on its mother's bosom possesses, although in an undeveloped state, the faculties, powers, and susceptibilities of its parent. (Teachings of Lorenzo Snow [1984], p.4)

Ezra Taft Benson (President)  
As God’s offspring, we have His attributes in us. We are gods in embryo, and thus have an unlimited potential for progress and attainment. (Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson [1988], p.21)

M. Russell Ballard (Quorum of the Twelve)  
Before the world was created, we all lived as the spirit children of our Heavenly Father. Through a natural process of inheritance we received in embryo the traits and attributes of our Heavenly Father. We are His spirit children. Some of what our Eternal Father is, we have inherited. What he has become we may become. (For scriptural enlightenment on this important concept, please see Acts 17:29 and Romans 8:16.) (Our Search for Happiness [1993], p.70)

George Q. Cannon (First Presidency)  
There was a period when we, with Jesus and others, basked in the light of the presence of God and enjoyed His smiles. We are the children of God, and as His children there is no attribute we ascribe to Him that we do not possess, though they may be dormant or in embryo. The mission of the Gospel is to develop these powers and make us like our Heavenly Parent. I know this is true, and such knowledge makes me feel happy.

Richard G. Scott (Quorum of the Twelve)  
The scriptures record, “And I, God, created man ... male and female created I them.” This was done spiritually in your premortal existence when you lived in the presence of your Father in Heaven. Your gender existed before you came to earth. (“The Joy of Living the Great Plan of Happiness,” Ensign, Nov. 1996, p. 73)

Marion G. Romney (First Presidency)  
The truth I desire to emphasize today is that we mortals are in very deed the literal offspring of God. If men understood, believed, and accepted this truth and lived by it, our sick and dying society would be reformed and redeemed, and men would have peace here and now and eternal joy in the hereafter.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accept this concept as a basic doctrine of their theology. The lives of those who have given it thought enough to realize its implications are controlled by it; it gives meaning and direction to all their thoughts and deeds. This is so because they know that it is the universal law of nature in the plant, animal, and human worlds for reproducing offspring to reach in final maturity the likeness of their parents.

They reason that the same law is in force with respect to the offspring of God. Their objective is, therefore, to someday be like their heavenly parents. (Ensign, July 1973, p. 11)

Joseph Fielding Smith (President)  
We believe in the dignity and divine origin of man. Our faith is founded on the fact that God is our Father, and that we are His children, and that all men are rothers and sisters in the

The Divine Potential of God’s Spirit Offspring

First Presidency Statement (Joseph F. Smith)  
Man is the child of God, formed in the divine image and endowed with divine attributes, and even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God. (“Origin of Man,” Messages of the First Presidency [1971], Vol.4, pp.205-206)

Richard G. Scott (Quorum of the Twelve)  
The scriptures record, “And I, God, created man ... male and female created I them.” This was done spiritually in your premortal existence when you lived in the presence of your Father in Heaven. Your gender existed before you came to earth. (“The Joy of Living the Great Plan of Happiness,” Ensign, Nov. 1996, p. 73)

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

All human beings–male and female--are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose. (Ensign, Nov. 1995, p. 102)

Richard G. Scott (Quorum of the Twelve)  
The scriptures record, “And I, God, created man ... male and female created I them.” This was done spiritually in your premortal existence when you lived in the presence of your Father in Heaven. Your gender existed before you came to earth. (“The Joy of Living the Great Plan of Happiness,” Ensign, Nov. 1996, p. 73)
same eternal family.
As members of his family, we dwelt with him before the foundations of this earth were laid, and he ordained and established the plan of salvation whereby we gained the privilege of advancing and progressing as we are endeavoring to do.

The God we worship is a glorified Being in whom all power and perfection dwell, and he has created man in his own image and likeness, with those characteristics and attributes which he himself possesses. (Conference Report, April 1970, p.4)

The Purpose of God’s Plan and Gospel is to Fully Develop the Divine Potential of Man

George Q. Cannon (First Presidency)
We are the children of God, and as His children there is no attribute we ascribe to Him that we do not possess, though they may be dormant or in embryo. The mission of the Gospel is to develop these powers and make us like our Heavenly Parent. I know this is true, and such knowledge makes me feel happy. (Gospel Truth [1987], 1:1)

Gordon B. Hinckley (First Presidency)
The whole design of the gospel is to lead us, onward and upward to greater achievement, even, eventually, to godhood. This great possibility was enunciated by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the King Follet sermon (see Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 342-62) and emphasized by President Lorenzo Snow. It is a grand and incomparable concept: As God now is, man may become! (See The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow, comp. Clyde J. Williams, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984, p. 1) (From Ensign, November 1994, p. 48; also Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley [1997], p. 179).

Progress and Development of Spirits

Howard W. Hunter (President)
While on earth, we are dual beings comprised of a physical body and a spirit. Our bodies are of recent origin and come to us from mortal elements. Our spirits were begotten by God and have had an extensive period of development in the spirit world, where we came to know God and to comprehend the nature of spiritual realities. Some of our Father’s sons developed spiritual talents to a marked degree, and they were foreordained to spiritual callings in mortality whereby their talents would be utilized to administer salvation to our Father’s children. (The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter [1997], p. 12)

M. Russell Ballard (Quorum of the Twelve)
Before the world was created, we all lived as the spirit children of our Heavenly Father. Through a natural process of inheritance we received in embryo the traits and attributes of our Heavenly Father. We are His spirit children. Some of what our Eternal Father is, we have inherited. What he has become we may become. (For scriptural enlightenment on this important concept, please see Acts 17:29 and Romans 8:16.)

Life in our heavenly home was a little different from life on earth, as we weren’t subject to the frailties and challenges of mortality. But we were still very much involved with learning and growing, maturing and developing; and we had meaningful association with one another. We had the opportunity in our premortal existence to make decisions and choices, and some of us proved to be better at that than others. ...

Our Heavenly Parents’ love and concern for us continues to this very moment. In our wonderful, pre-earth home we had the opportunity to learn many eternal truths. Our Heavenly Father wanted us to develop every godly quality, for He knew that although each of us is unique, we all have within us the seeds of godhood. Indeed, we yearned to be like Him. But He understood that we could only progress to a certain point without the wisdom of experience through mortality, including the trials and temptations that come to all of us as a direct result of our physical bodies. Therefore our Father’s plan was created to help us reach our full potential. It would be difficult and sometimes painful—for Him, perhaps, as well as for us. But He knew it was the only way His children could grow and improve. (Our Search for Happiness [1993], p.70)

Abraham 3
22 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones;
23 And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

D&C 138
53 The Prophet Joseph Smith, and my father, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and other choice spirits who were reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work,
55 I observed that they were also among the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning to be rulers in
the Church of God.

56 Even before they were born, they, with many others, received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time of the Lord to labor in his vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men.

Alma 13

3 And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.

5 Or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared.

Bruce R. McConkie (Quorum of the Twelve)

Alma taught the great truth that every person who holds the Melchizedek Priesthood was foreordained to receive that high and holy order in the pre-existent councils of eternity. “This is the manner after which they were ordained,” he says. They were “called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works [while yet living in pre-existence]; in the first place [that is, in pre-existence] being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceeding exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.” Thus, he explains, Melchizedek Priesthood holders have been “prepared from the foundation of the world” for their high callings. The Lord has prepared them “from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things.” (Alma 13:3-9.) [Mormon Doctrine [1996 2nd Ed], p.290]

Theodore M. Burton (Seventy)

Alma, referring to men who receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, spoke of their inherited rights and said of those who are ordained to the high priesthood:

“And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works [remember, this faith and works you demonstrated while you were still in the premortal world]; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceeding exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling ... which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.” (Alma 13:3.)

Thus, you and your fathers were reserved to be born at a time and in a place where you could not fail to hear the gospel preached and accept the holy priesthood. Thus, a preparatory redemption was made for you through a priesthood heritage from your fathers and mothers. (“Salvation for the Dead—A Missionary Activity,” Ensign, May 1975, p. 69)

Joseph Fielding Smith (Quorum of the Twelve)

SOME SPIRITS GREATER THAN OTHERS. The spirits of men had their free agency, some were greater than others, and from among them the Father called and foreordained his prophets and rulers. Jeremiah and Abraham were two of them. . . . The spirits of men were not equal. They may have had an equal start, and we know they were all innocent in the beginning; but the right of free agency which was given to them enabled some to outstrip others, and thus, through the eons of immortal existence, to become more intelligent, more faithful, for they were free to act for themselves, to think for themselves, to receive the truth or rebel against it.

CHILDREN OF ISRAEL FOREKNOWN. The Lord declared through Moses the following:

“Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: . . . When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.”

A similar passage to this occurs in Acts where Paul declares to the Athenians that the Lord “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times, before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”

These passages clearly indicate that the numbers of the children of Israel were known and the bounds of their habitation fixed, in the days of old when the Lord divided to the nations their inheritance. We conclude, therefore, that there must have been a division of the spirits of men in the spiritual world, and those who were appointed to be the children of Israel were separated and prepared for a special inheritance. (Doctrines of Salvation [1954], 1:59)

Harold B. Lee (President)

• In the spirit world there were some who were valiant-more valiant than others—in choosing to do good, and thus they became the noble and great ones of whom the Lord said, “These I will make my rulers” (Abraham 3:23), and so in this earth, coming through a chosen lineage, those noble and great ones are expected, as members of the Church and kingdom of God in every age, to be rulers of the world of sin and wickedness. (Conference Report, October 1945, p.46)

• Between the extremes of the “noble and the great” spirits, whom God would make His rulers (see Abraham 3:22-23), and the disobedient and the rebellious, who were cast out with Satan, there were obviously many spirits with varying degrees of faithfulness. May we not assume from these teachings that the progress and development we made as spirits have brought privileges and blessings here according to our faithfulness in the spirit world? Now don’t be too hasty in your conclusions as to what conditions in mortality constitute the greater privileges. That condition in life which gives the greatest experience and opportunity for development is the one to be most desired and any one so privileged is most favored of God. . . .

Now, don’t misunderstand as to just what may be a great privilege or opportunity. Sometimes to be born through the channels of adversity is to have had the greatest opportunity. Just because we haven’t been born rich, for instance, may be the greatest blessing we could possibly
Now, mind you, this was said to the children of Israel before they had arrived in the “Promised Land,” which was to be the land of their inheritance. (Deut. 32:8)

Now, mind you, this was said to the children of Israel before they had arrived in the “Promised Land,” which was to be the land of their inheritance. (Deut. 32:8)

Then note this next verse: “For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” (Deut. 32:9)

It would seem very clear, then, that those born to the lineage of Jacob, who was later to be called Israel, and his posterity, who were known as the children of Israel, were born into the most illustrious lineage of any of those who came upon the earth as mortal beings.

All these rewards were seemingly promised, or foreordained, before the world was. Surely these matters must have been determined by the kind of lives we had lived in that premortal spirit world. Some may question these assumptions, but at the same time they will accept without any question the belief that each one of us will be judged when we leave this earth according to his or her deeds during our lives here in mortality. Isn’t it just as reasonable to believe that what we have received here in this earth [life] was given to each of us according to the merits of our conduct before we came here? (“Understanding Who You Are Brings Self-Respect,” Ensign, January 1974, pp. 4-5)

Bruce R. McConkie (Quorum of the Twelve)

No two persons are born with the same talents and capacities; no two are rooted in the same soil of circumstances; each is unique. The cares of this world, gold and honor and power and renown, the lusts of the flesh the chains of past sins and a thousand other things – all exert their influence upon us. But in the final sense the answer stems back to premortality. We all lived as spirit beings, as children of the Eternal Father, for an infinitely long period of time in the premortal existence. There we developed talents, gifts, and aptitudes; there our capacities and abilities took form; there, by obedience to law, we were endowed with the power, in one degree or another, to believe the truth and follow the promptings of the Spirit. And the talent of greatest worth was that of spirituality, for it enables us to hearken to the Holy Spirit and accept that gospel which prepares us for eternal life.

Men are not born equal. They enter this life with the talents and capacities developed in pre-existence. Abraham saw in vision the spirit hosts of men before they were born, “and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones.” It was of that select and talented group that the Lord said: “These I will make my rulers.” And to Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, one of the greatest of the Lord’s earthly rulers, the comforting word came: “Thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.” (Abraham 3:22-23.) Alma tells us that those who are faithful high priests in this life were in fact “called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God on account of their exceeding faith and good works” while they yet dwelt in his presence. (Alma 13:3.) To Jeremiah the Lord said: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5.)

And as it is with the prophets, so is it with all the chosen seed. “God’s elect,” as Paul calls them (Romans 8:33), are especially endowed at birth with spiritual talents. It is easier for them to believe the gospel than it is for the generality of mankind. Every living soul comes into this world with sufficient talent to believe and be saved, but the Lord’s sheep, as a reward for their devotion when they dwelt in his presence, enjoy greater spiritual endowments than their fellows. (A New Witness for the Articles of Faith [1985], p.34)
It is evident that at that council certain plans had been proposed and discussed, and that after a full discussion of those principles, and the declaration of the Father's will pertaining to His design, Lucifer came before the Father, with a plan of his own, saying, "Behold I, send me, I will be thy Son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore, give me thine honor." But Jesus, on hearing this statement made by Lucifer, said "Father, they will be done, and the glory be thine forever." From these remarks made by the well beloved Son, we should naturally infer that in the discussion of this subject the Father had made known His will and developed His plan and design pertaining to these matters, and all that His well beloved Son wanted to do was to carry out the will of His Father, as it would appear had been before expressed. He also wished the glory to be given to His Father, who, as God the Father, and the originator and designer of the plan, had a right to all the honor an glory. But Lucifer wanted to introduce a plan contrary to the will of his Father, and then wanted His honor, and said: "I will save every soul of man, wherefore give me thine honor." He wanted to go contrary to the will of his Father, and presumptuously sought to deprive man of his free agency, thus making him a serf, and placing him in a position in which it was impossible for him to obtain that exaltation which God designed should be man's, through obedience to the law which He had suggested; and again, Lucifer wanted the honor and power of his Father, to enable him to carry out principles which were contrary to the Father's wish.

And further, in regard to agency; if man had not had his agency, or if he had been deprived of his agency, he could not have been tempted of the devil, or of any other power; for if they will of God prevailed, and was carried out without man's action or agency, it would have been impossible for him to have done anything wrong, for he would have been deprived of the power of doing that wrong. This was the position that Satan desired to place not only the spirits in the heavens, but also mankind upon the earth. And Satan said, "Surely I will save every one of them, wherefore, give me thine honor." But God's plan was different from this, and, as stated above, had been decided upon in the Councils of heaven; and the Father had made a decree as to how these things should be done; and that both the inhabitants of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth should have their free agency. It was against this that Lucifer rebelled; and he could not have rebelled against a plan or commandment that had not been given; for rebellion signifies a violation of law, command, or authority; and he was cast out of heaven because of the rebellion. This rebellion could not have existed without a free agency; for without a free agency they would all have been compelled to do the will of the Father. But having the free agency, they used it; and Lucifer and a third part of the angels were cast out because they rebelled and used this agency in opposition to their Heavenly Father. And not only because they rebelled, but because, as stated, "they sought to destroy the agency of man," and their agency would have been used in opposition to the interest, happiness and eternal exaltation of mankind, which were proposed to be accomplished through the atonement and redemption provided by Jesus Christ. [Quotes D&C 29:36-39; 76:25-28].

There are other questions mixed up with this rebellion besides those above referred to, and those questions are directly connected with the atonement. In the event of man having his free will and being subject to the power of temptation, the weakness of the flesh, the allurements of the world, and the powers of darkness, it was known that he must necessarily fall, and being fallen, it would be impossible for him to redeem himself, and that, according to an eternal law of justice, it would require an infinite, expiatory atonement to redeem man, to save him from the effects and ruin of the Fall, and to place him in a condition where he could again reinstated in the favor of God, according to the eternal laws of justice and mercy; and find his way back to the presence of the Father. Satan (it is possible) being opposed to the will of his Father, wished to avoid the responsibilities of this position, and rather than assume the consequences of the acceptance of the plan of the Father, he would deprive man of his free agency, and render it impossible for him to obtain that exaltation which God designed. It would further seem probable that he refused to take the position of redeemer, and assume all the consequences associated therewith, but he did propose, as stated before, to take another plan and deprive man of his agency, and he probably intended to make men atone for their own acts by an act of coercion, and the shedding of their own blood as an atonement for their sins; therefore, he says, "I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost; and surely I will do it; wherefore, give me thine honor." His plan, however, was rejected as contrary to the counsel of God, his Father, 'The well beloved Son than addressed the Father, and instead of proposing to carry out any plan of his own, knowing what His Father's will was, said, "Thy will be done;" "I will carry out thy plans and thy designs, and, as man will fail, I will offer myself as an atonement according to thy will, O God. Neither do I wish the honor, but thine be the glory;" and a covenant was entered into between Him and His Father, in which He agreed to atone for the sins of the world; and He thus, as stated, became the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. [Quotes Abraham 3:24-26 and Moses 4:1-4] From the above we gather: First, that the proposition of Lucifer was an act of rebellion "against me" -- God. Second, that God had already decreed that man should have his free agency, and this agency had been given to him by the Lord, as it is said, "which I, the Lord God, had given him." Third, that Lucifer coveted and asked for a power which was the prerogative of the Almighty and alone belonged to God; and which He called "mine own power." Fourth, that for this rebellion Lucifer was cast out and became Satan. Fifth, that the power by which he was cast out, was by a certain power of Priesthood which had been conferred by God on His Only Begotten; for he said, "By the power of mine Only Begotten I caused that he should be cast down." Sixth, the being cast down and becoming Satan, "even the devil, the father of lies," his office was to deceive and to blind men; as it is stated, "to deceive, and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice." (Mediation and Atonement [1882], pp. 93-98)

Spencer W. Kimball (President)
A plan was presented in the great council. Before this earth was created the Lord made a blueprint, as any great contractor will do before constructing. He drew up the plans, wrote the specifications, and presented them. He outlined it and we were associated with him. This was probably when, according to the scientist, this earth was just a nebulous mass in space. Our Father called us all together as explained in the scripture, and plans were perfected now for forming an earth. In his own words: “And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.” (Abraham 3:24-25.) That assemblage included us all. The gods would make land, water, and atmosphere and then the animal kingdom, and give dominion over it all to man. That was the plan. He gave it all to man that man might grow and develop and perfect himself and become godlike. (The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball [1982], p.29)

Joseph Fielding Smith (Quorum of the Twelve)

“And now, verily I say unto you,” our Redeemer says, “I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn; and all those who are begotten (i.e. who accept the Gospel) through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn. Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth.... Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God.” – D.C. 93:21-23, 38.

From this revelation we discover that in the beginning the spirits of all men were innocent. What a happy condition that must have been! But it was not to continue forever. In fact, we could not enjoy full happiness, or joy, because our spirits had not received their tabernacles of flesh by which it is possible for them to become perfect. The Lord says: “For man is spirit. The elements are eternal and spirit and element (or body), inseparably connected, receive a fullness of joy; and when separated, man cannot receive a fullness of joy.” (Ibid. v. 33-34.) So it was impossible for the pre-existing spirits to receive a fullness of joy. It is equally impossible for us in this mortal life to receive a fullness of joy, because the spirit and the body are not inseparably connected.

Therefore, there had to come a change. Preparations were made by which we could pass through this mortal probation, receiving tabernacles of flesh that we might go on to perfection. To bring about this change and to give to us the additional blessings, it was necessary that we also come in contact with pain, temptation and sin. In the world of spirits we could not suffer physical pain and understand the various conditions which are peculiar to mortal life. That we might have the knowledge of these things we had to experience them. The Father, therefore, through his Son, made known to us the plan of salvation. The full purpose of existence was explained to us in a grand council held in the heavens. We were informed that when we came to this present world we would have to suffer the ills of mortality. Among these ills we would be tried and tempted and only those who were willing to abide in the covenants of the Lord – which would be given us here—should have the privilege of returning again to his presence. We were told that many would fail because they would yield to sin and would reject the counsels of the Father, for their exaltation could only come on merit. Agency should be given us, and therefore each individual should have the privilege of choosing for himself whether he would keep the commandments of the Lord or whether he would rebel and follow sin. However, all should be rewarded according to their works and should be graded accordingly.

We are informed that in this grand council, when this plan was presented, we rejoiced, “and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” (Job 38:7.) The Savior, in presenting the plan, said “unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; and we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; and who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.” – Abraham 3:24-26. (The Way to Perfection [1935], pp. 30-31)

Ezra Taft Benson (President)

• We understand that the purpose of the Council in Heaven was to announce and present the plan of redemption for the salvation of all of God’s children. The council was called so that every man and woman could sustain the provisions of the Father’s plan, which required that all people obtain mortal bodies, be tried and proven in all things, and have opportunity to choose of their own free will to obey the laws and ordinances essential to their exaltation.

Because a fallen condition was an essential part of this plan, an infinite, eternal sacrifice was also required to redeem us from this state. We are all familiar with the facts: how Lucifer—a personage of prominence—sought to amend the plan, while Jehovah sustained the plan. The central issue in that council, then, was: Shall the children of God have untrammled agency to choose the course they should follow, whether good or evil, or shall they be coerced and forced to be obedient? Christ and all who followed Him stood for the former proposition—freedom of choice; Satan stood for the latter —coercion and force. Because Satan and those who stood with him would not accept the vote of the council, but rose up in rebellion, they were cast down to the earth, where they have continued to foster the same plan. The war that began in heaven is not yet over. The conflict continues on the battlefield of mortality. And one of Lucifer’s primary strategies has been to restrict our agency through the power of earthly governments. Proof of this is found in the long history of humanity (see Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 357). (Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson [1988], pp.23-24)

• I testify that we are the spirit offspring of a loving God, our Heavenly Father (see Acts 17:29, 1 Nephi 17:36). He has a great plan of salvation whereby His children might be perfected as He is and might have a fulness of joy as He enjoys (see 1 Nephi 10:18; 2 Nephi 2:25; Alma 24:14, 34:9; 3 Nephi 12:48, 28:10).

I testify that in our premortal state our Elder Brother in the
spirit, even Jesus Christ, became our foreordained Savior in the Father’s plan of salvation (see Mosiah 4:6–7, Alma 34:9). He is the captain of our salvation and the only means through whom we can return to our Father in Heaven to gain that fulness of joy (see Hebrews 2:10, Mosiah 3:17, Alma 38:9).

I testify that Lucifer was also in the council of heaven. He sought to destroy the agency of man. He rebelled (see Moses 4:3). There was a war in heaven, and a third of the hosts were cast to the earth and denied a body (see Revelation 12:7–9, D&C 29:36–37). Lucifer is the enemy of all righteousness and seeks the misery of all mankind (see 2 Nephi 2:18, 27; Mosiah 4:14).

I testify that all those who come into mortality accepted our Father’s plan (see Abraham 3:26). Having proved faithful in their first estate in heaven, they are now subject to the test of mortality in this second estate. That test entails doing all things whatsoever the Lord requires (see Abraham 3:25). Those who prove faithful in this second estate will have glory added upon their heads forever and ever (see Abraham 3:26). (‘I Testify,’ Ensign, Nov. 1988, p. 86)

Howard W. Hunter (Quorum of the Twelve)

Our Father in Heaven wanted our growth to continue in mortality and to be enhanced by our freedom to choose and learn. He also wanted us to exercise our faith and our will, especially with a new physical body to master and control. But we know from both ancient and modern revelation that Satan wished to deny us our independence and agency in that now-forgotten moment long ago, even as he wishes to deny them this very hour. Indeed, Satan violently opposed the freedom of choice offered by the Father, so violently that John in the Revelation described “war in heaven” (Revelation 12:7) over the matter. Satan would have coerced us, and he would have robbed us of that most precious of gifts if he could: our freedom to choose a divine future and the exaltation we all hope to obtain.

Through Christ and his valiant defense of our Father’s plan, the course of agency and eternal aspirations prevailed. In that crucial, premortal setting, a major milestone was passed, a monumental victory was won. As a result, we would be allowed to continue to pursue what President David O. McKay once described as the “eternal principle of progress.” Later Christ himself would come to earth, President McKay noted, “to perfect society by perfecting the individual, and only by the exercising of Free Agency can the individual even approach perfection” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1940, p. 118). (“The Golden Thread of Choice,” Ensign, Nov. 1989, p. 17)

Bruce R. McConkie (Quorum of the Twelve)

Elohim Presents His Plan – God the Eternal Father, the Father of the Firstborn and of all the spirit hosts, as an exalted and glorified Being, having all power and dominion, possessing all knowledge and all truth, personifying and being the embodiment of all godly attributes, did, of his own will, ordain and establish the plan of salvation whereby Christ and all his other spirit children might have power to advance and progress and become like him.

God ordained the plan. He established it. It is his plan. It was not adopted by the Father following one suggestion coming from Christ and another originating with Lucifer. The Father is the author of the plan of salvation, a plan that he created so that Christ, his Firstborn, plus all the rest of his spirit children might be saved. As Joseph Smith expressed it: “God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself.” (Teachings, p. 354.)

The Father’s plan, known first as the gospel of God, was taught to Christ, to Lucifer, and to all our Father’s spirit children. Each person, endowed with the divine power of agency, was free to believe or disbelieve, to obey or disobey, to follow Elohim or reject his goodness and grace. The plan itself included the creation and peopling of an earth. God’s children were to have the privilege of gaining mortal bodies and of being tried and tested in a probationary estate to see if they would keep their Father’s commandments at all hazards. The plan called for one of Deity’s spirit sons to be born into mortality as the Only Begotten in the flesh, who would thus inherit from the Father the power of immortality; it called for this Chosen One to work out an infinite and eternal atonement whereby fallen men would be raised in immortality, while those who believed and obeyed world also gain eternal life.

After this plan had been taught to all the hosts of heaven; after it was known and understood by all; after all its facets had been debated and evaluated -- then the Father asked for a volunteer to put the full terms and all of the conditions of his plan into force. Then it was, after all else was in readiness, that the call went forth in the Grand Council, “Whom shall I send” to be the Savior and Redeemer? (Abr. 3:27.) That is: Who will work out the infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice? Who will champion my cause? Who will go forth and do my will? Who will put all the terms and conditions of my plan in operation? Who will be my Son? Who will be the Messiah?

And thus the scene was set; thus the appointed time had come; thus the choosing and foreordination of the Messiah was at hand!

Christ Adopts the Father’s Plan – Two spirits of renown, two men of power and influence, two whose voices had been heard by all the hosts of heaven, stepped forth to answer the Father’s call, “Whom shall I send?” (Abr. 3:27.) One was Christ, the other Lucifer. Our Lord said: “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.” (Moses 4:2.) That is: “Father, I accept all of the terms and conditions of thy plan. I will do thy will. I will go down as thy Son, the Only Begotten in the flesh. With thy help I will atone for the sins of the world, and will ascribe the honor and the glory unto thee in all things.’

Lucifer said: “Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor.” (Moses 4:1.) That is: ‘I reject thy plan. I am willing to be thy Son and atone for the sins of the world, but in return let me take thy place and sit upon thy throne. Yea, ’I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; . . . I will be like the most High.’(Isa. 14:13-14.) . . .

Then came the decree. The issue was settled, except for the rebellion and war that was to follow. The voice of the Almighty said: “I will send the first.” (Abr. 3:27.) The God of heaven said: “My Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning,” shall be the Savior and Redeemer, the Deliverer and Messiah. (Moses 4:2.)
Lucifer rebelled. He and one-third of the hosts of heaven, all being of one mind and one spirit, were cast down to earth, denied mortal bodies, and forever damned, damned to suffer the fulness of the wrath of Him whose plan they rejected. (Moses 4:3-4; Abr. 3:28; Rev. 12:7-9.)

From the beginning the destined Deliverer had adopted, advocated, and sponsored the Father’s plan. Now with the decree issued that he should redeem and save mankind, that his atonement would enable men to become like their Father and God, and that the purposes of the Eternal Elohim should be brought to pass in full. (The Promised Messiah [1978], pp.48-52)