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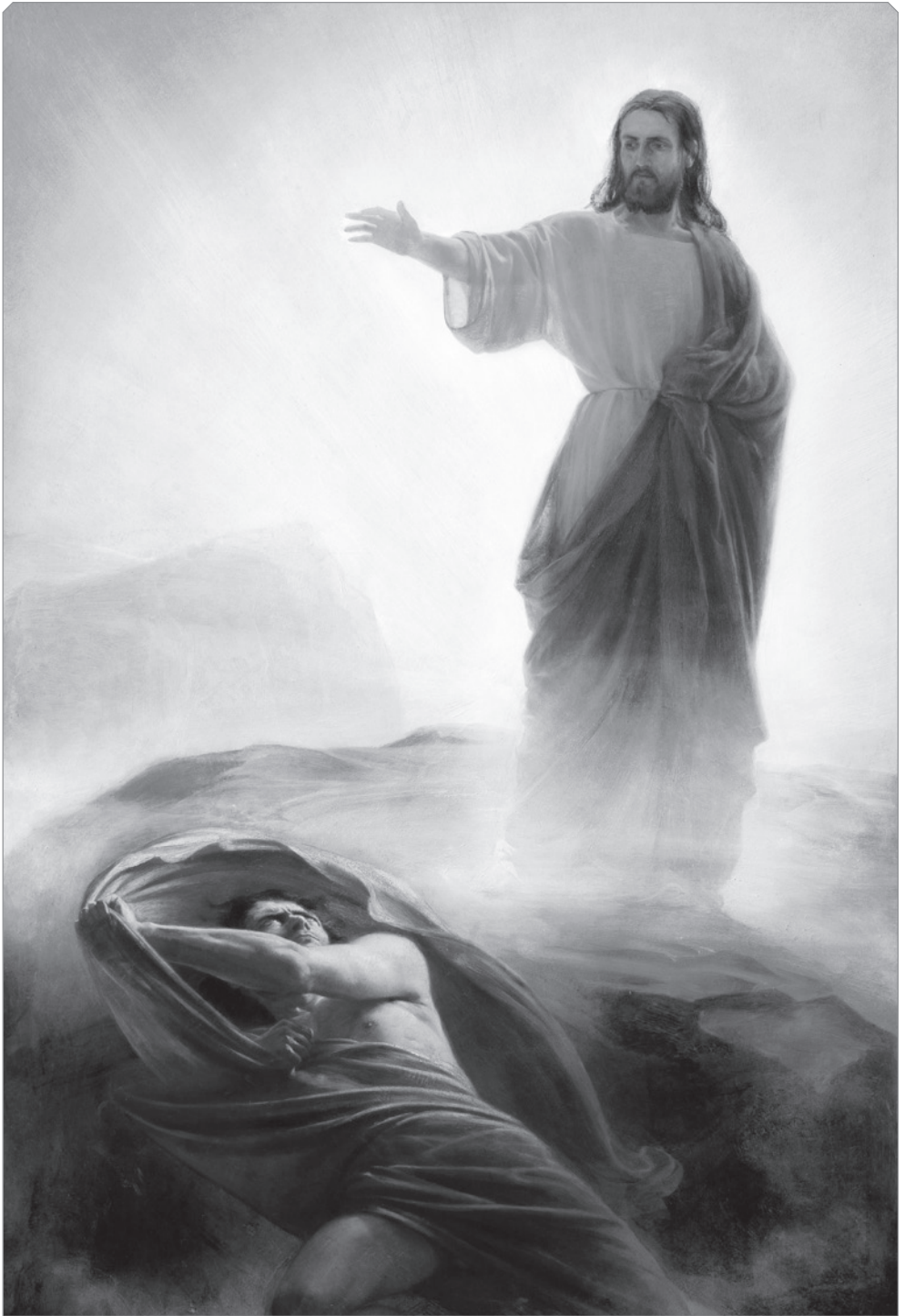
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In contrast to Lucifer and his lies, Jesus Christ stands untainted by vain ambition. He not only accomplished the Atonement but had pure motives before, during, and after the process.

“A Liar from the Beginning”

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Recently, a seminary student remarked that in the beginning, Satan “just wanted there to never be a wrong choice. He just wanted everyone to always make the right choices.” This assessment of Satan varies drastically from the Lord’s characterization of him as a liar and a murderer “from the beginning” (D&C 93:25; John 8:44). How did this student gain such a benign view of “the enemy of [his] soul”? (2 Nephi 4:28). The answer probably results from how Lucifer is often depicted in gospel discussions regarding the premortal Council in Heaven. Frequently, when Church members discuss a lesson on pre-earth life, someone will express the idea that two plans for our salvation were presented: one by Jesus and the other by Lucifer. Comments sometimes arise suggesting that Lucifer wanted to save all of God’s children and that he was going to force us to choose the right. Typically, the discussion then concludes with the assertion that God chose Jesus’ plan because it allowed us the opportunity to choose for ourselves, and Lucifer was cast out of heaven with those who preferred his plan.

Unfortunately, this type of discussion portrays the premortal council in such a way that Lucifer may come across as a benevolent, though misguided,

spirit who simply wanted all of us to be saved. Meanwhile, our Heavenly Father falsely appears to be an uncertain God, searching out ideas to formulate a plan for the redemption of his children. To some, the Father may also appear rather harsh. For instance, some may ask, “Why would God condemn Lucifer for seeking to redeem all?” Missing from these discussions are two fundamental truths that affirm the omniscient, loving nature of our Heavenly Father as well as the malicious designs of Lucifer. First, Heavenly Father established a perfect and eternal plan for our salvation, a plan which predated the Council in Heaven and needed no amendments or improvements. Second, Lucifer did not set forth a plan for our salvation. Rather, his proposal was in essence a lie. In fact, Lucifer’s proposal was deceptive in two ways. It was a lie in substance because his claim to redeem all mankind was utterly unfeasible. It was also a lie of intent because the actual motive behind his proposal had nothing to do with the redemption of our souls. The purpose of this article is to highlight the perfect and eternal nature of our Heavenly Father’s plan as well as the dually deceptive nature of Lucifer’s proposal to redeem all.

God’s Perfect and Eternal Plan

God our Father is the author of the plan of salvation (see Titus 1:2; D&C 20:17–19).¹ We learn from the Prophet Joseph Smith that Jesus Christ also “knew the plan of salvation” in the premortal realm, though he was not the plan’s originator.² The Father and the Son are omniscient beings who view all things past, present, and future as “one eternal ‘now.’”³ They “contemplated the whole of the events” that would befall each of the Father’s children before we ever came to earth, including our individual sins and circumstances, and they “made ample provision for [our] redemption.”⁴ Because the plan was composed by our perfect Heavenly Father, it is likewise perfect. It reflects God’s infinite intelligence as well as his perfect love, justice, and mercy (see Alma 42:13–26).

Not only is God’s plan perfect but it is eternal—both in purpose and in scope. In other words, the intent of the plan never changes, nor do the means by which that intent is accomplished. When Moses asked the Lord why he created and populated worlds, he learned of God’s universal objective: “Worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose. . . . For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:33, 39). All of God’s creative works thus converge in the accomplishment of one triumphant purpose—the

exaltation of his children. Latter-day Apostles have affirmed the eternal nature of God’s plan. Elder Neal A. Maxwell, for example, cited the words of President J. Reuben Clark in his assertion that “‘Our Lord is not a novice, he is not an amateur; he has been over this course time and time and time again.’ . . . The Lord himself described His course as ‘one eternal round’ (D&C 3:2; see also 35:1; 1 Nephi 10:19; Alma 7:20).”⁵ Because God’s “great and eternal plan” (2 Nephi 11:5) does not vary, the same plan that will exalt a person on this earth operates consistently throughout time and space.⁶ Elder Maxwell explained that “the plan of salvation is executed and re-executed, again and again, in realms beyond our purview.”⁷ Thus the Father’s plan presented for our redemption and exaltation was not newly conceived by Jehovah during the premortal Council in Heaven, and certainly it was not lacking in thoroughness. The Father’s plan is perfect and eternal.

A Lie in Substance

Lucifer’s proposal to redeem all mankind was a lie. In spite of his awareness of the Father’s perfect and eternal plan of salvation, Lucifer audaciously approached the throne of God and asserted: “I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost” (Moses 4:1). Could Lucifer really have accomplished the redemption of all as he boasted? The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “Jesus said there would be certain souls that would not be saved; and the devil said he could save them all.”⁸ Clearly, these assertions could not both be true. As we seek to understand these two positions, it is crucial to remember that Jesus Christ has always embodied “the Spirit of truth” (D&C 93:26), while Lucifer, in contrast, is “a liar from the beginning” (D&C 93:25). These revealed insights help us see that Lucifer’s proposal to redeem all was not in substance a plan, but a lie.⁹ Lucifer’s claim to redeem all was clearly deceptive because it suggested he could obtain better results than God in bringing about the redemption of mankind. As a divine and flawless system, the great “plan of our God” (2 Nephi 9:13) cannot be improved, especially not by Lucifer, a being of finite understanding who was and is immensely less intelligent than God (see Abraham 3:19; see also Moses 4:6). Whatever power or knowledge Lucifer may have possessed was grossly insufficient to accomplish his offer of universal redemption.

Exaltation cannot be achieved through compulsion. Comments of Church members sometimes imply a belief that Satan could have somehow redeemed all mankind by taking away our agency or forcing us to choose the right.¹⁰

This faulty idea finds expression in common refrains that liken various forms of human compulsion to “Satan’s plan.” Unfortunately, such remarks do not question Lucifer’s ability to force us all back to heaven, only his methods. A weakness in this reasoning is that it ignores the most fundamental problem with Lucifer’s proposal—the fact that he could not actually accomplish what he proposed. This reasoning also disregards the primary objective of the Father’s plan of salvation, which is to provide his children the opportunity to gain exaltation. As shown below, two reasons illustrate why a plan based on compulsion could never bring about our exaltation.

The first reason Lucifer could not have executed a functional plan based on force stems from the incompatibility of compulsion and exaltation. As the ultimate purpose of Heavenly Father’s plan for us, exaltation involves so much more than simply returning to heaven. Rather, his plan entails a process of development whereby we may realize our potential as “children of the Highest” (Luke 6:35) and ultimately become like him (see D&C 132:19–24). Elder Dallin H. Oaks aptly made this point in his talk “The Challenge to Become,” wherein he explained that “it is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions” to obtain salvation or exaltation. Rather, “the gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.” Elder Oaks illustrated this point with the following parable:

A wealthy father knew that if he were to bestow his wealth upon a child who had not yet developed the needed wisdom and stature, the inheritance would probably be wasted. The father said to his child:

“All that I have I desire to give you—not only my wealth, but also my position and standing among men. That which I *have* I can easily give you, but that which I *am* you must obtain for yourself. You will qualify for your inheritance by learning what I have learned and by living as I have lived. I will give you the laws and principles by which I have acquired my wisdom and stature. Follow my example, mastering as I have mastered, and you will become as I am, and all that I have will be yours.”¹¹

In light of this teaching, comments suggesting Satan could have forced exaltation upon all mankind appear entirely untenable. The idea that God became as he is through a path of compulsion suggests he really is no God at all. If such were the case, he would lack the divine attributes that constitute godhood, including the attribute of omnipotence. In reality, God is an all-powerful being who possesses the fullest measure of agency. Therefore, to become like him, we must also possess and righteously use the gift of agency.

Exaltation is the result of the personal choice to exercise faith in our Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, to access their grace and mercy through the power of the Atonement, and to willingly obey the laws upon which exaltation is predicated (see D&C 130:20–21). There are no shortcuts or alternate routes in the process, “for strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the exaltation” of our souls (D&C 132:22). Thus, exaltation, by its very definition, cannot result from a plan that operates through compulsion.

A second reason exaltation cannot be achieved through compulsion stems from the nature of agency and its relationship to our existence. The Lord linked the concepts of agency and existence in the following revelation: “All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence. Behold, here is the agency of man” (D&C 93:30–31).¹² The view that Lucifer could have redeemed all by eliminating agency fails to consider how doing so would fundamentally alter our existence.

Our understanding of the relationship between agency and existence can be strengthened by examining the four fundamental principles upon which agency is based, which are divine law, opposition, knowledge of good and evil, and the power to choose.¹³ The first two principles, divine law and opposition, directly pertain to the relationship between agency and existence and are addressed immediately below. The latter two principles, knowledge of good and evil and the power to choose, are included in a later section that discusses specifically how Lucifer sought to destroy agency in the premortal realm.

The principles of divine law and opposition constitute the relationship between agency and existence. Without law and opposition, neither agency nor a meaningful existence could be possible. Revelation affirms the necessity of God’s laws to create order in the universe (see D&C 88:12–13, 36–38). Without law, there would be no opposition, no distinguishing feature between sin and righteousness (see 2 Nephi 2:13). Some have mistakenly surmised that opposition exists because of Lucifer. In reality, opposition exists because of God—for as he designates through laws and commandments that which is good, he concurrently indicates what is evil (see Alma 42:17–23).¹⁴ Thus the laws of God create the possibility of opposition, which in turn provides mankind the polarizing options of obedience and disobedience, of love and hate, and so forth. If God were to remove opposition, Lehi teaches, “all things must have vanished away” (2 Nephi 2:13), both good and evil. In fact, opposition is crucial not only to the creation of morality (good and evil) but

to creation itself. How could an earth, a person, or an intelligible formation of any sort exist without opposition—without the distinguishing properties of which it is composed? Without opposition, what would separate light from dark, energy from inactivity, protons from electrons? Science, as well as scripture, affirms that “there is an opposition in all things; . . . [or else] all things must needs be a compound in one, . . . having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption” (2 Nephi 2:11).

In failing to consider these truths, some suggest that Lucifer sought to alter divine law or eliminate opposition to bring about compulsory salvation. Is it possible that Lucifer could have altered the laws of God? Could he have eliminated opposition so that we could only choose the right? The answer to these questions is *no*.¹⁵ Law and opposition exist eternally, independent of Lucifer. In fact, Lucifer himself is dependent upon law and opposition for his very existence. Without divine law and opposition, there could be no order in the universe, no creation, and certainly no plan of salvation. Thus the idea that Lucifer could create a plan of compulsory salvation by eliminating divine law or opposition is simply impossible. The removal of law or opposition and the destruction of agency would also destroy our existence.

Satan sought to destroy agency through deception rather than compulsion. The notion that Satan proposed to redeem all mankind by eliminating agency stems from an interpretation of the first four verses of Moses chapter 4. In verse 1, Satan makes his claim that he will redeem all mankind, and then we read in verse 3 that he “sought to destroy the agency of man, which . . . the Lord God, had given him.” The ideas in these verses have often been combined and interpreted to mean Lucifer planned to save all through force. Please notice, however, that in these verses Lucifer never actually spells out *how* he planned to redeem all mankind. Indeed, no explanation of a systematic plan is given. He simply claims that he “surely” will redeem all, and then we are given the Lord’s commentary that Lucifer was cast out “because” he “sought to destroy the agency of man” (v. 3). Thus a conceptual gap exists between the ideas of universal salvation and the destruction of agency—a gap that is often bridged with the assumption that Lucifer contrived a compulsory plan of redemption. However, this assumption presupposes that Lucifer was honest in his claim. It is based on the dubious premise that Lucifer truly wanted to save all and that somehow he could have actually done so.¹⁶ Could it be that Satan didn’t really have a plan to force us back to heaven? Could it be that he sought to destroy the agency of man not by conceiving an operable plan of compulsion

but through deception—by making an offer that appeared generous and attractive but in reality constituted nothing more than a ruse to gain power? The answers to these questions are found in Moses 4, which indicates that Lucifer’s false proposal resulted in his becoming “Satan, . . . the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will” (v. 4). In other words, these scriptures suggest Lucifer became Satan not because he submitted a plan to redeem us all by force, as is often suggested in Church classes, but because he sought to destroy our agency by lying to us and persuading us to follow him. Hence, Lucifer’s first lie was *not* his pitch to Eve in the Garden of Eden, “Ye shall not surely die” (v. 10). Rather, it came much earlier, in the premortal realm: “I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost” (v. 1). This lie constituted Lucifer’s primeval ploy to destroy the agency of man.

To understand why Lucifer sought to captivate others through deception rather than compulsion, it is crucial to recognize that Satan did not then possess—nor does he now—the ability to directly control our use of agency. Satan could never force a soul to heaven just as he cannot now force a soul to hell.¹⁷ The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “the devil has no power over us only as we permit him.”¹⁸ Because of this reality, Lucifer necessarily targets the latter two components of agency mentioned above—our knowledge of good and evil and our power to choose. These two components of agency are interdependent. On one hand, the power to choose allows us through righteous choices to increase in light and truth, to gain greater discernment of good and evil, and to expand our possibilities of choice. On the other hand, poor choices lead to the loss of light, which leads to fewer possible choices, thus diminishing our agency.

Revelation confirms that Lucifer has only an indirect role in this process of constricting our knowledge and choice: “That wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience” (D&C 93:39). This statement shows that Satan cannot directly destroy either our knowledge of good and evil or our power to choose, but he can entice us to make choices that will result in limiting our use of agency (see 2 Nephi 28:21–22).¹⁹ Satan labors cunningly to warp our knowledge of good and evil and to weaken our power to choose, fully aware that it is through *our* disobedience that he is able to destroy our agency.

Lucifer employed these tactics of deception and enticement while attempting to destroy agency in the premortal realm. As stated previously,

the Lord presented a perfect, eternal plan for our redemption. He presented truth, which is “knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; and whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning” (D&C 93:24–25). Included in the Lord’s presentation of truth was the hard reality that some would choose not to fulfill their potential.²⁰ Lucifer evidently exploited this reality to promote the lie that he could redeem all. His proposal failed in two ways to measure up to the Lord’s definition of truth cited in the revelation above. Paradoxically, Lucifer’s proposal was both more than truth—an exaggeration—and less than truth—a subtle withholding of crucial information. It was more than truth in that he claimed all would be redeemed. It was less than truth because he presented no functional alternative that could have actually brought about universal salvation.

Lacking other means to gain the power he craved, Lucifer proposed a lie, a glittering snare—“I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost” (Moses 4:1)—to obtain the ears, the hearts, and the eventual captivity of other spirits. Employing a brand of seduction that anti-Christ and apostates would later imitate in mortality, Lucifer spoke half-truths and hyperbole, “flattering words” (Alma 30:47) and “perverse things, to draw away disciples after” himself (Acts 20:30; see also 1 John 2:22).²¹ “A third part of the hosts of heaven,” the Lord revealed, “turned he away from me because of their agency” (D&C 29:36).²²

Some might wonder how those who followed Lucifer could have allowed themselves to do so.²³ Were they genuinely deceived? If so, how could they be held responsible for their choice? The Book of Mormon account of Korihor is helpful in addressing these questions, for it shows how a person may use his agency to “resist the spirit of truth” (Alma 30:46) and willingly accept Satan’s deceptions. Korihor confessed: “The devil hath deceived me . . . and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing to the carnal mind; and I taught them, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true; and for this cause I withstood the truth, even until I have brought this great curse upon me” (Alma 30:53). Implicit in this confession is Korihor’s admission that he did not at first believe Satan’s deceptions, yet he embraced them because they pleased his carnal nature. Satan merely offered the philosophical framework necessary to justify the wicked course Korihor desired to pursue. In this case, the lies Satan promoted included the denial of God and of

accountability to him for one’s choices. Though Satan appeared to Korihor “in the form of an angel” (Alma 30:53) and introduced these deceptions, the ultimate cause of Korihor’s ruin was self-deception. “I always knew that there was a God,” he admitted (Alma 30:52). In spite of Lucifer’s lies, Korihor was fully aware of—and fully accountable for—his own wickedness.

Similarly, those spirits who sided with Lucifer in the premortal realm ultimately were not tricked into choosing their fate, nor were they forced. On the contrary, they knowingly “suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy [God’s] power” (D&C 76:31). Their choice will lead them to an ultimate loss of light, to a place apart from this earth called outer darkness (see D&C 76:44). There the blessings of agency are quenched while their torment is not, for these spirits willfully “receive[d] not the gift” (D&C 88:33) of redemption but rather enlisted as volunteers in a great war against their Redeemer.²⁴ Scholars have noted the poignant irony that “those who embraced the cause wherein none were to be lost became the only ones who are everlastingly lost.”²⁵ In response to Lucifer’s false proposal, these spirits foolishly turned from the truth, freely espoused the lie, unconscionably championed the liar, and made his path their own. This is how Lucifer used deception, not compulsion, to destroy agency in the premortal realm.²⁶

As in premortality, the choice between truth and falsehood continues today. The fundamental principles of agency have not changed. The doctrine of agency revealed in scripture helps us understand that Satan’s power has always been limited by how we respond to the truth and light which emanate from the Father and the Son (see D&C 84:44–53). Satan remains incapable of changing divine law or of abolishing opposition. He therefore continues, through the only means he can, seeking to destroy the agency of man. He attempts to distort our perspective of truth, and he entices us to choose for ourselves a dreaded fate.

In summary, Lucifer’s proposal to redeem all mankind was not a plan of salvation; it was a lie. Through this lie, Satan attempted to destroy the agency of man. As gospel instructors, it is important for us to understand and teach that Lucifer lied in offering universal redemption. President Gordon B. Hinckley warned that “small aberrations in doctrinal teaching can lead to large and evil falsehoods.”²⁷ Mistaken notions concerning the premortal council can result in flawed views that minimize the omniscience and love of the Father and the Son while falsely attributing benevolence to Lucifer.

We can avoid these errors by affirming the perfect and eternal nature of our Heavenly Father's plan. Additionally, when comments arise purporting that Satan had a plan to redeem all, we can kindly help others see how this notion contradicts revealed truths concerning the nature of exaltation as well as the relationship between agency and existence.

A Lie of Intent

As mentioned earlier, Lucifer's proposal to redeem all mankind was dually deceptive—it was a lie in both *what* he said and *why* he said it. President James E. Faust commented on Lucifer's false intent, explaining that after Jehovah declared he would fulfill the Father's plan, "Satan . . . countered that he would come and 'redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost,' . . . [but] *something had to be in it for him. And thus he became the father of lies and selfishness.*"²⁸ Perhaps because classroom discussions do not often consider that Lucifer lied in claiming he could redeem all, students may also fail to realize the deception behind his motives. For instance, discussions regarding the Council in Heaven sometimes involve comments suggesting Satan wanted to save everyone. While it is true that Lucifer implied this motive through his claim, the Lord—who knows the hearts of all (see Alma 18:32; D&C 6:16; 33:1)—clearly divulged Lucifer's actual intent (see Moses 4:3). Lucifer was only ostensibly concerned with the redemption of all. As shown below, his proposal was part of a premeditated rebellion against the Father, the Son, and the established priesthood order of heaven. Moreover, Lucifer's actions following the rejection of his proposal demonstrate that he was never interested in accomplishing the redemption of the Father's children.

Rebellion against the Father. We learn from revelation that Lucifer couched his claim to redeem all mankind with the following clause, brazenly spoken to the face of God: "Give me thine honor" (Moses 4:1). The Father also revealed that Lucifer sought "that I should give unto him mine own power" (Moses 4:3). These important insights indicate Lucifer's proposal to redeem all was motivated by his lust for supremacy.²⁹ In authority and dominion, he desired to "be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:14)³⁰ but certainly not in "gentleness and meekness, and . . . love unfeigned" (D&C 121:41) nor in the host of other righteous attributes that constitute both the character of God and the pattern for exercising his priesthood power in righteousness. Unlike God, who glories in the exaltation of others (see Moses 1:39), Lucifer sought his own glorification at the expense of others.

Because Lucifer’s motives were based on his lust for the Father’s honor and power rather than a sincere desire to bring about the redemption of others, the Lord has repeatedly characterized his actions during the premortal council as a rebellion (see Moses 4:3; D&C 76:25).³¹ In fact, the Lord marked Lucifer’s rebellion at the time he spoke his proposal: “He rebelled against me, *saying*, Give me thine honor, which is my power” (D&C 29:36; emphasis



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Mistaken notions concerning the premortal council can result in flawed views that minimize the love of the Father and the Son.

added). This designation of Lucifer's proposal as an act of rebellion indicates his offer was not innocently given. From the beginning, Lucifer's proposal was crafted as a means of serving his own purposes, not the Father's.

Rebellion against the Son. Lucifer's false proposal represented rebellion not only against the Father but also against the Son.³² The third chapter of Abraham shows how Lucifer sought to usurp Jehovah's position. The account begins with the Father's question "Whom shall I send?" (Abraham 3:27). Both Jehovah and Lucifer reply with the words "Here am I, send me" (Abraham 3:27), though Jehovah answers first. Heavenly Father then announces his decision to "send the first" (Abraham 3:27), and so the "second was angry, and kept not his first estate" (Abraham 3:28). Read in isolation from other scriptures, this account may not seem to provide much evidence of Lucifer's wrongdoing. Indeed, it may be read in such a way that Lucifer appears to have committed no offense until after his offer was rejected. However, by situating this episode in a broader doctrinal context,³³ two primary reasons emerge that reveal why Lucifer did not qualify to fulfill the role of Redeemer and consequently show why his offer demonstrated rebellion against the one who did qualify. The first reason centers on Jehovah's identity as the Firstborn among God's spirit children. The second is based on the requirement of character that was necessary to fulfill the role of Redeemer.

Comprehension of Lucifer's rebellion against the Son begins with one's appreciation of the following doctrine revealed by our Savior: "I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn" (D&C 93:21; see also Colossians 1:18).³⁴ A statement by the First Presidency has similarly affirmed that "among the spirit children of Elohim the firstborn was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ to whom all others are juniors."³⁵ As the Firstborn, Jesus Christ "possessed all the rights, interests, and inheritance of the Father. He was the Birthright Son. He was in premortality the inheritor and rightful heir of all the Father possessed. He was the Father's agent and executor."³⁶

Jehovah's inheritance as the Firstborn and Birthright Son included another sacred title. He was to be called the Only Begotten Son of God, meaning that "in His nature would be combined the powers of Godhood with the capacity and possibilities of mortality."³⁷ In his second estate, the Only Begotten Son would possess "life in himself" (John 5:26), including power to lay down his life at will and "power to take it again" (John 10:18).³⁸ This power, which Jesus rightfully received through his birthright as the Firstborn spirit, was necessary for him to fulfill his unique role as Savior and accomplish

the infinite and eternal Atonement. Jesus Christ used his divine inheritance as the Birthright Son to bless all the Father’s children, offering us resurrection and eternal life through his merits. Mercifully, through the Father’s magnanimous plan, we may become “joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17) and be numbered in eternity among “the church of the Firstborn . . . into whose hands the Father has given all things” (D&C 76:54–55).

A number of scriptures indicate Lucifer coveted the authority and power belonging to Jehovah as the Firstborn and Only Begotten Son. For example, Doctrine and Covenants 76 states Lucifer “rebelled against the Only Begotten Son whom the Father loved and who was in the bosom of the Father” (D&C 76:25).³⁹ Additionally, the fourth chapter of Moses shows that Lucifer’s proposal of universal redemption was accompanied by this self-centered petition to the Father: “I will be thy son” (Moses 4:1). Because all of us are spirit children of God, the phrase “I will be thy son” refers to something greater—the birthright inheritance received by Jesus. If Satan ever had a plan in premortality, clearly it was a plan of wickedness bent on supplanting the Firstborn.

In contrast to Lucifer, Jehovah qualified to receive the role of Redeemer not only by virtue of his rightful inheritance as Firstborn but also because of his character. President Ezra Taft Benson illustrated the disparity between Jehovah and Lucifer in terms of their desires concerning the Father’s purposes: “Christ wanted to serve. The devil wanted to rule. Christ wanted to bring men to where He was. The devil wanted to be above men.”⁴⁰ These differences existed long before the Council in Heaven.⁴¹ Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote that “Jesus, being sinless and being the Firstborn of the Eternal Father in the spirit world, was utterly and uniquely qualified to perform the Atonement. No one else was qualified in full conformance with the Father’s will.”⁴² Additionally, scriptures evidence that in premortality Jehovah actively and worthily fulfilled his inherited role of Firstborn Son. Well before his mortal birth, Jehovah authoritatively represented the Father, created numerous worlds, and was identified as a god (see John 1:1–4; Moses 1:1–6).⁴³ The Firstborn Son also taught us the gospel plan in the premortal realm (see Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:1–2),⁴⁴ and many of us exercised the principles of faith and repentance through his name and by virtue of his future Atonement (see Alma 13:1–10).⁴⁵

Thus the Father’s plan always centered on this Firstborn Son who would become, by right of inheritance and character, the Only Begotten in the flesh. There was not a “back-up savior” or “plan B,” nor was there ever need

for one. “My Beloved Son, . . .” the Father declared, “was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning” (Moses 4:2; see also 1 Peter 1:20). The writer of Hebrews emphasized this point by rhetorically asking, “For unto which of the angels said [God the Father] *at any time*, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? . . . [And] to which of the angels said [God the Father] *at any time*, Sit on my right hand . . . ?” (Hebrews 1:5, 13; emphasis added; see also Psalms 2:7; 110:1). The unequivocal answer to these questions is none but Jesus Christ (see Hebrews 1:2–4, 8–9). Jehovah, the Firstborn of the Father, was always designated to be “the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever” (Moses 5:9). “This,” the Father testified, “is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten” (Moses 6:62).

Understanding Jehovah’s identity as the Firstborn and his perfect character helps us see that when the great question was posed—“Whom shall I send?”—the choice was obvious. This is especially evident when one considers the Father’s options: his magnificent Firstborn Son or the pompous and coniving Lucifer. Yet, if the Father always knew who would be the Savior, why did he ask, “Whom shall I send?” Three reasons appear as possible answers to this question, each of which acknowledges the eternal significance of agency.

First, the Father may have asked the question so that Jehovah could make a free and willing offering of himself. Although he was designated by birthright to fulfill the role of Redeemer, Jehovah yet possessed his agency.⁴⁶ By asking the question “Whom shall I send?” our Father allowed his Firstborn to offer himself “of his own voluntary will” (Leviticus 1:3). Through his submissive response, Jehovah established a perfect pattern for offering all future sacrifices, which were to be given with “real intent” (Moroni 7:6) and “not grudgingly” (2 Corinthians 9:7), just as he gave himself (see D&C 138:13).

A second possible reason for the question “Whom shall I send?” may have centered on the Father’s other children. Perhaps the question was asked to benefit those who witnessed Jehovah’s response. If we, as spirits, had the opportunity to see Jehovah voluntarily submit to the coming sorrow, agony, blood, and grief that an infinite Atonement required, consider how our faith in and loyalty to him may have been fortified. This may have been a powerful teaching moment to underscore in our minds the infinite costs associated with the gift of agency, as well as the benevolent determination of Jehovah to pay those costs for us. Such a scenario brings to mind the words of John: “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Finally, the Father may have queried “Whom shall I send?” to provide opportunity for Lucifer to exercise his agency.⁴⁷ Elder David A. Bednar has taught that the Father uses questions to allow his children to act as agents rather than “merely be acted upon” and to ensure accountability to him for their choices.⁴⁸ Obviously aware of Lucifer’s lust for power, the Father nevertheless asked a question that allowed Lucifer to act for himself. The question may have granted Lucifer a chance to amend his apostate course and choose to sustain Jehovah, the Firstborn Son upon whom the plan was centered. Rather than defer to the prescribed plan, however, Lucifer used the opportunity to parade his fantastic ego and continue in his rebellion. Because Lucifer was given the opportunity to act, he was also accountable to receive the consequences of his actions (see D&C 101:78).

This pattern whereby God uses questions as an impetus for his children to wisely use their agency is reflected in the mortal experience of Cain and Abel. In this account, much like in the premortal council, two sons make offerings unto God. Abel’s offering of the firstlings of his flock was accepted because it was given in faith according to the prescribed plan of redemption (see Moses 5:20). Conversely, Cain’s offering of “the fruit of the ground” (Moses 5:19) was rejected because it represented a blatant change⁴⁹ of the symbolism typifying “the great Sacrifice which God had prepared,” as the Prophet Joseph Smith explained, and therefore ran “contrary to the plan of heaven.”⁵⁰ Like Lucifer, Cain distorted the very essence of God’s plan and sought to reshape it after his own image.⁵¹ After rejecting the offering, however, the Lord mercifully proffered Cain the opportunity to right his course by providing the following questions and counsel: “Why art thou wroth? Why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted” (Moses 5:22–23). Additionally, the Lord warned Cain of the consequences accompanying his course (see Moses 5:23–25). Yet “Cain was wroth, and listened not any more to the voice of the Lord, neither to . . . his brother, who walked in holiness before the Lord” (Moses 5:26).

The archetypal elements of this incident reverberate with similarities to our premortal existence.⁵² Sadly, both episodes end with the mourning of a father over the loss of a rebellious son (see Moses 5:27; D&C 76:26)—a son who eventually sought the blood of his brother (see Moses 5:32; John 8:44). If Satan, like Cain, was forewarned of the consequences of his choices, then the following line from Milton’s *Paradise Lost* seems to accurately portray

Lucifer's character and the twisted reasoning behind his ongoing rebellion: "Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven."⁵³

When we understand Christ's preeminence as the Father's uniquely qualified Firstborn Son, we can more fully comprehend why Lucifer's proposal was a rebellion and why his intent was so pernicious. Lucifer's proposal was not a plan to save souls, nor was this his motive. Had Lucifer truly been interested in the salvation of souls, he would have sustained Jehovah, the Father's perfect choice as Redeemer. Instead, Lucifer attempted to deprive Jehovah of his rightful position and authority and sought to take these for himself. Because Heavenly Father was clearly aware of the vast differences in character between Jehovah and Lucifer, his question of whom to send was not the inquiry of an unknowing God.⁵⁴ Rather, the question was a fulcrum that allowed both Jehovah and Lucifer to act for themselves and, in the process, to display their character and intentions.

Rebellion against the priesthood. Lucifer's rebellion against the Father and the Son necessarily encompassed opposition to the priesthood, which is "called *the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God*" (D&C 107:3; italics in original). The fact that this priesthood order is eternal, "without beginning of days or end of years" (Alma 13:7), indicates Lucifer's rebellion sought to circumvent or reshape the established order of heaven. Lucifer's treachery was compounded by the fact that he was "an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God" (D&C 76:25). Though further detail regarding Lucifer's position of authority has not been revealed, it is clear that his choice to rebel included deliberate plotting against God's priesthood government. Thus Lucifer became a traitor, the "Primeval Turncoat," as Elder Jeffrey R. Holland once described him.⁵⁵ President Joseph F. Smith insightfully declared that Satan "hates the *Priesthood*, which is after the order of the Son of God."⁵⁶ President Marion G. Romney taught, "It now is and has always been the objective of Satan to destroy the Priesthood of God. As long ago as the war in heaven, he sought to usurp the power of the Priesthood."⁵⁷ Unwilling to pursue exaltation as a joint heir with Christ by humbly submitting to "the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father" (Alma 13:9), Lucifer arrogantly sought to destroy the order and set up his own priesthood.⁵⁸

Lucifer's actions betrayed his feigned desire to redeem all mankind. Not only has the Lord revealed the duplicitous nature of Lucifer's intentions, but Lucifer has as well. A familiar adage suggests our actions speak louder than our words. In this case, Lucifer's words "I will redeem all mankind" represent

a mere whimper when contrasted with his actions. The scriptural record of Lucifer’s deeds demonstrates that he had no real interest in the redemption of mankind. Elder Dallin H. Oaks has noted that Lucifer merely “*pretended*” to seek our redemption when he offered his proposal.⁵⁹ Indeed, the gaping discrepancy between his words and actions—from claiming a desire to save all to leading so many to sorrow and misery—bears witness of Lucifer’s pretense. The Psalmist’s phrase provides an apt description of Lucifer’s hypocrisy: “The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart” (Psalm 55:21).

At some point during our first estate, Lucifer’s intentions became very clear. John described him as a great dragon whose tail “drew the third part of the stars of heaven” and led them to war against Jehovah, Michael, and those many other spirits who valiantly defended the plan of God (Revelation 12:4, 7–9). His well-earned title of *devil*, meaning slanderer, offers insight into Lucifer’s methods of war.⁶⁰ Evidently, one of his strategies was to slander the name and character of Jehovah in order to shake the confidence of Heavenly Father’s children that God’s Firstborn could perfectly fulfill the exacting role of Savior.⁶¹ Lucifer undoubtedly spread lies against Christ’s allies as well, seeking to defame their character and diminish their stature in the eyes of the Father’s other children. In this way, Lucifer became, even before his banishment from heaven, the “father of all lies” (Moses 4:4) and the “accuser of [his] brethren” (Revelation 12:10). The War in Heaven was therefore a war of truth and falsehood, trust and doubt. Those who overcame in this war did so by faith in “the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11). Perhaps Lucifer, knowing the Father would weep for the loss of his rebellious children (see D&C 76:26–27; Moses 7:28–37), believed he could pressure God into surrendering to his demands for power. Yet our Father maintained his course in righteousness.

Through his actions in the War in Heaven, Lucifer proved himself “a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). Indeed, he was the original mass murderer, leading whomever he could to self-inflicted spiritual death. But Lucifer’s influence over the wicked failed to appease his ravenous envy of God’s power. As the prototypical son of perdition (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3; D&C 76:26), Lucifer also desired to crucify Jesus and “put him to an open shame” (D&C 76:35). This demonic goal was finally accomplished during the meridian of time, wherein Satan tempted a uniquely wicked generation to crucify our Lord (see 2 Nephi 10:3). Furthermore, Lucifer has from the

beginning sought the rejection, scorn, and slaying of all God's prophets, each of whom is a type of Christ and "an annoyer of [Satan's] kingdom" (Joseph Smith—History 1:20). Through these deeds, Satan has inflicted suffering upon the noble and great ones, while grasping the wicked "with his everlasting chains" (2 Nephi 28:19) and leading the indifferent "carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:21).

Some of the most damning evidence of Satan's intentions is recorded in the synoptic Gospels, wherein we read of his attempts to persuade Jesus to sin during and after his forty-day sojourn in the wilderness (see Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13). This was no benign testing of the promised Messiah. Rather, these attempts represented a personal vendetta against the Father and the Son with inestimable ramifications for each of us. Had Jesus succumbed at this point or any other, even in the slightest degree, his ability to atone would have been lost, and our faith in the Father's plan and in the name of his Only Begotten would have been rendered meaningless.⁶² With a voided Atonement, all who had sided with Christ and come to earth would have "become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil" (2 Nephi 9:8). In this awful state of subjection, "our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself" for all eternity (2 Nephi 9:9). Satan's temptations of the Christ weren't just coincidental to such an outcome—they were calculative.

Satan's failure to destroy God's plan in one fell swoop, however, did little to assuage his desires or efforts to bring God's children into a state of misery. Quite the opposite—Satan apparently has intensified his efforts upon us as individuals "because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Revelation 12:12) before he is rendered utterly impotent. In our days of probation, therefore, we must never forget Peter's warning that our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He and his angels observe and seek to exploit our every weakness, they seek to inspire and then celebrate every sin, and they mercilessly laugh at every form of malice, abuse, and addiction (see Moses 7:26; 3 Nephi 9:2).⁶³

In summary, Lucifer's proposal to redeem all was a gross misrepresentation of his actual intentions. This "liar from the beginning" (D&C 93:25) merely feigned a desire to redeem all mankind. The Lord has clearly revealed Lucifer's motives and the cause of his rebellion. He wanted power, honor, and

ascension. He sought to supplant the Son and dethrone the Father. Elder B. H. Roberts remarked, “Truly the ambition of Lucifer was boundless, as his selfishness was fathomless.”⁶⁴ While Jehovah and Lucifer both uttered the phrase “Here am I, send me,” their motives were entirely at odds. Scriptures testify his actions were anything but naïve: “The devil sinneth from the beginning” (1 John 3:8), for he “sought that which was evil before God” (2 Nephi 2:17). Furthermore, Satan and “the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” (Jude 1:6), have subsequently demonstrated their depravity. Day after day, year after year, and dispensation after dispensation, they have tirelessly opposed God’s redemptive work while seeking to bring about the misery of all mankind.

Conclusion

Father in Heaven’s plan of salvation is perfect and eternal. There was no oversight in the premortal council—no changes to the plan were, or ever will be, required. When students understand this truth, they will also see that Lucifer could not have proposed a plan of salvation. Instead, he spoke a self-promoting lie. It was a lie in substance because redemption for all mankind was beyond his power to deliver. There can be no alteration to the laws which govern both our agency and our existence, and compulsory salvation is simply impossible. Despite Lucifer’s claim of “surely I will do it” (Moses 4:1), revealed truth makes it clear that surely he could not. Lucifer’s words also represented a lie of intent. With utter disregard for our salvation, he promoted a prevarication to get what he really wanted—honor and power.

When we help students understand the beautifully merciful and just nature of Heavenly Father’s plan, their faith in God can become more firm. Students will not have to wonder if God’s will, disposition, or mood will change. If they know that Heavenly Father has perfectly formulated their mortal existence to bring about his “great and eternal purposes” in their lives (Alma 42:26), they can more fully trust him and turn to him during any time of trial. Moreover, when we emphasize the eternally central role of Jesus Christ in the Father’s plan, they can more fully appreciate why “there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ” (Mosiah 3:17). Students will then better understand why Church leaders continually talk of Christ and rejoice in Christ, preach and prophesy of Christ, that all of us might “know to what source [we] may look for a remission of [our] sins”

(2 Nephi 25:26). Lucifer could not have improved the manner or means of saving the Father's children—no one could have.

In contrast to Lucifer and his lies, Jesus Christ stands eternally at the right hand of our Father, representing all that a Son and a Savior should be. Untainted by vain ambition, he is our divine Redeemer not only because he accomplished the Atonement but because of the purity of his motives before, during, and after the process. In premortality, he humbly responded to the Father: "Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2). Shortly after experiencing the agony of his infinite and eternal Atonement, Christ exclaimed: "I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11). And the Savior remains just as pure and dedicated to the Father in the present: "I came by the will of the Father, and I do his will" (D&C 19:24).

The Father and the Son have left nothing undone in the great plan of happiness. Nephi testified that the Lord "doeth not anything save it be for the benefit of the world; for he loveth the world" (2 Nephi 26:24). Jacob, chapter 5, manifests the Lord's tireless labor for our salvation as evidenced by his repeated question, "What could I have done more for my vineyard?" (v. 41). "Salvation is free," Lehi declared (2 Nephi 2:4), and "all things are given [men] which are expedient unto [them]" (2 Nephi 2:27). From the pre-mortal Council in Heaven to this very moment and on through eternity, we are blessed by a flawlessly designed plan which manifests to us the love of our Heavenly Father and his Beloved Son, our Savior. **RE**

Notes

1. See also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 210.
2. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, 407.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, 406.
4. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, 406–7.
5. Elder Maxwell quotes President Clark in the first half of the above quotation. See *Moving in His Majesty and Power* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 21.
6. We learn from Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24 that the inhabitants of numerous worlds "are begotten sons and daughters unto God" through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. This truth underscores the central role of Jesus Christ's infinite Atonement in God's plan for the salvation of our world as well as the many others created by his Only Begotten.
7. Neal A. Maxwell, "Wisdom and Order," *Ensign*, June 1994, 43.

8. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 6:314.

9. Elder Richard G. Scott firmly declared that Satan “is a consummate bluff, just extraordinarily able to make people think he has power he doesn’t have.” Elder Richard G. Scott Answers Questions Asked by Young Single Adults,” *Church News*, October 24, 2009, 5.

10. Throughout this article the term “agency” is understood to be “power to choose good or evil; to seek after that which is good . . . or to pursue an evil course.” *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, 213.

11. Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, November 2000, 32.

12. Citing this revelation, President Marion G. Romney taught, “Abridge man’s agency, and the whole purpose of his mortality is thwarted. Without it, the Lord says, there is no existence.” In Conference Report, April 1966, 99; see also Neal A. Maxwell, *One More Strain of Praise* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999), 77–94.

13. Elder Bruce R. McConkie asserted that these “four great principles must be in force if there is to be agency.” *Mormon Doctrine* (Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1966), 26, “agency.”

14. The Joseph Smith Translation of Romans 7:13 reads: “*But sin, that it might appear sin by that which is good*, working death in me; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinfull.” Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 487; emphasis added.

Elder B. H. Roberts of the Quorum of the Seventy taught that evil “has always existed as the back ground [*sic*] of good.” *New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons and Deseret News, 1895–1909), 3:223; for Roberts’s complete discussion of this topic, see pages 219–30.

15. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “God has more power than all other beings, because He has greater knowledge; and hence He knows how to subject all other being to Him. He has power over all.” *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, 265. Satan, because of his inferior intelligence and power, could never alter the laws of God.

16. Though the scriptures accurately quote Lucifer, they do not allege he was telling the truth. Indeed, the idea that Lucifer had a plan to redeem all by eliminating agency is not specifically supported by scripture. In fact, the only scripture references that allude to anything that might be termed “Satan’s plan” speak of his desires to bring about our destruction and misery, not our redemption (see 2 Nephi 9:28; Alma 12:5; 28:13; Helaman 6:30; D&C 10:12, 23).

17. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, 214.

18. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, 214. President James E. Faust of the First Presidency similarly taught: “Satan is our greatest enemy and works night and day to destroy us. But we need not become paralyzed with fear of Satan’s power. He can have no power over us unless we permit it. He is really a coward, and if we stand firm he will retreat.” “Be Not Afraid,” *Ensign*, October 2002, 4. Whether in heaven or on earth, Lucifer must have our compliance to destroy our agency; there can be no outright compulsion (see James 4:7; Revelation 12:7–8).

19. The scriptures reveal his methods of enticement, including deception (see Moses 4:4), justification of sin (see 2 Nephi 28:8), “anger against that which is good” (2 Nephi 28:20), and continual efforts to stir up contention and iniquity (see 3 Nephi 11:29; Helaman 16:22). However, such enticements by themselves do not cause a loss of agency. The danger lies in our decision to yield to these enticements.

20. This truth was affirmed by the Prophet Joseph Smith in a quotation we cited earlier: *History of the Church*, 6:314.

21. While these scriptures refer to examples of the wickedness of mortals, they are also instructive of Lucifer's strategies. Such examples provide types of Satan's character and the methods he employs to bring others under his dominion. See James E. Faust, "Serving the Lord and Resisting the Devil," *Ensign*, September 1995, 2–7; "The Forces That Will Save Us," *Ensign*, January 2007, 5–9.

22. The term "third part," as used in this passage of scripture and also in John's account of the War in Heaven (see Revelation 12:4), may not mean the literal fraction one-third. "The phrase 'third part' implies a numerically undetermined segment of the population who symbolize the fact that Satan's power over the premortal spirits was limited. Thus, the numerology in the passage implies that we have no knowledge of the fraction or percentage of the Father's children who followed the adversary. All we know is that Satan had a limited influence over those in the presence of God." Alonzo L. Gaskill, *The Lost Language of Symbolism: An Essential Guide for Recognizing and Interpreting Symbols of the Gospel* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 118–19, see also 359–60n69.

23. Kevin M. Bulloch explores this topic in his fine article "The War in Heaven and Satan's Continuing Battle for Power," *Religious Educator* 11, no. 1 (2010): 33–45.

24. The Lord revealed that the devil, his angels (or premortal followers), and those who become sons of perdition during their second estate are "the only ones who shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord, after the sufferings of his wrath" (D&C 76:38).

25. Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler, *Revelations of the Restoration: A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants and Other Modern Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 217.

26. Consider how the following statement from the Prophet Joseph Smith pertains to those spirits in the Grand Council who turned away from the plan of God while turning toward Lucifer: "The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power." *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, 214.

27. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 620.

28. James E. Faust, "What's in It for Me?," *Ensign*, November 2002, 19; emphasis added.

29. Notice the repetitive emphasis on the selfish nature of Lucifer's proposals in Moses 4:1 and Isaiah 14:13–14.

30. We recognize that these verses in Isaiah can have double meaning—they describe both Lucifer and the king of Babylon.

31. President John Taylor asserted that "Satan rebelled against God. He could not rebel against a law if that law had not been given. He could not have violated a commandment if that commandment did not exist." *The Gospel Kingdom: Selections from the Writings and Discourses of John Taylor, Third President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 100.

32. Revelation affirms Lucifer "sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ" (D&C 76:28).

33. President Boyd K. Packer explained that "individual doctrines of the gospel are not fully explained in one place in the scriptures, nor presented in order or sequence. They must be assembled from pieces here and there. They are sometimes found in large segments, but mostly they are in small bits scattered through the chapter and verses." "The Great Plan of Happiness," in *Charge to Religious Educators*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1994), 112.

34. Elder Bruce R. McConkie affirmed that Jehovah “is the Firstborn spirit child of the Eternal Elohim.” *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 165.

35. “The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles,” *Improvement Era*, August 1916, 934–42, reprinted in *Ensign*, April 2002, 18; see also “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” *Ensign*, April 2000, 2, reprinted in *Ensign*, March 2008, 44; capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling standardized.

36. D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, *Verse by Verse: The Four Gospels* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 12.

37. James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 77.

38. President Joseph Fielding Smith emphasized that the “Savior was a God before he was born into this world.” *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56), 1:32.

39. Similarly, Doctrine and Covenants section 88 refers to Lucifer as “him who seeketh the throne of him who sitteth upon the throne, even the Lamb” (D&C 88:115). That Lucifer jealously craved the position and power of Jehovah is further evidenced in the Book of Moses. There we read that after Moses had seen Jehovah, Satan appeared and “cried with a loud voice, and ranted upon the earth, and commanded, saying: I am the Only Begotten, worship me” (Moses 1:19).

40. *Sermons and Writings of President Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 286.

41. Scripture affirms Jehovah was “in the bosom of the Father, even from the beginning” (D&C 76:13) and “was prepared from before the foundation of the world” (Moses 5:57) by the Father to fulfill his crucial ministry (see John 8:25–28).

42. *One More Strain of Praise* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999), 42–43.

43. In a 1916 doctrinal exposition, reprinted in the *Ensign* in 2002, the First Presidency explained that “in all [God’s] dealings with the human family Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. This is true of Christ in His preexistent, antemortal, or unembodied state, in the which He was known as Jehovah; also during His embodiment in the flesh; and during His labors as a disembodied spirit in the realm of the dead; and since that period in His resurrected state.” “The Father and Son,” 13.

44. Thomas A. Wayment, ed., *The Complete Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament: A Side-by-Side Comparison with the King James Version* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 224.

45. Doctrine and Covenants 93:38 acknowledges that sin existed in the premortal realm: “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” (emphasis added). The word *again* indicates that we moved from clean to filthy and back to clean prior to our mortal births. President Joseph Fielding Smith explained that “the spirits of men were not equal [in premortality]. 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.” Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:59.

46. “It is important to remember that Jesus was capable of sinning, that he could have succumbed, that the plan of life and salvation could have been foiled, but that he remained

true. Had there been no possibility of his yielding to the enticement of Satan, there would have been no real test, no genuine victory in the result. If he had been stripped of the faculty to sin, he would have been stripped of his very agency. It was he who had come to safeguard and ensure the agency of man. He had to retain the capacity and ability to sin had he willed so to do." *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 4.

47. President Brigham Young taught, "The Lord Almighty suffered this schism in heaven to see what his subjects would do." *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 51. This statement suggests that the Lord allowed the rebellion to occur so that each spirit, including Lucifer and his followers, might exercise agency.

48. Elder David A. Bednar, "Seek Learning by Faith," *Ensign*, September 2007, 63. Though Elder Bednar's insight is specific to Adam, the same reasoning may apply to why God asked, "Whom shall I send?"

49. Cain's offering was a deliberate corruption of the ordinance of sacrifice revealed by God to Adam. Our understanding of Cain's apostasy is illuminated by the fact that Adam and Eve made "all things known unto their sons and their daughters" (Moses 5:12), including the knowledge that the sacrifice of their firstlings was done in "similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father" (Moses 5:7).

50. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, 48.

51. See Gaskill, *The Lost Language of Symbolism*, 215–16.

52. The Lord himself draws this parallel by warning Cain that he would be called Perdition—a name given also to Lucifer in conjunction with his rebellion and fall in the first estate (see Moses 5:24; D&C 76:25–26).

53. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, bk. 1, line 263.

54. To believe that God expressed uncertainty or hesitancy about his plan through the question "Whom shall I send?" besmirches his characteristics of omniscience and omnipotence. See Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 19–20.

55. "The Inconvenient Messiah," *Ensign*, February 1984, 68.

56. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998), 262; emphasis in original.

57. Marion G. Romney, in Conference Report, October 1960, 74.

58. Lucifer "desired to set up his own priesthood order. The order was designed to set himself up at its head and none would preside over him, not even God. . . . Those who are willing to give Lucifer honor as their father from his priesthood order and are known as the sons of perdition." McConkie and Ostler, *Revelations of the Restoration*, 218.

59. Dallin H. Oaks, *The Lord's Way* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), viii, note; emphasis in original.

60. Bible Dictionary, "Devil," 656.

61. Gospel scholar Robert Matthews wrote: "Quite often I find when I talk to students about the Savior, some of them wonder if there was an alternate plan; they seem to be asking, 'What if Jesus had failed?' Now, not intending to cast aspersions on these students, I think that that question typifies one of the tools the devil used in the premortal life. I think he not only 'guaranteed' salvation without effort for everybody but also probably went around saying something like this: 'Now look, if you allow yourselves to be born into this world subject to the fall of Adam, subject to sin and to death, and if Jesus doesn't come through, then you

have lost your salvation.’ That is true; that is what *would* have been the case. If Jesus had not performed the infinite atonement, we all would have become sons of perdition, and he would have also.

“I can almost hear Lucifer in that premortal sphere saying, ‘Are you going to put all of your faith in Jesus?’ And those spirits who were not strong in their faith were thus prompted by the devil to wonder, to doubt, and to think to themselves, ‘Well, I don’t know if I want to trust Jesus or not. What if he fails?’ Such a thought is just about like going tracting without purse or scrip but having ten dollars in your shoe just in case. That is not faith. During our pre-mortal life, having faith in Jesus Christ meant that we knew he would not let us down. That is why the gospel is called the ‘good news.’ The good news is that there is a redemption for mankind and that Jesus successfully performed the Atonement in order to bring that redemption about.” *A Bible! A Bible* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990), 287–88.

62. Hunter, *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, 4.

63. As President Harold B. Lee taught, “There are carefully charted on the maps of the opposition the weak spots in every one of us. They are known to the forces of evil, and just the moment we lower the defense of any one of those ports, that becomes the D Day of our invasion, and our souls are in danger.” *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 167.

64. B. H. Roberts, *The Seventy’s Course in Theology*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1907–12), 4:33.