

Agency Outline – Mike Baird

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What is Agency?

- Ability to choose

Who has agency?

- Joseph Smith
" All persons are entitled to their agency, for God has so ordained it. He has constituted mankind moral agents, and given them power to choose good or evil; to seek after that which is good, by pursuing the pathway of holiness in this life, which brings peace of mind, and joy in the Holy Ghost here, and a fulness of joy and happiness at His right hand hereafter; or to pursue an evil course, going on in sin and rebellion against God, thereby bringing condemnation to their souls in this world, and an eternal loss in the world to come. " (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, (2007),206–16*)
- Joseph F Smith
"This is a blessing that God has bestowed upon the world of mankind, upon all his children alike. " (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith, 283*)

When did we have our agency given to us?

- Moses 4:3
" Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought

to destroy the *agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him*, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;"

- D&C 29:35

"And it came to pass that Adam, being tempted of the devil—for, behold, the devil was before Adam, for he rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also *a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency*"

To Exercise our agency what must exist? (Opposites)

- 2 Nephi 2:11-16

"Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other"

- D&C 29:39

"And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves"

- Joseph F Smith

"If men were not left free to choose the good and refuse the evil, or vice versa, there would be no righteousness or even reason in bringing them to judgment " (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith*, 283)

What makes our agency possible? (Atonement)

- 2 Nephi 2:26-7

"And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And *because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever*, knowing good from evil; *to act for themselves and not to be acted upon*, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given. Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to

choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself"

Satan tried to destroy our agency

- Moses 4:3
" Wherefore, because that *Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man*, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;"

We are free to choose but must accept consequences of our choices

- 2 Nephi 2:26
"And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, *save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day*, according to the commandments which God hath given."
- D&C 93:31-32
" Behold, *here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man*; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light. And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation"
- D&C 101:78
"That every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment"
- Joseph F Smith
"This is a blessing that God has bestowed upon the world of mankind, upon all his children alike. But he will hold us strictly to an account for the use that we make of this agency, and as it was said of Cain, so it will

be said of us; "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door" (Gen. 4:7)." (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith, 283)

God does not force us (neither can Satan)

- Joseph Smith
"God *would* not exert any compulsory means, and the devil *could* not; and such ideas as were entertained [on these subjects] by many were absurd" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, (2007),206–16*)
- Joseph Smith
"Satan cannot seduce us by his enticements unless we in our hearts consent and yield. Our organization is such that we can resist the devil; if we were not organized so, we would not be free agents." (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, (2007),206–16*)
- Joseph Smith
"The devil has no power over us only as we permit him; the moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power." (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, (2007),206–16*)
- Joseph F Smith
"The agency of man is not interfered with by Divine Providence." (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith, 283*)
- Howard W Hunter
"God does not force us to do right, and Satan does not have the power to force us to do wrong. They may stand at the door and knock, but we have the power to open it to whomsoever we wish" (*The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter, pg 86.*)

Agency & Anger

- Can anyone make you angry? - No
 - Lynn G. Robbins (Quorum of 70)
"A cunning part of his (satans) strategy is to dissociate anger from agency, making us believe that we are victims of an emotion that we cannot control. We hear, "I lost my temper." Losing one's temper is an interesting choice of words that has become a widely used idiom.

To “lose something” implies “not meaning to,” “accidental,” “involuntary,” “not responsible”—careless perhaps but “not responsible.”

“He made me mad.” This is another phrase we hear, also implying lack of control or agency." (“Agency and Anger,” Ensign, May 1998, pg 80)

- If God does not force us and Satan can't then who is "making us angry"?
- Lynn G. Robbins (Quorum of 70)
"This is a myth that must be debunked. No one makes us mad. Others don't make us angry. There is no force involved. *Becoming angry is a conscious choice, a decision; therefore, we can make the choice not to become angry. We choose!*" (“Agency and Anger,” Ensign, May 1998, pg 80)

Agency & other feelings & reactions

- Don't **WE** decide then on how we deal with everything?

Agency and keeping the commandments

- Is agency restricted by keeping the commandments?
 - Example of keeping speeding laws
 - Obey and keep driver's license so can drive (more freedom)

Agency and your Family

- Do you have your agency in your family?
- How does exercising our agency and maturity go together?

Agency and Bad Things

- How does understanding agency help us to understand why bad things happen in this world?
- Joseph F Smith
" God, doubtless, could avert war, prevent crime, destroy poverty, chase away darkness, overcome error, and make all things bright, beautiful and joyful. But this would involve the destruction of a vital and fundamental attribute in man—the right of agency. It is for the benefit of His sons and daughters that they become acquainted with evil as well as good, with darkness as well as light, with error as well as truth, and with the results of the infraction of eternal laws. Therefore he has permitted the evils which have been brought about by the acts of His creatures, but will control their ultimate results for His own glory and the progress and exaltation of His sons and daughters, when they have learned obedience by the things they suffer. The contrasts experienced in this world of mingled sorrow and joy are educational in their nature, and will be the means of raising humanity to a full appreciation of all that is right and true and good." (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith, 283)

Agency and Foreordination

- Does God's foreknowledge take away our agency?
 - Neal Maxwell
" As to the questions asked—even by faithful Saints—such as, "If what is going to happen is 'all set,' why pray?," the answer is that God foresees, but He does not compromise our agency. All the outcomes are not, for our purposes, "all set." True, God's foreseeing includes our prayers, our fasting, our faith, and the results that will thereby be achieved. But until our mortal actions occur and our decisions are

made, things are not "all set." The Father foresaw the Atonement, but the Atonement was not wrought until the very moment of Christ's death when He gave up His spirit, which He had the power to retain." ("All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience" pg 97)

- Does God's foreknowledge make him responsible for what we do?
- Joseph F Smith
"The foreknowledge of God does not imply His action in bringing about that which He foresees, nor make Him responsible in any degree for that which man does or refuses to do" (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith, 283)

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