

## Was Eve Beguiled?

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James C. Christensen, 1942: *Pandora*

Whether earnestly promoted as Christian theology or merely mentioned in tasteless jest, Eve is too often painted in the colors of Pandora,<sup>1</sup> a mythological figure whose unbridled curiosity unleashed a long train of potent ills against mankind. This is *not* the view of the Latter-day Saints.

In light of the LDS understanding that the Fall was a necessary prerequisite for mankind's further progression and our rejection of the generally negative portrayals of Eve in historical Christianity, Mormon authors typically emphasize her perceptiveness and interpret her role as ultimately constructive. A few have, however, taken this view to what I take to be an untenable extreme, not only rightfully exonerating her from full accountability for her transgression and honoring her lifelong faithfulness, but in addition arguing that, for various reasons, she was not actually "beguiled" by Satan in her decision to take of the forbidden fruit.<sup>2</sup>

Such a view goes well beyond the settled LDS doctrines that the Fall was an essential part of the divine plan from the beginning and that Adam and Eve did not commit a sinful or otherwise blameworthy act. Though it is easy to see how such views might arise from honest misunderstanding, a careful analysis will show that they should be no more a part

of the beliefs of well-informed Latter-day Saints than the notion that Eve was a prototype of Pandora.

My differences in perspective with the well-intentioned LDS authors who make such arguments are, of course, far outweighed by our common beliefs and sympathies. In presenting what I see as necessary correctives to certain aspects of these views, I intend no personal offense. In hopes of eliminating any misrepresentation, I sent early and final drafts of this article to two of the authors referenced, Alonzo Gaskill and James T. Summerhays, who graciously responded with some welcome suggestions. I hope that the shortcomings in what I have written below will also be corrected in time through the comments of perceptive readers and happy prospect of continuing revelation on the subject.

After a review of the “standard” view of the Fall, I will examine two of the questions raised by the writings of Gaskill and Summerhays: “Was Satan entirely truthful?” and “Was Eve actually beguiled?” We will then return to the story of the Fall, showing how Eve wisely took the initiative to counteract Satan’s efforts to rupture her unity with Adam. In conclusion, I will show why the story of the Fall cannot be fully appreciated when presented as a laundry list of isolated symbols, but instead must be understood as a harmonious whole.

### **The Standard View of the Fall**

Before examining the contention that Eve was not beguiled in her encounter with Satan, it seems important to outline a brief summary of the “standard” view of the Fall, meaning the one that I have most commonly encountered in LDS Church settings over the years:

1. We do not believe that the Fall was a surprise to God, since it was foreseen and planned for from the beginning.<sup>3</sup>
2. We do not believe that the Fall was something to be regretted, since it constituted the appointed means by which mortality, an essential step in mankind’s progression, would be afforded to Adam and Eve and their posterity.<sup>4</sup>
3. We do not blame, but rather are grateful for Adam and Eve’s roles in the Fall. Eve was deceived by Satan, and thus did not act with full understanding. Adam, in light of Eve’s honest and logical explanation and knowing that it was essential that he and Eve not be separated, wisely chose to partake of the fruit.<sup>5</sup> The only blameworthy party in the story is the serpent.
4. Because Adam and Eve did no wrong, we label their actions as “transgressions” rather than “sins.”<sup>6</sup> What is important, of course, is not the dictionary definitions of these two words—which are, after all, quite similar in meaning—but rather the effort in LDS scripture and prophetic teachings to preserve a careful conceptual distinction between what happened in the Garden of Eden and the kind of trouble you and I get ourselves into when we yield to temptation.<sup>7</sup>

Elder James E. Talmage has written what might be taken as the closest thing we currently have to an “official” statement about the specifics of the Fall. As part of a manuscript that

was “read... and approved by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve” and “published by the Church,”<sup>8</sup> his *Jesus the Christ* affirmed that Adam and Eve were “pure” and “noble.” Noting that, of course, “when we pass through the veil we shall perhaps learn something of their high estate, more than we know now,”<sup>9</sup> Elder Talmage wrote:

The woman was deceived, and in direct violation of the counsel and commandment partook of the food that had been forbidden... Note in this matter the words of Paul the apostle: “Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived was in the transgression”<sup>10</sup>... The arch-tempter through whose sophistries, half-truths and infamous falsehoods, Eve had been beguiled, was none other than Satan.<sup>11</sup>

Elder Talmage's book *The Articles of Faith*,—the lectures on which it was based having been “prepared in accordance with the request and appointment of the First Presidency” and subsequently “published by the Church,”<sup>12</sup>—further elaborates. Following a description of how “Satan... sought to beguile the woman,” we read:

The woman was captivated by these representations; and, being eager to possess the advantages pictured by Satan, she disobeyed the command of the Lord, and partook of the fruit forbidden. She feared no evil, for she knew it not.<sup>13</sup>

Later, Elder Talmage summarizes:

Eve was fulfilling the foreseen purposes of God by the part she took in the great drama of the Fall; yet she did not partake of the forbidden fruit with that object in view, but with intent to act contrary to the divine command, being deceived by the sophistries of Satan, who also, for that matter, furthered the purposes of the Creator by tempting Eve; yet his design was to thwart the Lord's plan... Adam's part in the great event was essentially different from that of his wife; he was not deceived; on the contrary he deliberately decided to do as Eve desired, that he might carry out the purposes of his Maker.<sup>14</sup>

I am persuaded that Elder Talmage states the situation accurately. Although he recognized that Satan beguiled Eve, he in no way implies that Eve chose evil—because “she knew it not.” He rightfully portrays Adam and Eve as “pure” and “noble,” having played their parts perfectly in accordance with the Father's original plan.

### **Was Satan Entirely Truthful?**

According to the “standard” view described above, Satan mixed truth with falsehood in his assertions to Eve. On the one hand, Satan is seen to have told a part-truth in his assertion that Adam and Eve's eyes would “be opened, and [they would] be as gods, knowing good and evil”<sup>15</sup>; on the other hand, his claim that they would “not surely die”<sup>16</sup> as the result of eating is taken to be deception pure and simple.

In a thoughtful book entitled *The Savior and the Serpent*, Alonzo Gaskill questions this picture of Satan's deceptiveness,<sup>17</sup> arguing that he was “actually quite accurate”<sup>18</sup> in his statement about *both* matters.

To fully appreciate Gaskill's perspective, it must be understood that he takes the unusual position of interpreting the entire story of the Fall as being about you and I, the "metaphorical" Adam and Eve, and not about our first parents, the "historical" Adam and Eve. Thus, according to Gaskill, any attempt to use the biblical text or modern temple teachings to prove that the "historical" Eve was deceived—or to assert anything else about our first parents—is futile, as he sees the account as wholly applying to us.<sup>19</sup>

To make my own position on this question clear, I do, of course, agree that we have much to learn about our own lives in studying the scriptural accounts of the Fall, especially given that each of us have, in a sense, "sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."<sup>20</sup> However, it is one thing to say that everything our first parents did in the story of the Fall applies in some way to us, and quite another to say that nothing in that admittedly highly-figurative scriptural account applies exclusively to them. Neither in scripture, nor in the writings of Church authorities, do I find an advocate for the idea that the "historical" Adam and Eve are completely absent from the Genesis and book of Moses accounts. Moreover, with respect to temple teachings, Elder Talmage confirmed in a summary of the endowment published by the Church<sup>21</sup> that "our first parents,"<sup>22</sup> the "historical" Adam and Eve, are the subjects of the figurative story told within the experience of that temple ordinance.

Whether one takes the subjects of the story of the Fall as told in the book of Moses as figuratively portraying the "historical" or the "metaphorical" Adam and Eve, Gaskill's arguments contending for Satan's supposed full veracity bear directly on the primary question raised by this article. He makes two appeals for his conclusion that Satan was truthful not only about the opening of Adam and Eve's eyes, but also in his response to God's statement that in eating the fruit they would "surely die":

1. *Appeal to the underlying Hebrew text:* In Moses 4:10, Satan tells Eve: "ye shall not surely die." However, taking a cue from the literal word-by-word rendering of the Hebrew given in a footnote of the LDS edition of the Bible ("Dying, ye shall not die"), Gaskill asserts that the English of the KJV and the book of Moses are misleading. He argues "from the Hebrew" that Satan's meaning was that in "physically dying you will not die (i.e., permanently die)."<sup>23</sup> In other words, Satan is taken to be truthfully saying that if Eve ate, the consequence of death she would eventually suffer would only be of temporary duration. However, I can find no justification in the Hebrew text itself for the meaning that is being applied to the phrase, since in Hebrew the repetition of the verb in such grammatical constructions ("dying," "die") is always understood as intensifying the negation (i.e., changing the meaning "you will *not* die" to something like "you will *absolutely not* die"). So far as I have been able to determine, the interpretation of this phrase has never been a matter of controversy among biblical scholars. Since the plain meaning of the emphatic Hebrew text, traditionally rendered "ye shall not surely die," is well understood,<sup>24</sup> the argument fails.
2. *Appeal based on authority:* In a second form of argument, Gaskill quotes from a discourse of Brigham Young where he says that Satan "told the truth" to Eve. However, the original context of the statement makes it clear that President Young was only referring to the Devil's accurate claim that her eyes would be

opened, not to his false averral that she could eat and live with impunity.<sup>25</sup> Elsewhere, in fact, President Young is remembered as having explicitly said that Satan told Eve “many truths and some lies.”<sup>26</sup> Gaskill similarly quotes Hyrum Andrus out of context to support the argument.<sup>27</sup> However, Andrus never makes the claim that Satan is *fully* truthful in his words to Eve. In fact, he has elsewhere taken the opposite point of view.<sup>28</sup>

Neither the arguments based on the Hebrew text, nor the appeal to authority seem to make a compelling case for the idea that Satan was entirely truthful in his statements to Eve. By way of contrast, the Book of Mormon more than once prefaces a mention of Adam and Eve’s transgression by the statement that the Devil is “the father of all lies”<sup>29</sup>—implying that the two concepts are closely linked. Perhaps the most telling of these passages is 2 Nephi 2:18. Here the word “wherefore” seems to function as an explicit logical connective between the clause that describes who Satan is and the one that tells what he said: “the devil, who is the father of all lies, *wherefore he said*: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but shall be as God, knowing good and evil.”

### **Was Eve Actually Beguiled?**

In a separate effort to refute the idea that Eve was beguiled, James T. Summerhays<sup>30</sup> summarizes the research of Vivian McConkie Adams—and, indirectly, that of Beverly Campbell, who has presented similar views.<sup>31</sup>

While not seeking to directly contradict the statement of scripture that Satan “*sought*... to beguile Eve,”<sup>32</sup> the question raised by these authors is whether the Adversary actually *succeeded* in deceiving her.<sup>33</sup> Summerhays claims that, in view of the “original Hebrew meaning and restoration scripture,” it is plain that, in Eve’s statement that she was beguiled, she “is not saying she was tricked.” Four reasons are given for this conclusion:

1. *Summerhays*: “Hebrew scholar Nehama Aschkenasy points out that the original Hebrew word that was translated as beguiled is a rare verb that has rich and connotative meanings. ‘Beguile’ suggests Eve underwent a deep internal process; she weighed, pondered, and reflected upon the ramifications of partaking of the fruit before she did so.<sup>34</sup> The King James translators, themselves inheritors of the original sin cultural bias, used the word almost exclusively to mean deceived. They did not capture the original richness of the word.”

*Response*: Aschkenasy’s discussion of the Hebrew term behind the English word “beguiled” is useful insofar as it highlights the seeming complexity of the “inner conviction” that “led [Eve] to the act of disobedience.”<sup>35</sup> The multifaceted nature of her experience is likewise witnessed by the text of Moses 4:12 itself.<sup>36</sup> However, the idea that deception is an important component of the meaning of “beguiled”<sup>37</sup> is not merely an outmoded concept attributable to the lack of sophistication of the King James translators, but rather a feature that has been retained by virtually every modern Bible translation.

2. *Summerhays*: “A second witness to the original meaning of ‘beguile’ is given by the prophet Lehi, who makes commentary on the Adam and Eve story from a

record much earlier than anything the King James translators had to work with—namely, the brass plates. Lehi explains that Eve was enticed by the tree of knowledge of good and evil that stood in opposition to the tree of life.<sup>38</sup> In other words, she wanted it; she chose it over the other.”

*Response:* This argument fails to make the point—it is just as easy to be enticed by evil as by good. We cannot take the fact that Eve chose the Tree of Knowledge over the Tree of Life as proof that she was not, at least in part, deceived by Satan in the reasons for her choice. Note also that, although the word “entice” is sometimes used in the Book of Mormon to describe Satan’s general role as a tempter,<sup>39</sup> the word “beguile,” with one exception, is preferred to “entice” in specific descriptions of his temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden. Highlighting the dimension of deception are scriptural references that directly link Satan’s role as the “the father of all lies” to his efforts to “beguile” Adam and Eve.<sup>40</sup>

3. *Summerhays:* “And it was a good tree, not inherently evil in any way. Notice all the positive terms in Genesis 3:6—‘And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.’ Eve saw, the record says, not merely wondered or believed or hoped that the tree was good.”

*Response:* In contrast to this view, Sarna sees an “undertone of irony in the formulation that she ‘saw that it was good,’ for it echoes God’s recurring judgment about His creation in Genesis 1. Now, however, good has become debased in the woman’s mind. Its definition is no longer God’s verdict but is rooted in the appeal to the senses and in utilitarian value.”<sup>41</sup> Note that Eve says nothing about such things as the importance of the experience of mortality and the joy of having children, as one might have expected had she been fully aware of God’s purposes in her eating of the fruit. Significantly, while the KJV says that the fruit “was pleasant,” the JST says “it *became* pleasant.” It seems that the more Eve looked, the more attractive the fruit appeared.<sup>42</sup> True, we are not told explicitly whether her perception was becoming clearer or cloudier, but the meaning of the passage in context seems plain. As Elder Talmage taught, Eve “was captivated by”<sup>43</sup> the “sophistries, half-truths and infamous falsehoods”<sup>44</sup> of Satan and, “being eager to possess the advantages pictured by [him], she disobeyed the command of the Lord.”<sup>45</sup>

4. *Summerhays:* “A scholar on the story of Eve, Vivian McConkie Adams, explains [in a personal communication] that ‘the word *saw* in this verse comes from the Hebrew word *ra’ah*, which has direct relation and root to the Hebrew word *ro’eh*, which means seer or vision.’ Such word play, which is common in Hebrew, suggests that Eve had a prophetic spirit and may have received seeric revelation from God as part of her tutoring in the garden.”

*Response:* To make this argument is to suggest, by way of analogy, that because “see” and “seer” are related in English, a statement about “seeing” can be taken as indicative of divine vision. It is true, as Summerhays points out in the case of “beguile,” that the semantic range of an underlying Hebrew term may at times

exceed that of its equivalent in English translation. However, if the story had meant to imply that Eve had seen something in vision, a better Hebrew root, one that is used exclusively in the Old Testament for “seer” and “seeing in vision,” was available. Besides, a principle point of the story is to contrast Eve’s limited view of things before the Fall to the greater discernment she manifested afterward.<sup>46</sup> Of course, to discount the claim that Eve received “seeric revelation” as she regarded the forbidden fruit is not to say that Eve may not have had some degree of prior insight into the positive consequences of her choice.<sup>47</sup> Nor is it to assert that her understanding was not relatively complete *after* she had eaten.<sup>48</sup> However, to argue that she was divinely inspired on the basis of the Hebrew of Genesis 3:6 is not persuasive.

The explicit declaration of scripture is that “Satan... sought to beguile Eve.”<sup>49</sup> The Hebrew text describing her temptation is unambiguous. The actions of Adam and Eve in making the fig leaf aprons and hiding in the tree witness their doubtful state of mind following the transgression. Why doubt Eve’s own straightforward explanation of what happened? In the admirable candor and simplicity of her confession, she both admitted the deception and rightfully laid blame on the very one—the only one—who deserved it: “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”<sup>50</sup>

### **Eve Restores the Broken Harmony**



Brian Kershnik, 1962-: *Holy Woman*, 2001

We return to the story of Adam and Eve. Hugh Nibley observes that the “perfect and beautiful union of Adam and Eve [had] excited the envy and jealousy of the Evil One, who made it his prime objective to break it up.”<sup>51</sup> Jolene Edmunds Rockwood’s summary makes clear the extent to which the Adversary initially succeeded:<sup>52</sup>

Until the woman and the man actually partake of the fruit, . . . the language of the text indicates a union in their actions. . . . [However, after their transgression,] the unity of the man and woman becomes sudden separateness. They use the first person singular for the first time in the narrative as the Lord confronts them: “*I* heard thy voice in the garden, and *I* was afraid, because *I* beheld that *I* was naked; and *I* hid *myself*”<sup>53</sup> explains Adam, speaking only for himself. The man’s comments are even more interesting when we realize that *both* the man and the woman heard God’s voice, *both* were afraid, and *both* of them hid. Though performing the same actions, their unity is ruptured. The woman also uses the first person singular to answer the Lord’s question: “The serpent beguiled *me*, and *I* did eat.”<sup>54</sup>

In view of the ruptured unity with Adam, and having been empowered by newly-acquired insight, Eve had already wisely, heroically, and compassionately taken the initiative to approach her companion. Though Eve had been the one deceived, Nibley observes that she also became the first to understand what must be done to prevent a separation from Adam and to secure the future of their family:<sup>55</sup>

After Eve had eaten the fruit and Satan had won his round, the two were now drastically separated, for they were of different natures. But Eve, who in ancient lore is the one who outwits the serpent and trips him up with his own smartness, defeated this trick by a clever argument. First, she asked Adam if he intended to keep all of God’s commandments. Of course he did! All of them? Naturally! And what, pray, was the first and foremost of those commandments? Was it not to multiply and replenish the earth, the universal commandment given to all God’s creatures? And how could they keep that commandment if they were separated? It had undeniable priority over the commandment not to eat the fruit. So Adam could only admit that she was right and go along: “I see that it must be so,” he said, but it was she who made him see it. This is much more than a smart way of winning her point, however. It is the clear declaration that man and woman were put on the earth to stay together and have a family—that is their first obligation and must supersede everything else.

### **The Symbolism of the Fall in Context**

Rockwood gives a beautiful summary of the three episodes of the Fall. At the same time, she demonstrates why it cannot be fully appreciated when presented as a laundry list of isolated symbols. Instead, the account must be understood as a harmonious whole:<sup>56</sup>

In the first episode, unity and perfection characterize all of the orders of creation. In the second episode, all orders of creation participate in their own fall,<sup>57</sup> which brings separateness and conflict in episode three. Yet the author introduces the story with a statement that celebrates the fall from immortality to mortality and ends it in the same way.

The symmetry of the story is, in fact, one of contrasts. In episode one there is unity and perfection but there is no joy, for they know neither good nor evil. They have no knowledge. Their very innocence leaves them defenseless. In episode two, they gain knowledge, realize they are naked, and attempt to conceal their guilt from God. Their very guilt, however, means they have gained knowledge, the knowledge of good and evil. With [correct] knowledge they can cover their “nakedness,” thus acquiring a defense against evil. The experience is compounded of both bitter and sweet. Episode three presents a final contrast. Because they are mortal, they will now experience pain and hardship. They will be separated from Deity. Yet, paradoxically, they will only now be able to know joy. They are sent away from the Garden, but it is for their own good, for they are imperfect and could no longer live in the presence of perfection. Nor could they gain experience in an environment where their needs are automatically supplied. The Lord provides them with clothing (shields of knowledge) to cover their nakedness (defenselessness). They can now defend themselves against evil. His final response is thus an act of compassion, not punishment.

Reading the entire account as a poetical unit thus resolves many of the individual elements; they are symbols, symmetrically paired to reveal the layers of contrast in the story as a whole.

## Conclusions

Latter-day Saints should rightfully honor Eve while also recognizing Satan as the cunning Tempter that he is. Though she was once deceived, Eve’s innate perceptiveness, augmented by her experience, is recognized by a diversity of traditions that associate her with Wisdom itself (*Sophia*).

While briefly successful, Satan’s strategy to destroy the couple’s happiness was no match for the greatness of God’s wisdom and love. Eve’s forthright and intelligent initiative was a decisive blow to the Adversary. Later, in witness of their recaptured oneness, Adam and Eve unitedly expressed their understanding of the blessed effects of the Fall in a dual psalm of gratitude:

10 And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God.

11 And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.<sup>58</sup>

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## Notes

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1 As retold by Katerina Servi, the Greek myth of Pandora runs as follows: “When Zeus discovered that Prometheus had stolen fire, he was extremely angry. In order to punish mankind, he told Hephaestus to make a woman out of earth and water. To this woman each of the gods gave a gift—some beauty, some skill, and so on—and for this reason the woman was called Pandora (‘All Gifts’). Hermes, however, on the orders of Zeus, put wickedness into the soul of Pandora and took her to Epimetheus[, the brother of Prometheus], supposedly as a gift from the gods. One day, Pandora, out of curiosity, opened a storage jar which the gods had entrusted to her, whereupon all the ills and disasters which torment mankind leapt out. Last, at the bottom of the jar, only Elpis—Hope—remained” (K. Servi, *Greek Mythology*, p. 23).

2 See, e.g., V. M. Adams, *Eve*; V. M. Adams, *Eve*; B. Campbell, *Eve*; A. L. Gaskill, *Savior and Serpent*; C. F. Olson, *Women*; J. T. Summerhays, *Wisdom*.

3 See, e.g., B. Young, December 1844, reported in E. England, *Laub*, p. 28. See also B. Young, 3 June 1855, p. 302.

4 T. G. Madsen, *LDS View*, pp. 99-100.

5 Rockwood succinctly explains the situation: “If we take the view that [Adam and Eve] were separated at the time of the temptation, implied in 1 Timothy 2:13-14, then we can say that the woman was presented with a set of deceptive and incomplete facts and concluded through her own perception what the results of her actions would be. Thus, she made a more difficult choice. She then presented the situation to the man in a clear and rational manner which enabled him to perceive his alternatives accurately and, hence, the course he should take... There is no tempting or coercing on the part of the woman and apparently no hesitation on the part of the man. They became mutually responsible for the transgression” (J. E. Rockwood, *The redemption of Eve*, p. 19).

6 E.g., Article of Faith 2; R. D. Draper *et al.*, *Commentary*, p. 231; D. H. Oaks, *Plan*, p. 73; J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 9 February 1841, p. 63.

7 Stephen T. Whitlock gives the personal opinion that what Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden “cannot be compared to our concepts of sin, transgression, repentance and forgiveness in the telestial world we live in. I believe the rules were different and there was great care to balance agency and life... Eve’s action was a choice made outside the boundaries of our earthly existence, prior to the initiation of the sin/repentance process. Our LDS ‘definition’ of and application of the word ‘transgression’ is an imprecise attempt to state this” (S. T. Whitlock, 8 February 2010).

8 J. E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, Preface, p. 5. See J. E. Talmage, *Essential*, pp. 163-170; J. R. Talmage, *Talmage Story*, pp. 181-187.

9 J. E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 29.

10 1 Timothy 2:14. Verse 15 says: “Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.” The Joseph Smith

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Translation changes “she” to “they,” highlighting the joint responsibility of husband and wife in their family responsibilities.

11 J. E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 18.

12 From the author’s preface, 3 April 1899. See J. E. Talmage, *Essential*, pp. 44-62; J. R. Talmage, *Talmage Story*, pp. 154-159. Harvard S. Heath writes:

To this day, *Articles of Faith* is one of the few books the church recognizes as reflecting Mormon theology. It is interesting to note that this book, at the behest of the First Presidency, was published under the church’s name and not by the author as an individual. The book has undergone numerous editions and remains one of the definitive words on Mormon principles and practices. (cited in the Foreword to J. E. Talmage, *House of the Lord*, p. vi).

13 J. E. Talmage, *Articles* (1984), p. 59.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

15 Moses 4:11.

16 Moses 4:10.

17 A. L. Gaskill, *Savior and Serpent*, p. 79.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

19 In my initial reading of Gaskill’s book, it was immediately apparent that he intended to emphasize the value of the account of the Fall as a metaphor for our own lives. However, it was only through his much-appreciated email replies to my questions as I prepared this article that it was made clear that he saw no part of the story in scripture or in the temple as applying to the “historical” Adam and Eve.

Gaskill’s arguments are sometimes very subtle. It was in my seeking to disentangle the “historical” and the “metaphorical” Eve in various passages he had written, that Gaskill wrote back to make it clear that none of his conclusions, apart from some of his statements made in the first chapter of the book, concerned the “historical” Eve. It should be understood that he has no issue with Adam and Eve existing as historical figures—he just doesn’t think the story in Genesis was designed to teach us about them.

One of the objections I made in my book of Moses commentary about Gaskill’s view of the Fall was based on a mistaken assumption that he was making a distinction between the two Eves in the passage about Satan’s efforts to beguile (J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image*, p. 595). Should the commentary be reprinted, I will correct this error.

20 Romans 5:14. The entire verse reads: “Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.” The thrust of Paul’s argument here is to show

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that sin and its consequences were in the world long before the law of Moses was given, and one proof is that all mortals are subject to death because of the transgression of Adam. Even those who “‘had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,’ never sinned in their own persons as Adam did—which is to be understood of infants, that were never guilty of actual sin, and yet died” because they experienced the effects of the Fall (M. Henry, Commentary, Romans 5:6-21, p. 2205). For Paul, “Adam is a type, a prefiguring or foreshadowing of Christ as the head of humanity. As the first man, Adam caused death to reign in the human race. As the new and perfect Man, Christ brings eternal life to humanity” (J. N. Sparks *et al.*, Orthodox Study Bible, Romans 5:14n., p. 1530).

To single out those who had “*not* sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,” however, is to imply that others *had* done so. Spiritual death has continued to reign “because man overwhelmingly continued to sin in rebellion against God” (J. N. Sparks *et al.*, Orthodox Study Bible, Romans 5:14n., p. 1530). In this sense, as *2 Baruch* concludes, “Adam is... not the cause [of unrighteousness], except only for himself, but each of us has become our own Adam” (A. F. J. Klijn, *2 Baruch*, 54:19, p. 640).

The degree to which the premortal, mortal, and postmortal phases of the story of Adam and Eve parallel the experience of every one of God’s children raises the question about whether, before taking upon themselves mortality, there would have been an opportunity for these spirits to have disobeyed God’s commandment “after the similitude of Adam’s transgression”—in effect experiencing a kind of personal “fall.” Though the rebellion of Satan and his hosts clearly demonstrates that sin was possible in the premortal life, it is a matter of conjecture whether sin and repentance were part of the general experience of all who lived in the spirit world.

The only scripture that seems to bear directly on this question is D&C 93:38, which reads: “Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God, having redeemed man from the fall, men become again, in their infant state, innocent before God.” Brent Top interprets the verse as follows: “The key word is ‘again.’ This seems to indicate that men had lost innocence in the premortal world through sin and disobedience, but were once again, through the great plan of Redemption, made innocent before God upon entering mortality ‘in their infant state’” (B. L. Top, *Life Before*, p. 95; cf. Moses 6:53). Another possibility is that the comma between “again” and “in” was inserted erroneously. Without this comma, the scripture would simply imply that the Redemption of Christ (accomplished through the ordinances) brings men again to an infant state, in other words, innocent before God.

Regarding the question of sin in premortal life, Elder Orson Pratt offered his opinion that:

among the two-third [of God’s spirit children] who remained [after Satan’s rebellion], it is highly probably that, there were many who were not valiant..., but whose sins were of such a nature that they could be forgiven through faith in the future sufferings of the Only Begotten of the Father, and through their sincere repentance and reformation. We see no impropriety in Jesus offering Himself as an acceptable

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offering and sacrifice before the Father to atone for the sins of His brethren, committed not only in the second, but also in the first estate (O. Pratt, *The Seer*, 1:4, p. 54, punctuation standardized, cited in A. C. Skinner, *Temple Worship*, pp. 51-52).

21 J. E. Talmage, *House of the Lord*, Preface, pp. x, xii; J. R. Talmage, *Talmage Story*, p. 172. The description of Elder Talmage is still reused frequently in Church publications today.

22 J. E. Talmage, *House of the Lord*, p. 54.

23 A. L. Gaskill, *Savior and Serpent*, p. 79. Gaskill cites the literal rendering of Hebrew into English given in a footnote of the LDS edition of the Bible at Genesis 3:4a (“Dying, ye shall not die”), a Gnostic account (“With death you shall not die,” from *The Reality of the Rulers*, 90:4-5, as cited in E. Pagels, *Adam*, p. 67), and Irenaeus (“Ye shall not die by death,” from Irenaeus, *Heresies*, 5:23:1, p. 551), among others, to support the phrasing of his translation. However, while it is true that the literal wording of each of these sources parallels the Hebrew of Genesis, the crucial point is that none of them support the meaning that Gaskill attempts to read into the phrase. In Hebrew, the kind of repetition that occurs within these phrases always signals intensification.

24 See, e.g., B. L. Bandstra, *Genesis 1-11*, pp. 174-175; U. Cassuto, *Adam to Noah*, pp. 143-144.

25 B. Young, 11 August 1872, p. 126. After paraphrasing Satan’s words to Eve in Moses 4:10-11, Brigham Young says that “he worked upon the tender heart of mother Eve until she partook of the fruit, and her eyes were opened. He told the truth. And they [i.e., the wicked] say now, ‘Do this that your eyes may be opened, that you may see; do this that you may know thus and so.’” The burden of President Young’s remarks was to show how the Evil One and his followers have persecuted the Saints from the beginning.

26 Brigham Young, December 1844, reported in E. England, *Laub*, p. 28. In an 1862 discourse, he also said: “Adam and Eve did not sin because it was in their nature to love sin, but, as Paul says in his Epistle to Timothy, ‘Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved in child bearing, if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety’” (1 Timothy 2:14-15). The enemy of all righteousness deceived the woman, and Adam went with her that man might be, and that she might be saved in child-bearing” (B. Young, 15 June 1862, p. 305).

27 A. L. Gaskill, *Savior and Serpent*, p. 79. See H. L. Andrus, *Doctrinal*, pp. 187-188; H. L. Andrus, *Doctrinal (Rev.)*, p. 158. Gaskill quotes Andrus as follows: “True to form, Satan had taken a truth, and applied it in such a way as to achieve his unrighteous purposes,” implying in that context that Andrus supported the view that the Devil did not beguile Eve. Taking the wider context of Andrus’ writings into account (see the next footnote), it seems apparent to me that when Andrus speaks of “a truth,” he is not talking about Satan’s entire statement to Eve, but merely the part about the how it would open Eve’s eyes. This part-truth, in conjunction with the lie about how she would “not surely

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die,” and being “applied” to the forbidden fruit is in my reading what Andrus takes to be deceptive. Thus, I conclude that the single sentence quoted by Gaskill that mentions Satan’s having “taken a truth” but fails to include any allusion to Andrus’ views on Satan’s deception, has been used out of context.

28 For example, Andrus writes of Lucifer’s purpose to “deceive and blind men” (H. L. Andrus, *Doctrinal*, p. 185; see Moses 4:4) and contrasts Eve with Adam in saying that with the latter “there was no deception” (H. L. Andrus, *Doctrinal*, p. 187; also citing 1 Timothy 2:14). In the second edition of his book, Andrus explicitly asserts that Satan used “a big lie and... a half-truth... to achieve his purpose” (H. L. Andrus, *Doctrinal* (Rev.), p. 156-157).

29 2 Nephi 2:18; Ether 8:25. See also 2 Nephi 9:9: “the father of lies.”

30 J. T. Summerhays, *Wisdom*.

31 V. M. Adams, *Eve*; V. M. Adams, *Eve*; B. Campbell, *Eve*; B. Campbell, *Eve*, pp. 71-73.

32 Moses 4:6.

33 In 2 Corinthians 11:3, Paul speaks of how “the serpent beguiled Eve through his craftiness.” The following is a sampling of LDS sources that conclude that Eve was deceived: G. Q. Cannon, *Truth*, 1:24; B. R. McConkie, *Eve and the Fall*, p. 63; B. R. McConkie, *New Witness*, p. 86; J. F. McConkie *et al.*, *Revelations*, p. 221; O. Pratt, 18 July 1880, p. 288; B. H. Roberts, *The Truth*, p. 350; S. E. Robinson, *Book of Adam*, p. 133; J. E. Talmage, *Articles* (1984), pp. 59, 63; O. F. Whitney, *Thoughts*, 12, pp. 284-285; J. B. Wirthlin, *Without Guile*, p. 80; B. Young, 15 June 1862, p. 305. This same view is not uncommonly held by non-LDS exegetes (e.g., V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, pp. 182-184). Thanks to Matthew B. Brown for assistance in locating references.

34 N. Aschkenasy, *Woman*, p. 127. Compare B. Campbell, *Eve*, p. 71.

35 N. Aschkenasy, *Woman*, p. 128.

36 See, e.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image*, pp. 255-256.

37 The Hebrew word translated “beguile” in Genesis 3:13 (*nasha*) appears thirteen times in relevant contexts in the Old Testament—in all other instances it is translated “deceive” (Genesis 3:13; 2 Kings 18:9, 19:10; Isaiah 19:13, 36:14, 37:10; Jeremiah 4:10, 29:8, 38:9, 49:16; Obadiah 1:3, 7; 2 Chronicles 32:15). In an additional instance it is translated “seize” (Psalm 55:15), and in a handful of occurrences the term is used in connection with being a debtor or a creditor.

As an interesting footnote on the verb, John Tvedtnes writes: “I have always been intrigued by the Hebrew verb Eve used when telling the Lord that ‘the serpent beguiled me’ (Genesis 3:13). It is *hishi'ani*, ‘he beguiled me.’ The root is *n-SH-* and it is in the *hif'il* form (the *n* has assimilated to the *shin*, so the *shin* is geminated and hence has a

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*dagesh*). [Of course], the *shin* and *sin* are written alike. In pointed script, they are distinguished by a dot over the right side for *shin* and over the left side for *sin*. Switch them this way and read it *hisi'ani* and it means 'he advised/counseled me.' I'm not saying that is the way one must read it, but it is interesting" (J. A. Tvedtnes, 8 February 2010).

38 2 Nephi 2:15–16. Note that the use of the term “beguile” would have been impossible here, since phrasing of the verse required the same word to be used for good and evil desire.

39 2 Nephi 9:39 (“the enticings of that cunning one”); Helaman 7:16 (“the enticing of him who is seeking to hurl away your souls”); Moroni 7:12 (“the devil... inviteth and enticeth to sin”). The sole exception is Helaman 6:26 (“that same being who did entice our first parents”).

40 2 Nephi 9:9 (“the father of lies... who beguiled our first parents”); Ether 8:25 (“the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents”). Additional references to the incident are 2 Nephi 2:18 (“the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die”); Mosiah 16:3 (“that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall”); and D&C 29:41 (“the devil tempted Adam, and he partook of the forbidden fruit and transgressed the commandment”).

41 N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 25; cf. J. H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, pp. 26-27.

42 Apparently agreeing with the view expressed by Summerhays, Camille Fronk Olson takes the phrase to imply that “Eve evolved in her realization that the tree was good. By placing the Tree of Knowledge in the center of the Garden with the warning [that was given], God created an environment in which Adam and Eve were free to discover the only way they and their posterity could access the power of Christ’s Atonement and thereby reach their divine potential... Exercising her budding agency, [Eve] acted, ‘[seeing] that the tree was good’” (C. F. Olson, *Women*, p. 13).

43 J. E. Talmage, *Articles* (1984), p. 59.

44 J. E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 18.

45 J. E. Talmage, *Articles* (1984), p. 59.

46 See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image*, pp. 257-258.

47 See, e.g., J. R. Holland, *Christ*, pp. 202-205; B. H. Roberts, *The Truth*, p. 343, see also pp. lxii-lxiv; E. W. Tullidge, *Women*, pp. 198-199; J. A. Widtsoe, *Evidences*, pp. 193-194. While each of these sources imply that Eve had some insight into the ultimately positive consequences of her choice, none of them directly take issue with the idea that Eve was also, to a greater or lesser degree, “beguiled” or “deceived.”

48 See, e.g., D. H. Oaks, *Plan*, p. 73. Note that the ellipsis in the excerpt of Elder Oaks’ talk included in C. F. Olson, *Women*, p. 12 might give the erroneous impression to a

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reader that Elder Oaks was affirming Eve's understanding of the necessity of the Fall *prior to* rather than *after* the transgression in Eden. In doing research for this article, I have encountered other instances where the textual ambiguity or failure to provide appropriate context may similarly mislead. Olson rightfully warns of the widespread, and too often deliberate, tactic of "taking out of context something a believer has said [and] looking at the selected phrase from a different perspective than the speaker intended" (C. F. Olson, *Women*, pp. 11, 13).

49 Moses 4:6.

50 Christopher Miasnik observes that "even if Eve had made a fully-informed decision to eat, she would have still done the right thing in doing so. And, in that case, she would have admitted so when questioned by someone she knew loved and trusted her. But she didn't admit that because that wasn't the case. This is what she said: 'The serpent beguiled me.' I take her at her word" (C. Miasnik, 8 February 2010).

51 H. W. Nibley, *Patriarchy*, p. 88.

52 J. E. Rockwood, *The redemption of Eve*, pp. 19, 20. See also J. E. Rockwood, *Eve's Role*, p. 55.

53 Moses 4:16. In the original, Rockwood cites the Genesis version of this verse.

54 Moses 4:19.

55 H. W. Nibley, *Patriarchy*, pp. 88-89.

56 J. E. Rockwood, *The redemption of Eve*, p. 22.

57 Rockwood is here asserting that the plant, animal, and human orders of Creation each participated in the Fall: the Tree of Knowledge through its fruit, the animal kingdom through the serpent, and humans through Adam and Eve.

58 Moses 5:10-11. Note that Eve improves upon Adam's psalm, using "we" rather than "I" throughout.