respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:6, 11). These two principles provide a basis for understanding Paul’s use of the term “predestination.” The term apparently connoted “to be ordained beforehand for godly labor.” In the sense that one’s potential or calling has been recognized and declared, this interpretation conforms with the Greek term Paul used, proorizó, and does not denote an irreversible or irresistible predetermination.

Latter-day Saints are to “look unto God in every thought” (D&C 6:36), because no person can save himself. But neither can God redeem anyone without that person’s effort and collaboration. All are free to accept or reject God’s help and powers of redemption. It is clearly taught in scripture that with his help both justification and sanctification will be “just and true” (D&C 20:30). “But there is a possibility that man may fall from grace and depart from the living God; therefore let the church take heed, and pray always, lest they fall into temptation; yea, and even let those who are sanctified take heed also” (D&C 20:32, 33).

RICHARD D. DRAPER

PRE-EXISTENCE (PRE-EARTHLY EXISTENCE)

[The term “pre-existence,” or more accurately, “premortal existence,” refers to a period of individual conscious and accountable life before birth into mortality on this earth. It is Latter-day Saint doctrine that living things existed as individual spirit beings and possessed varying degrees of intelligence in an active, conscious spirit state before mortal birth and that the spirit continues to live and function in the mortal body. The revelations teach that premortal spirit bodies have general resemblance to their physical counterparts.

Articles pertaining to the premortal existence are Animals; Birth; Council in Heaven; Devils; First Estate; Foreordination; God the Father; Intelligences; Jehovah; Jesus Christ; Firstborn in the Spirit; Mother in Heaven; Premortal Life; Soul; Spirit; Spirit Body; War in Heaven.]
made (D&C 93:29). In due time that intelligence was given a spirit body, becoming the spirit child of God the Eternal Father and his beloved companion, the mother in heaven. This spirit, inhabited by the eternal intelligence, took the form of its creators and is in their image (Ballard, p. 140).

To the Prophet Joseph Smith it was revealed that we are all literal spirit sons and daughters of heavenly parents. He received a revelation of information once made known to Moses: "I [God] made the world, and men before they were in the flesh" (Moses 6:51). This likewise reflects the implication in Numbers 16:22 that God is the Father of all, and hence he is "the God of the spirits of all flesh."

Intelligences were organized before the world was, and among these were many great and noble ones, such as Abraham and Moses. God stood in their midst, saw that they were good, and chose them for responsibilities on earth and throughout eternity (Abr. 3:21–23). Jesus, the firstborn spirit, was preeminent among them. "Jesus . . . existed with the Father prior to birth in the flesh; and . . . in the pre-existent state He was chosen and ordained to be the one and only Savior and Redeemer of the human race" (JC, p. 6).

Revelation indicates that all things, even the earth itself, had a spirit existence before the physical creation. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith wrote, "Not only has man a spirit, and is thereby a living soul, but likewise the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea have spirits, and hence are living souls. . . . The fish, the fowl, the beasts of the field lived before they were placed naturally in this earth, and so did the plants that are upon the face of the earth. The spirits that possess the bodies of the animals are in the similitude of their bodies" (DS 1:63–64). The biblical passage that says the Lord God made "every plant of the field before it was in this earth, and every herb of the field before it grew" (Gen. 2:5) is clarified in a parallel scripture with the words: "For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually before they were naturally upon the face of the earth . . . and I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men and not yet a man to till the ground; for in heaven created I them" (Moses 3:5).

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "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 of the intelligences could have a privilege to advance like himself" (TPJS, p. 354). His plan included sending his sons and daughters to earth (the second estate), to obtain a body of flesh and bones and learn by experience through earthly vicissitudes, with no memory of the first estate and with the agency to fail or succeed.

In a council in heaven to preview earth life, the Lord called before him his spirit children and presented the plan of salvation by which they would come to this earth, partake of mortal life with physical bodies, pass through a probation in mortality, and progress to a higher exaltation. The matter was discussed as to how, and upon what principle, the salvation, exaltation, and eternal glory of God's sons and daughters would be brought about (cf. DS 1:58). The Firstborn of God volunteered to implement the plan of salvation (Abr. 3:27). Lucifer, who was also a son of the Father, came forward with a counterproposal: "Behold, send me, I will be thy Son, and I will redeem all mankind, that not one soul shall be lost and surely I will do it; wherefore, give me thine honor" (Moses 4:1). Already of exalted status, Lucifer sought to aggrandize himself without regard to the rights and agency of others, seeking to destroy the agency of man (JC, p. 7–8). The Father said, "I will send the first" (Abr. 3:27).

This decision led the hosts of heaven to take sides, and a third part rose in rebellion and, with Lucifer, were cast out of heaven. "They were denied the privilege of being born into this world and receiving mortal bodies. . . . The Lord cast them out into the earth, where they became the tempters of mankind" (DS 1:65; cf. Jude 1:6).

Elder James E. Talmage wrote, "The offer of the firstborn Son to establish through His own ministry among men the gospel of salvation, and to sacrifice himself, through labor, humiliation and suffering even unto death, was accepted and made the foreordained plan of man's redemption from death, of his eventual salvation from the effects of sin, and of his possible exaltation through righteous achievement" (JC, p. 18). Elder Joseph Fielding Smith explained, "God gave his children their free agency even in the spirit world, by which the individual spirits had the privilege, just as men have here, of choosing the good and rejecting the evil, or partaking of the evil to suffer the consequences of their sins" (p. 318–19).

The Book of Mormon prophet Alma3 further explains the opportunities presented to the spirit
children of God in the premortal existence: “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 . . . on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren. 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” (Alma 13:3–5; emphasis added). The “first place” here refers to one’s first estate or premortal existence.

The doctrine of foreordination suggested in the above passage is understood to mean that many may come to earth with preassigned callings and responsibilities. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “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). Abraham was shown the noble and great premortal spirits, and the Lord said to him, “Thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born” (Abr. 3:22–23). The apocryphal book of Tobit also suggests the concept that in a premortal life there were assignments that could affect mortality (6:17). However, even though some may be foreordained to special missions on earth, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith stated that “no person was foreordained or appointed to sin or to perform a mission of evil” (DS 1:61). Foreordinations and appointments do not proscribe one’s agency or free will.

The character of one’s life in the spirit world probably influences disposition and desires in mortal life. From among those who were the noble and great ones in that former world, the Lord selected those to be his prophets and rulers on earth in the second estate, for he knew them before they were born, and he knows who will be likely to serve him in mortality. Characteristics of the spirit, which were developed during experiences of the former existence, may play an important part in man’s progression through mortal life (cf. DS 1:60). “Even before they [the prophets] 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 souls of men” (D&C 138:56).

This concept that God’s spirit children developed some characteristic capabilities, but yet come to earth in forgetfulness, is similar to that expressed in Wordsworth’s “Ode, Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood”: “Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting: . . . Trailings clouds of glory do we come from God, who is our home” (verses 58, 64–65). Elder Orson Hyde, an apostle, declared that lack of memory does not mean that mankind did not have a premortal life. He explained that many people leave their homeland to live in another country, yet after a number of years memory of that earlier country can be almost obliterated as though it never existed. “We have forgotten! . . . But our forgetfulness cannot alter the facts” (JD 7:315).

Thus, to Latter-day Saints premortal life is characterized by individuality, agency, intelligence, and opportunity for eternal progression. It is a central doctrine of the theology of the Church and provides understanding to the age-old question “Whence cometh man?”

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


**GAYLE OBLAD BROWN**

**PRESIDENCY, CONCEPT OF**

The administrative/leadership calling of presidency is part of the presiding structure at all levels in virtually every unit of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A presidency generally consists of the president (or bishop) and two counselors, with assistance from secretaries and/or clerks. Presidencies are responsible for all members and programs within their organizational jurisdiction and range from the first presidency of the Church to a presidency of a small priesthood quorum or class.

Presidents are usually called by the next higher level in the organization, and their calling is “sustained” by common consent of the group over which they will preside. Counselors are