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### The Affair in Eden—The “Fall” of Man

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## The Affair in Eden—The “Fall” of Man

With the doctrine of a necessary opposition in all things set forth as essential to any existence at all, that good can only exist and be known in antithesis with evil, that both joy and sorrow are essential to be a happy world,<sup>a</sup> and recognizing evil as [a]mong the eternal things not created or made, but existing as part of the “dramatic whole,”<sup>b</sup> we are prepared to approach the affair in Eden—“the fall of man”—with larger assurance of understanding than could otherwise be hoped for.

*The symbol trees—the tree of death; the tree of life.* The story of the “Fall” is well known: we shall have small need of entering upon its details. In the garden of God’s planting, Eden, were two symbol trees. (1) The tree of the knowledge of good and evil: to eat of its fruit meant death to the life then known to man—the life of innocence, and the ~~temporal~~ physical life.<sup>†</sup> This tree, then, could also be known as “the tree of death.” (2) Opposite to this, and in the midst of the garden, was “the tree of life.” Here in the last analysis, are the symbols of the necessary “opposition in all things”—the tree of life, the tree of death—symbols of the antinomies of the universe!<sup>c</sup>

With the necessity of knowing both good and evil in order to know anything, it can scarcely be expected that man was placed in the

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This chapter is a more concise version of Roberts’s discussion of the Fall found in *Seventy’s Course in Theology* 4:35–45. Compare Roberts’s article “The Affair in Eden: The Fall of Man,” *Deseret News*, Church Section, June 30, 1928, 7. On Roberts’s attitude towards the Fall, see pages 657–59 below.

<sup>a</sup>2 Ne. 2:11, 23–25.

<sup>b</sup>See the discussion in the preceding chapter.

<sup>†</sup>Regarding the statement about “temporal physical life,” the committee of the Quorum of the Twelve simply asserted: “This we question in the light of the Book of Mormon revelation” (2 Ne. 2:22). Evidently in response, Roberts crossed out the word “temporal.”

<sup>c</sup>2 Ne. 2:15.

Garden of Eden to refrain from partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Notwithstanding the commandment not to partake of the forbidden fruit, why is he there if not to partake of it? And may not the “commandment,” respecting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, saying: “thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17)—may not this be regarded more as announcing the nature of the fruit of the tree and the consequence of eating it, than an expected and effective prohibition of partaking of this fruit?<sup>d</sup>

Back of all this iterated “commandment,”—“thou shalt not eat of the fruit of this tree, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”—is felt the fact of the agency of man, his power to choose for himself, to eat or not to eat. Only know the consequences, O Man! If you eat of it, death to your life of innocence will follow; death to your physical life will follow; for “dust thou art, and [un]to dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:19). It is full of risk, this eating of the forbidden fruit! It is full of danger. There are real losses to face. It means adventure. It will inaugurate a new order of things. Man, thou art forewarned, but thou art free!

***The tree of knowledge not an evil tree.*** Let it be observed that the tree of knowledge, even though the tree of death, is nowhere called an “evil tree,” or its fruit bad. “And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9). No intimation of this tree of knowledge being in itself evil. Rather to the contrary: it is included among the trees “pleasant to the sight, and good for food,” in the same verse in which it is named (Gen. 2:9). The observation **respecting of** Eve in the commencement of her conversation with Lucifer (symbolized by the serpent)<sup>e</sup> may have been ~~really and~~ wholly true of the fruit of the tree of knowledge **of good and evil**: “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” (Gen. 3:6), she was not merely echoing something that Lucifer ~~and~~ **had** suggestively infused into her

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<sup>d</sup>This is suggested in the scriptural account in Moses 3:17: “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

<sup>e</sup>Moses 4:6 specifically connects the biblical serpent with Satan: “And Satan put it into the heart of the serpent.”

mind, but was uttering a truth respecting the tree itself, and what it stood for. It is good to know; and since the good may not be known without also knowing the evil, it is good—since from the constitution or nature of things it can not be otherwise—it is good to know both. Besides, throughout the whole narrative of Genesis, it is taken for granted that to eat the forbidden fruit “will make men as gods, knowing good and evil” (cf. Gen. 3:5); and is it not good for men to be as gods, knowing good and evil—in any way *to be* as gods? Who shall say nay? “The fall of man!” Is it not here that man begins to rise? True it is Lucifer who in the Genesis narrative ~~one~~ first suggests, and doubtless with evil intent, that eating the fruit would open the eyes of man, “and make him as God.” Yet it was a truth; for God himself is represented as saying *later*, after Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit—

Behold, the man is become as one of us (the Gods), to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground. . . . And he placed . . . Cherubims, and a flaming sword . . . to keep the way of the tree of life. (Gen. 3:22-24)

Which only means that the time had not then come for man to attain immortality, nor then to know the way to the tree of life. Opportunity to reap the full harvest *from eating* of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil must be granted, not only to Adam and his spouse, but to their posterity also—to the race; a testing period and a testing place is provided where the whole drama of good and evil in conflict shall work out the purposes of God in the planned earth life of man.<sup>f</sup>

But for man to become as God, in any respect, in any way, and by any means must be great gain, and surely embraced from the beginning in God’s general and positive plan for man’s advancement. It must have been included in the covenant of “eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2); and not an incident that surprised the purposes of God and provoked his anger.

*The doctrine of the Fall according to the Book of Mormon.* And now as to the effects of the Fall according to the account of it given in the Book of Mormon: if Adam had not fallen

He would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state *in* which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they (Adam and Eve) would have had no children;

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<sup>f</sup>This period is called a “state of probation” in 2 Ne. 2:21.

wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. (2 Ne. 2:22-24)

The parts to emphasize in these statements are (1) but for the “Fall” all things must have remained in the same state in which they were created without end: no change, hence no progression; (2) the state of man’s innocence before the “Fall” would have brought no joy, for in it man knew no misery; (3) Adam and Eve could do no good, for they knew no sin.

*The dilemma: What shall Adam do?* What then? Shall the creation in which they stand remain static? Know no good because, forsooth, to know good and to do good, evil must also be experienced! And that because of the eternal nature of things, for which no one is responsible, no; not God. No one has created that “eternal nature of things” any more than anyone has created space, duration, matter, force, or intelligences: these are eternal things. So too, are good, beauty, truth, righteousness, life, peace, joy. These **latter**, however, as we have seen, may be known only in duality—they are known only in contrast with their respective opposites; good by its opposite or antinomy of evil; joy by its opposite of sorrow; life by its opposite of death, and so following. To know any one of these you must experience its opposite.<sup>†</sup> The question resolves itself into this: Is the knowledge of the good, the beautiful and the true, the realization of life—even immortal life—worth while? Is conscious existence better than nonexistence? Even when conscious existence involves misery and suffering, but is attended by the hope that sometime, somewhere, there will be relief: such as “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning”? (Ps. 30:5).

These were the principles involved in the Fall. These the issues set before man in Eden. And Adam and his spouse chose the way of life, even the way of immortal and eternal life, though the way led through the valley and the shadow of temporal death; and though by necessity they

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<sup>†</sup>Reflecting on the statement “To know any one of these you must experience its opposite,” the reviewing committee in 1929 wrote: “This thought raises some questions. While it is necessary that there be opposition in all things, yet a man does not have to sin, or come in contact with wickedness by partaking of it, to know it. We may have failed in grasping the meaning here.” Reporting to President Clawson, George Albert Smith reasoned: “Christ did not sin, yet he ‘experienced’ evil. Can this be changed to avoid this ambiguity?”

must experience the mingled joys and sorrows of a world of broken harmonies, with good and evil, life and death in conflict—and fiercely in conflict—disclosing the pain of the universe, yet in all this Book of Mormon doctrine, there is no complaint of the hard condition the “Fall” imposes on the participants or on their descendants who fall heirs to their woes; no upbraiding of the Creator as being responsible for the evil. No, on the contrary the affirmed assurance is: “All things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things” (2 Ne. 2:24).

Later, when prophetically the coming of Messiah in the fulness of time is made known to Adam and the men who by now were with him, and the purpose of Messiah’s coming and mission is declared to be the redemption of “the children of men from the Fall,” then listen to the full organ-tones of the joy in which these things are recounted, and it will not be difficult to understand how the “Fall” is really held to be “the beginning of the rise of man.”

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. (2 Ne. 2:26-27)

*Effect of the Fall.* I shall doubtless be told, however, that this rejoicing is over the “redemption from the Fall” rather than rejoicing over the “Fall”; but it was the “Fall” which brought forth the need of the “redemption”; and therefore mediately if not immediately the cause of the rejoicing. Moreover, it is the things brought about by the “Fall” that are mentioned as the occasion for the rejoicing: men have a new-found freedom—“they have become free forever”; they know now “good from evil”; that knowledge came through the “Fall”; henceforth they will be free “to act,” and not merely to be “acted upon,” save to meet the consequences of their acts in judgments. A great change has been wrought in their status. Henceforth they will be self-centers of free agency, agents of self-determining power, centers of intelligent force with power of initiative. They are awakened to a knowledge of good and evil; they have become as God, at least so far as to know good and evil, and have become conscious of the power to choose between

them. This affair in Eden, the “Fall” is something more, allow me to repeat, than a thing “permissively embraced in the sovereign purpose of the Deity,” which he “designed to order to his own glory.”<sup>1</sup> The necessity of its taking place was something ~~rather~~ that is imbedded in the very constitution of things. The only way by which man could come to knowledge of good, and to do good, was by partaking of the fruit of the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” This is the only way to be “as God” in respect of knowing good and evil, which knowledge is the source of man’s free agency, the consciousness of the freedom of the human will, of true morality, and of self-given loyalty to God. With so many things of high import and precious to man and dear to God, there can be no doubt but what the “Fall” was as much a part of God’s earth-planned life for man as the “redemption” provided for him; indeed there would have been no need of redemption but for the “Fall,” and ~~none~~ **no redemption** would have been provided but for anticipation of that “Fall.”

*The attitude of Christendom on the Fall.* Though all this seems so clearly set forth, or is very reasonably implied from the story of the “Fall” in Genesis, yet the attitude of Christendom, both in Roman Catholic and Protestant divisions, on the doctrine of the “Fall” of man seems to be one of profound regret that the “Fall” ever happened. As self-constituted interpreters of the event, these churches deplore the “Fall” and strongly hold that man and the world would have been better off had the thing never happened. And upon Adam is laid a heavy burden of responsibility. It was he, they complain, who “brought death into the world, and all our woe.”

(a) *The Roman Catholic view.*<sup>8</sup> The Roman Catholic doctrine of the “Fall” is set forth straight forwardly in the Douay Catechism, from which I quote:

Q. How did we lose original justice?

A. By Adam’s disobedience to God in eating the forbidden fruit. . . .

Q. How do you prove that?

A. Out of Romans 5:12: “By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death; and so into all men death did pass, in whom all have sinned.”

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<sup>1</sup>*Westminster Confession*, chapter 6, section 1.

<sup>8</sup>This is a shortened form of the discussion in *Seventy’s Course in Theology* 4:143–48.

Q. Had man ever died if he had never sinned?

A. He would not, but would live in a state of justice and at length would be translated alive to the fellowship of the angels.<sup>2</sup>

Again, "The Catholic Church teaches," says Joseph Fàa di Bruno, DD.,

that Adam by his sin has not only caused harm to himself, but to the whole human race; that by it he lost the supernatural justice and holiness which he received gratuitously from God, and lost it, not only for himself, but also for all of us; and that he, having stained himself with the sin of disobedience, has transmitted not only death and other bodily pains and infirmities to the whole human race, but *also sin, which is the death of the soul*.<sup>3</sup>

And again:

Unhappily, Adam by his sin of disobedience, which was also a sin of pride, disbelief, and ambition, forfeited, or, more properly speaking, rejected that original justice; and we, as members of the human family, of which he was the head, are also implicated in that guilt of self-spoilation, or rejection and deprivation of those supernatural gifts; not indeed on account of our having willed it with our personal will, but by having willed it with the will of our first parent, to whom we are linked by nature as members to their head.<sup>4</sup>

(b) *The Protestant view*.<sup>h</sup> For the Protestant view I quote the following from Buck's *Theological Dictionary*, published in 1844 (American Edition). It was the Protestant Encyclopedia on Protestant theology at the period of publication:

In the fall of man we may observe, 1. The greatest infidelity.—2. Prodigious pride.—3. Horrid ingratitude.—4. Visible contempt of God's majesty and justice.—5. Unaccountable folly.—6. A cruelty to himself and to all his posterity. . . . *That man is a fallen creature*, is evident, if we consider his misery as an inhabitant of the natural world; the disorders of the globe we inhabit, and the dreadful scourges with which it is visited; the deplorable and shocking circumstances of our birth; the painful and dangerous travail of women; our natural uncleanness, helplessness, ignorance, and nakedness; the gross darkness in which we naturally are, both with respect to God and a future state: the general rebellion of the brute creation against us; the various poisons that lurk in the animal, vegetable and

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<sup>2</sup>*Douay Catechism*, 13.

<sup>3</sup>Fàa di Bruno, *Catholic Belief*, 5-6; italics in original. The work carries the approval of Cardinal Henry E. Manning, Archbishop of Westminster, England.

<sup>4</sup>Fàa di Bruno, *Catholic Belief*, 330.

<sup>h</sup>*Seventy's Course in Theology* 4:49-51.

mineral world, ready to destroy us; the heavy curse of toil and sweat to which we are liable; the innumerable calamities of life, and the pangs of death.<sup>5</sup>

God, it is said, made man upright (Eccl. 7:29); without any imperfection, corruption, or principle of corruption in his body or soul; with light in his understanding, holiness in his will, and purity in his affections. This constituted his original righteousness, which was universal, both with respect to the subject of it, the whole man, and the object of it, the whole law. Being thus in a state of holiness, he was necessarily in a state of happiness. He was a very glorious creature, the favorite of heaven, the lord of the world, possessing perfect tranquillity in his own breast, and immortal. Yet he was not without law; for the law of nature, which was impressed on his heart, God super-added a positive law, not to eat of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2:17) under the penalty of death natural, spiritual, and eternal. Had he obeyed this law, he might have had reason to expect that he would not only have had the continuance of the natural and spiritual life, but have been transported to the upper paradise. . . . Man's righteousness, however, though universal, was not immutable, as the event has proved. How long he lived in a state of innocence cannot easily be ascertained, yet most suppose it was but a [very] short time. The positive law which God gave him he broke, by eating the forbidden fruit. The consequence of this evil act was, that man lost the chief good; his nature was corrupted; his powers depraved, his body subject to corruption, his soul exposed to misery, his posterity all involved in ruin, subject to eternal condemnation, and forever incapable to restore themselves to the favor of God, to obey his commands perfectly and to satisfy his justice.<sup>6</sup>

From another Protestant source:

The *tree of knowledge of good and evil* revealed to those who ate its fruit secrets of which they had better have remained ignorant; for the purity of man's happiness consisted in doing and loving good without even knowing evil.<sup>7</sup>

(c) *Presbyterian modification of the Protestant view of the Fall.* All this severity is relieved but by one division of Christendom of any considerable numbers and standing; and by that division the modification is but slight. This is by the Presbyterian Church in its Westminster Confession of Faith and an authoritative comment upon it by A. D. Hodge. The confession dealing with the "Fall" concedes that "God

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<sup>5</sup>Buck, *Theological Dictionary*, s.v. "Fall of Man."

<sup>6</sup>Buck, *Theological Dictionary*, s.v. "Man."

<sup>7</sup>Smith, *Old Testament History*, 26.

was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit it (the “Fall”) having purposed to order it to his own glory.”<sup>8</sup>

In the authoritative exposition of this chapter, it is set forth, “that this (aim) [sin] (the “Fall”) was permissively embraced in the (sovereign) [eternal] purpose of God.”<sup>9</sup> Its purpose being God’s general plan, and one eminently wise and righteous, to introduce all the new created subjects of moral government into a state of probation for a time in which he makes their permanent character and destiny depend upon their own action. Still, this “sin” described as being “permissively embraced” in the sovereign purpose of the Deity and that God designed “to order it to his own glory,” nowhere appears to be of any benefit to man. The only thing consulted in the theory of this creed seems to be the manifestation of the glory of God—a thing which represents God as a most selfish being—but just how the glory of God *even* can be manifested by the “Fall” which, according to this creed, results in the eternal damnation of the overwhelming majority of his “creatures,” is not quite apparent.

Those who made this Westminster Confession, as also the large following which accept it, concede that their theory involves them at least in two difficulties which they confess it is impossible for them to meet. These are respectively:

First, how could sinful desires or volitions originate in the soul of moral agents created holy like Adam and Eve?

Second, how can sin be permissively embraced in the eternal purpose of God, and not involve him as responsible for the sin? “If it be asked,” they say,

why God, who abhors sin, and who benevolently desires the excellence and happiness of his creatures, should sovereignly determine to permit such a fountain of pollution, degradation, and misery to be opened, we can only say, with profound reverence, “even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.”<sup>10</sup>

Such the theology of yesterday, and also of today in official creeds and their expositions; but rapidly these are becoming obsolete to the thoughtful; who are doubtful if this lauded life of innocence in Eden would have been as desirable as the theologians of past generations would have us think. Dr. John Fiske of Harvard, in his “Studies in Religion” challenges it squarely, and on the “Fall,” as in the matter of the necessity of “opposite existences” in order to [have] existences at all,

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<sup>8</sup>*Westminster Confession*, chapter 6, section 1.

<sup>9</sup>Hodge, *Commentary on the Confession*, 107.

<sup>10</sup>Hodge, *Commentary on the Confession*, 108.

is in strict accord with both the theology and with the philosophy of Lehi, the Book of Mormon prophet.<sup>1</sup>

*Views of John Fiske on life in Eden without “the Fall.”*

What would have been the moral value or significance of a race of human beings ignorant of sin, and doing beneficent acts with no more consciousness or volition than the deftly contrived machine that picks up raw material at one end, and turns out some finished product at the other? Clearly, for strong and resolute men and women an Eden would be but a fool’s paradise. How could anything fit to be called *character* have ever been produced there? But for tasting the forbidden fruit, in what respect could man have become a being of higher order than the beasts of the field? An interesting question is this, for it leads us to consider the genesis of the idea of moral evil in man. . . . We can at least begin to realize distinctly that unless our eyes had been opened at some time, so that we might come to know the good and the evil, we should never have become fashioned in God’s image. We should have been the denizens of a world of puppets, where neither morality nor religion could have found place or meaning.<sup>11</sup>

In this passage, the Harvard philosopher unwittingly supports the sober doctrine of the Book of Mormon that partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was an absolute necessity to a life worthwhile; for thereby was brought to pass the broken harmonies of the world out of which would be forged the experiences that would lead to virile manhood, high character, human freedom, morality, and loyalty to righteousness; and therefore the “Fall” is not an incident to be deplored. Again: It was “the beginning of the rise of man.”

*Adam fell that men might be.* One item mentioned in the passages quoted from the Book of Mormon on the “Fall” has not yet been mentioned in these comments; but it is worthy of a paragraph. The item is: “And all things . . . must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children. . . . Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Ne. 2:22–23, 25).

From this we learn that in some way, the “Fall” seems to be associated with the having of children, and also we learn that the purpose of man’s existence is that “he might have joy.” That is God’s good intent towards him. Tentatively I suggest the following as a possible solution of this phase of the “Fall.”

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<sup>1</sup>See chapter 33 for a discussion of Fiske.

<sup>11</sup>Fiske, *Studies in Religion*, 252, 266.

Paul in his first letter to Timothy, referring to the experience in Eden said: “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Tim. 2:14).

Reference to the order of the happenings in Eden verifies the truth of this statement. Eve was persuaded to eat of the forbidden fruit, ~~and undertook the persuasion of Adam to the forbidden fruit~~, and undertook the persuasion of Adam to the same act of disobedience. Eve was already in “the transgression,” and stood in the shadow of the penalty of the law—banishment from Eden, union broken with God, separation from Adam, death! Under these circumstances what shall Adam do? Conjointly they had received this mission to “replenish the earth” (Gen. 1:28)—refill it with inhabitants. If this penalty falls upon Eve alone there will be separation of the pair, and the high purpose of their conjoint mission will be defeated. Again, what shall Adam do? Shall he draw about him the consciousness of his own innocence, and let his spouse bear the burdens of her violations of the law pertaining to the knowledge of good and evil? I refrain from what my comment would be could I think the progenitor of the human race guilty of such procedure. But no! Our Prince Michael did no such thing.<sup>1</sup> Not deceived, but with eyes open, and knowing all the consequences he ate the forbidden fruit offered by a loving hand—one who so loved him that she would have him as “God, knowing good and evil” (2 Ne. 2:18). He resolved upon fulfilling the major part of his mission, which might not be fulfilled in separation from Eve. And hence “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy” (2 Ne. 2:25). Despite the “Fall”? Nay, rather because of it! He has partaken of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he has become as God that far; he shall *yet* find his way to the tree of life!

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<sup>1</sup>Adam is identified as Michael in D&C 27:11; 107:54; 128:21.