

bility, or a blessing which, likewise, foresees but does not fix the outcome” (Maxwell, p. 71).

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FOREORDINATION

Foreordination is the premortal selection of individuals to come forth in MORTALITY at specified times, under certain conditions, and to fulfill pre-designated responsibilities. In LDS interpretation, “foreordained” does not mean predetermined (*see* PREDESTINATION). It is the outcome of voluntary choice, not the violation or abrogation of it. The idea of preexistence and premortal preparation for earth life is hinted at in biblical sources, and evidence of it appears in some early Jewish-Christian sources. But it has been less prominent in later thought.

ABRAHAM was told that he was included among the valiant SPIRITS and was therefore chosen or *foreordained* before his birth to be a leader in God’s kingdom on earth (Abr. 3:22–23). The Lord likewise informed Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and . . . I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:5). Alma₂ taught that priests belonging to a “holy order” were foreordained “according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works” (Alma 13:1, 3). The Prophet Joseph SMITH concluded that “every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was” (*TPJS*, p. 365). And in addition to these foreordinations to priesthood callings, many spirits may have been foreordained to specific nations and generations, which Paul characterized as the “bounds of habitation” (Acts 17:26), as well as to families and to varied assignments, work, or missions on earth.

While each of these selections is ultimately based on the omniscience and foreknowledge of

God, several factors may influence one’s earthly circumstances. Foreordination comes as a blessing or reward for premortal righteousness and valiant commitment to Jesus Christ. BIRTH into the house of ISRAEL and heirship to all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are often seen as the birth-right of dedicated souls (see Eph. 1:4–5; Rom. 9:4). These rights and blessings may still be obtained by any and all who elect to receive them, whether in this life or the next. People sooner or later will manifest, as Elder B. H. Roberts, of the Seventy, taught, “the strength of that intelligence and nobility to which their spirits had attained in the heavenly kingdom before they took bodies upon earth” (T. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith* [Salt Lake City, 1980], p. 2). The Doctrine and Covenants teaches that men and women may come to God through RIGHTEOUSNESS and diligence and thus become numbered with those who are “sons [and daughters] of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God” (D&C 84:34).

Through faithfulness on earth, whatever one’s premortal foreordination or prior covenants, one may, as PAUL taught, become “adopted” into the favored lineage: “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6). Many, that is, may be foreordained to high missions in mortality, but may, through sin, rebellion, or sloth, fail in their foreordinations and give up their blessings. Obedience to the COVENANTS and ORDINANCES of the gospel is a primary factor in determining ultimate election to the chosen lineage.

Latter-day Saints further believe that the times, places, and circumstances of birth into mortality may be the outcome of former covenants and decisions as well as that which would be best, in divine wisdom, to provide both opportunities and challenges for the individual’s growth and development. Additionally, foreordination may also be based on God’s own purposes and plans to bless all of his children. The specifics of these factors remain unclear. As a result, a person’s premortal character can never be judged by his or her present station in life. Some of the most bitter and arduous circumstances may be, in the perspective of eternity, the most blessed, and perhaps even the situations that men and women elected and agreed to enter. Foreordination does not preclude the exercise of agency. Foreordination is a *conditional* preappointment to or bestowal of certain blessings and responsibilities.

Following Augustine and Calvin, some have interpreted the word "predestine" in Romans 8:29–30 and Ephesians 1:4–5 as meaning divine pre-causation. In this view, God is the ultimate causal agent, whereas man is always and only an effect. Latter-day Saints reject this interpretation. They believe that neither the Greek nor related scriptural sources lead to this view. Paul's usage of this term refers to being foreordained to divine sonship through Christ. Furthermore, since God knows "all things, for all things are present before [his] eyes" (D&C 38:1–2), he anticipates our choices. However, he does not make the choices for us. Knowing our potential, he foreordains those who will help to bring about his purposes. Latter-day Saints extend this concept to embrace foreordination to any divinely appointed ministry or function.

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FORGERIES OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

The possibility of forgery must be considered by all historians as they ponder their evidence and by archivists as they build their collections. Forged Dutch colonial documents have been found in New York, and forgeries of Lone Star Republic documents have been identified in Texas.

One of the most famous forgeries in LDS history is the alleged "Joseph Smith Revelation" appointing James J. Strang his successor. It was created in the 1840s, probably by Strang, and is now located at the Beinecke Library at Yale University. The motives of Strang, who hoped to succeed Joseph Smith, were clear. Equally apparent were the reasons for the forgery of a pamphlet attributed to Joseph Smith's early associate, Oliver COWDERY. *Defense in a Rehearsal of My Grounds for Separating Myself from the Latter Day Saints*, supposedly written in Ohio in 1839, first appeared in an anti-Mormon publication in 1906 (Anderson, pp. 20–21). Others have attempted forgeries for

money, ego, or the desire to influence or alter history.

The Hofmann forgeries of the 1980s have raised questions about some historical documents related to early Latter-day Saint history. In their search for new sources for information about the Church's formative period, historians were fascinated by the seemingly endless cache of historical documents supposedly located by Mark Hofmann. These documents purported to illuminate such topics as Joseph Smith's reception and translation of the records known as the Book of Mormon and the selection of his successor in Church leadership. Many, if not most, "Hofmann documents" turned out to be skillful forgeries. Hofmann had built a paper fortune from document dealing and duplicity, but when he was unable to produce additional promised documents for clients, he murdered a Salt Lake City businessman and the wife of an acquaintance in 1985. The subsequent investigation led to his arrest, confession of murder and forgery, and life sentence in the Utah State Prison.

The story of the Hofmann forgeries is the subject of several books and numerous articles. The case has deeply embarrassed both historians and the dealers and collectors who handled his documents. It has also prompted greater caution and healthy skepticism about the validity of purported historical documents of unknown background or provenance.

Documents that have been maintained in the official custody of a church or government agency throughout their life cycle should be considered more reliable than "newly found" documents. Scholars and archivists should be especially wary of those documents whose provenance is unclear. In all cases new and startling evidence must be critically evaluated against the standard of known and reliable documents.

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