



Mormonism's Satan and the Tree of Life

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Introduction

At first glance, the Devil¹ of LDS belief does not depart substantially from the Devil of conservative Christian theology. A frequently-referenced passage from the Book of Mormon tells us that Satan was once an “angel of God,” who “had fallen from heaven; wherefore, he became a devil, having sought that which was evil before God.” Having thus fallen, he became “miserable forever” and “sought also the misery of all mankind.”² Mormons believe that the Devil is real and personal,³ that he tempts humans to do evil,⁴ and that he will ultimately be defeated.⁵

There are, however, a few beliefs held by Mormons about the Devil that, to traditional Christian ears, might seem rather curious. One notable departure from traditional Christian theologies is in the doctrine that Lucifer, like all of humanity, is one of the premortal spirit children of God.⁶ And while few traditional Christians would disagree with the LDS belief that God “allows” Satan to tempt us⁷—for how else can we understand God’s refusal to stop the Devil’s work?—most would avoid the kind of rhetoric uttered by Elder Jedediah M. Grant at the Salt Lake Tabernacle in 1854:

I have this idea, that the Lord our God absolutely gave Lucifer a mission to this earth; I will call it a mission. You may think it strange that I believe so good a being as our Father in heaven would actually send such an odd missionary as Lucifer... but his mission, and the mission of his associates who were thrust down with him, ... is to continue to oppose the Almighty, scatter His Church, wage war against His kingdom, and change as far as possible His government on the earth.⁸

Though one might be tempted to write off Elder Grant's stark utterance as an anomaly from the early days of Mormonism, it must be admitted that the general idea he voices, albeit with language unlikely to be heard today, is not alien to current LDS belief. Mormonism still embraces the view expounded by President Brigham Young, who said in 1870:

Sin is upon every earth that ever was created, and it if was not so, I would like some philosophers to let us know how people can be exalted to become sons of God, and enjoy a fulness of glory with the Redeemer. Consequently every earth has its redeemer, and every earth has its tempter;⁹ and every earth, and the people thereof, in their turn and time, receive all that we receive, and pass through all the ordeals that we are passing through.¹⁰

Some Christian theologians have crafted a more teleologically positive view of the Fall,¹¹ but few would go as far as Mormonism. For the Latter-day Saints, Satan is not only the diabolical chief of the fallen angels, nor is he simply a monochrome incarnation of evil and temptation unhappily tolerated by a God who—for whatever reason—will not forcibly remove him from the world. For Mormonism, Satan is, in some respects, a curiously “necessary evil.”¹² Mormons believe that the purpose of earth life is to “prove” mankind “to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them.”¹³ Such a test requires a fallen world, one which the Devil himself helped institute through his temptation in the Garden of Eden. Moreover, in his ongoing role as head Tempter, he ensures that this proving process continues today. Writes Mormon theologian Blake Ostler: “Ironically, God has adopted a plan to use Satan’s desire to steal our agency as a means of ensuring our agency: ‘And it must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have the bitter they could not know the sweet.’¹⁴ Thus, God has created this world as a space to choose by granting us the

opportunity to experience ‘opposition in all things.’¹⁵ Satan provides the opposition necessary to further our agency.”¹⁶

In sum, Mormonism avers that the Devil and, in particular, the Fall that he facilitated,¹⁷ are, in crucial respects, the very means by which God fits His children for eternal life.¹⁸ And yet, despite this, LDS belief remains clear that Satan is an enemy of God whose opposition to God’s plan is both absolute and intractable. Some account of this puzzle seems necessary. In this paper, we will explore the Devil’s paradoxical role in Mormon theology, noting Joseph Smith’s statement that it is by “proving contraries” (Satan-as-God’s-tempting-agent vs. Satan-as-God’s-enemy) that the “truth is made manifest.”¹⁹ Of course, we claim neither the authority nor the perspicacity required to provide a firm, final, or comprehensive portrait of the great Deceiver, although we do believe our work offers a coherent Mormon theological narrative. Our intention is merely to probe some of the common assumptions that have grown up around the character of the Devil in popular LDS belief and, in doing so, to attempt a tentative answer to the following question: In what specific respects were Satan’s actions objectionable since temptation—the “proving” deemed necessary by Abraham 3:25, and subsequently demonstrated in the expedient Fall and the book of Job—is part of God’s design? A fresh reading of Satan’s plan as understood by Mormon theology seems to shed new light both on his strategy for the Fall in the Garden of Eden, and on his tactics to tempt man thereafter.

Satan in the Book of Job

Some elements of the LDS characterization of Satan find fascinating analogues in the Old Testament, particularly in the story of Job. In Job, as in Mormon accounts of the premortal councils and the Fall, God grants astonishing liberty for the testing of his children. In no instance is God’s plan frustrated. For example, Job’s trials provide the very means by which the fountain of divine wisdom is ultimately revealed. And in the story of the Fall, Satan’s unsuccessful efforts to forever limit the progress of Adam and Eve play perfectly into God’s hands, roundly advancing His beneficent purposes.²⁰

Job and the Search for Divine Knowledge

The book of Job offers an ancient portrayal of “necessary evils” in God’s retinue. Readers of the book of Job often tend to approach the work primarily as

a theodicy, but there is a richer theology beneath the surface of the story—one that may be of special interest to Latter-day Saints. Job’s quest, like that of Abraham, is above all a search for experience and understanding of sacred things.²¹ Margaret Barker emphasizes that this “hankering after divine wisdom... is exactly the theme of Job, where Job is challenged and eventually condemned on the grounds of his claim to knowledge. The book is not just about suffering but also about Job’s claim to know.”²²

Extracanonical sources not only reinforce the priority of theophany over theodicy in the story of Job, but also introduce the theme of apotheosis. Nibley has shown how the pseudepigraphal *Testament of Job* attests to traditions that grew up around the figure of this prophet. These traditions associate Job with key elements of temple ritual and apocalyptic accounts of heavenly ascents, some of which find parallels in the LDS understanding of the career of Adam and Eve. For example, Job’s ascent not only included a visit to a heavenly throne, but also descriptions of sacred clothing (“And as she chanted the hymns, she permitted ‘the Spirit’ to be inscribed on her garment.”²³), prayer circles (“And they lifted me up, supporting my arms on each side”²⁴), and tests for knowledge (“Arise, gird your loins like a man. I shall ask you certain questions, and you shall give me certain answers!”²⁵). Like both the biblical story and the temple tradition, the pseudepigraphal account includes a series of tests provided by Satan himself who, for example, at one point cruelly declares to the penniless Job that anything in the world can be had for money.²⁶ Indeed, throughout all the Job traditions²⁷—as in the stories of the Fall of Adam and Eve,²⁸ the heavenly ascent of Moses,²⁹ and Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness³⁰—the Adversary provides an essential element, “helping” the hero meet the requirement to prove himself worthy of a continued journey toward divine light and knowledge.

This interesting concept of the Devil’s essential role in the Job tradition and elsewhere in the Old Testament and Pseudepigrapha is much closer to the perspective of Mormonism than is the diabolical character found in the literature of traditional Christianity. Indeed, at least in the respects we have outlined, one could characterize Mormonism’s view of Satan as “Jobian.”

Old Testament Concepts of Satan

The Hebrew noun *śātān* is related to the verb *śātan*.³¹ The precise meaning of the verb is difficult to render in English, but it is generally understood to lie somewhere between “to accuse,” “to slander,” and “to be an adversary.” The Greek Septuagint translates *śātan* in Psalm 38:21 (English v. 20) with the term *endieballon*, suggesting slander. The Greek term for “devil”—*diabolos*—conveys a roughly similar meaning: “one who throws something across one’s path,” or “obstructor.”³² The term *śātān* is applied as a title to human or heavenly figures who either block the way of the wrongdoer, act as agents of divine judgment, or who act as accusers. It therefore has an ambivalent moral sense: acting as an agent of God is “good,” whereas slander—accusing falsely—is universally “bad.” Hamilton therefore prefers to translate *śātān* as “accuser” with the negative nuance of “adversary” or “slanderer” applied only where the context requires it.³³

Terrestrial “satans” include David, when he was seen as a threat by the Philistine lords;³⁴ Abishai, for overstepping the bounds of his authority in David’s eyes;³⁵ any potential enemy of Solomon;³⁶ Hadad, the Elamite, whom the Lord incited against Solomon;³⁷ and similarly Rezon.³⁸ The KJV, NASB, and NRSV translate *śātān* in all these passages with “adversary.” In Psalm 109:6 the Psalmist asks God for “a satan” to bring a trial against his enemies.³⁹ The NASB and NRSV prefer the literal “accuser,” while the KJV literally follows the Hebrew, calling this “accuser” “Satan.”

There are also celestial satans in the Old Testament: the angel of Yahweh who acts as “a satan”⁴⁰ (without definite article: *śātān*) in blocking the path in front of Balaam’s ass;⁴¹ “the satan,” (with definite article: *haśśātān*)⁴² who stands as Joshua the high priest’s accuser and whom Yahweh rebukes;⁴³ a satan (without the definite article)⁴⁴ who incites David to take a census of Israel,⁴⁵ and the satan of Job 1-2. In the Old Testament, then, we see “satan” as the title given to numerous beings, both human and celestial, who act as someone’s “adversary” but not necessarily in opposition to God’s will (on the contrary!). Such satans are emphatically not *stricto sensu* simply reducible to the Devil as commonly conceived today.

Job’s Satan as a Member of God’s Divine Council

In the book of Job, “the” satan⁴⁶ has been “roaming⁴⁷ the earth” (doing what, we are not told). God brings Job’s perfect righteousness to the satan’s attention, but the latter is not impressed, accusing God of divine patronage.⁴⁸ In order to test the satan’s assumption that Job does not fear God for nothing, God

grants the satan the power to disturb Job's life, to "prove" him. He is allowed to act independently, but only with God's permission and within strict limits of what he can and cannot do.

Job's satan belongs to the wider ancient Near Eastern theological world, where he is inextricably linked with the Divine Council. In ancient Israel, the idea of a celestial assembly with God at its center was widespread and, by analogy with material from Mesopotamia and Ugarit, we see that it was common to the Near East in general.⁴⁹ The Bible does not provide much information about the specific members of this assembly, except, of course, that Yahweh was sovereign over them.⁵⁰ If we interpret the phrase YHWH *šēbā'ōt* to mean "Yahweh of hosts" we have an idea of the heavenly court constituting Yahweh's retinue. Coupled with Jacobsen's seminal notion of the heavenly assembly mirroring human institutions (albeit in relation to ancient Mesopotamia, not Israel),⁵¹ an image of Yahweh as king and warrior, surrounded by his court and his army comes into view.

Terrestrial courts and royal retinues certainly included the kind of officials to which the figure of the satan in Job alludes. In judicial courts, prosecutors,⁵² and accusers played important roles, and in the apparatus of imperial government, spies, and informers were crucial to the maintenance of the state. Assemblies, inasmuch as they make decisions that need to be communicated, require messengers⁵³ or heralds. In the Hebrew Bible the term *mal'ak* YHWH ("messenger/angel of Yahweh") denotes those divine beings who make Yahweh's decrees known, and even those who act as surrogates for Yahweh himself. It is interesting in this context to see that the satan who blocks Balaam's way in Numbers 22 is also called a *mal'ak* YHWH, "the angel of Yahweh."

In Mesopotamia, the titles of certain early royal officials were later used as the names of demons.⁵⁴ It is not hard to see how in certain circumstances such figures (spies, prosecutors, accusers, messengers) would come to be seen negatively, inasmuch as they were often the agents of royal punishment. Because in the ancient Near East the celestial court often mirrored the royal court on earth, the character of the satan in Job may reflect in some way the royal minister/spy who was believed to incite the powers of the king/God against the people. The satan presented to us in Job, it seems, was perceived to be a necessary (if unloved) part of God's governance of the earth. There is little in Job to suggest that "the satan" is the Devil in his classic Christian guise.

In contrast to the focus of Old Testament accounts, the New Testament, other early Christian writings, and some Jewish pseudepigrapha⁵⁵ create a more diabolical character sketch of the Devil. These descriptions depart to a

degree from the emphasis of these ancient satans, and stress the role of Satan—here given a proper name—as God’s cosmic enemy and adversary of mankind in portrayals that depict him as the ruler of the world⁵⁶ and the prince of a host of evil spirits and demons.⁵⁷ Eventually, these New Testament concepts came to dominate Christian thought, and the idea of an adversary as a necessary member of God’s retinue was deemphasized, if not forgotten. Intriguingly, Joseph Smith’s Satan retains the basic biography of early Christian thought while at the same time renewing lost aspects of a “Jobian” role. Of course, this is not meant to suggest that the satan of Job is somehow an exact equivalent, or indeed *any* equivalent of Satan as understood by Latter-day Saints.⁵⁸ Indeed, recognizing the divine sanction enjoyed by the Old Testament satans places the evil of Satan in stark relief, motivating further reflection to determine more precisely what makes him an enemy of God in Mormon eyes. If nothing more, such a discussion serves both to illuminate the fluidity in which the concept of a tempter has been held in the past and also to highlight the echoes of earlier theologies that one so often sees in Joseph Smith’s work. In the next section, we explore some of these contributions in more detail.

Satan in the Premortal Councils in Heaven

In the revelations and teachings of Joseph Smith, Lucifer is described as “a son of the morning” and “an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God” who “rebelled... and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ.”⁵⁹ He was jealous,⁶⁰ “selfish, ambitious, and striving to excel,”⁶¹ and “became Satan”⁶² as he wickedly sought that God should give him His “own power.”⁶³

In explaining how all this took place, the Prophet revealed a Satan who, like the satan of Job, was once an active participant in divine councils. In contrast to the Jobian satan, however, Lucifer’s ostensible objective in these councils—and later in the Garden—was initially not to “prove” humankind but rather, on the contrary and as we hope to demonstrate, to enable universal “redemption” *without* requiring such a test—thus opposing and attempting to frustrate God’s original designs.

Because relatively few details about the heavenly rebellion of Lucifer are extant in scripture, it is not surprising that Mormons have gradually filled in certain particulars of the story. In doing so, a set of basic assumptions about Satan’s premortal plans and doings have become widely accepted. In this section, we

explore three questions relating to these common Mormon assumptions:

1. What did Satan mean when he proposed to “redeem all mankind”?⁶⁴
2. By what means did Satan seek to “destroy the agency of man”?⁶⁵
3. Why was it essential that premortal spirits be given the opportunity to receive a body?

A close examination of the answers to these questions will reveal difficulties with some of the commonly accepted assumptions and will set the stage for further exploration of the events surrounding the Fall and Satan’s strategy in the Garden in the next section.

1. What Did Satan Mean When He Proposed to “Redeem All Mankind”?

Describing the contrast between Lucifer’s proposal and the plan of the Father that was advocated by the premortal Jesus Christ, Joseph Smith taught:

The contention in heaven was—Jesus said there would be certain souls that would not be saved; and the Devil said he could save them all, and laid his plans before the grand council, who gave their vote in favor of Jesus Christ. So the Devil rose up in rebellion against God, and was cast down, with all who put up their heads for him.⁶⁶

The most common understanding of this statement is that it implies a difference in the consequences of the two plans for mankind in general. In other words, it is generally supposed by Mormons that, according to the plan advocated by Jesus, only the righteous would be saved, whereas in the Devil’s plan, “all generations of man... would be returned into the presence of God.”⁶⁷ However, if we can trust the accuracy of a retrospective summary of a discourse by the Prophet from the journal of George Laub, the controversy highlighted in this statement more specifically concerned the fate of the “sons of perdition”:⁶⁸

Jesus Christ... stated [that] He could save all those who did not sin against the Holy Ghost and they would obey the code of laws that was given.⁶⁹

Laub's version of the statement emphasizes specific limits of the guarantee of salvation promised by Jesus Christ. While, of course, allowing for the possibility of exaltation for the obedient, its burden in context was to lay out the major differences with Satan's proposal. The statement implies that Jesus' atonement could only provide absolute assurance of a minimal form of salvation, namely, that all men, except those who sinned against the Holy Ghost, would be, in the words of Elder Bruce R. McConkie, "resurrected to [at least] a telestial glory, escaping the second, i.e., spiritual death."⁷⁰

Satan, on the other hand, was reported in Laub's recollection of the Prophet's statement to have countered with an absurdly unconditional proposal:

Send me, I can save all, even those who sinned against the Holy Ghost.⁷¹

Apparently trying to do away with the need for an atonement,⁷² Satan is here portrayed as having "sought... to redeem... all in their sins."⁷³ Following the logic of Laub's account, this option presumably would have been most appealing to those spirits who would stand to benefit most from it; namely, those who had already manifested a proclivity toward the unpardonable sin—and, preeminently, Satan himself.

2. *By What Means Did Satan Seek to "Destroy the Agency of Man"?*

The book of Moses states that Satan "sought to destroy the agency of man."⁷⁴ The means by which this would have been accomplished have not been authoritatively explained. However, the common LDS assumption is that, as part of the Devil's premortal proposal, an element of compulsion was required—the idea that Satan advocated "the assertion of raw power to coerce moral sanctity from humanity."⁷⁵ For example, in an article in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Chauncey Riddle writes: "Lucifer's plan proposed to 'save' all of the Father's children by forcing each to obey the Father's law in all things."⁷⁶ Similarly, Victor Ludlow states that: "Lucifer... wanted to modify our agency so that there would be no opportunity at all to sin, thus enabling all God's children to return to their celestial existence."⁷⁷

Yet, at least insofar as an analogy can be drawn between what was contemplated in this proposal and life on earth today, LDS theology seems to preclude the possibility that such a plan could have succeeded. Drawing a distinction

between “agency (the power of choice)” and “freedom, the right to act upon our choices,”⁷⁸ Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a Mormon apostle, argues that though it is possible for our freedom to be curtailed, “no person or organization can take away our free agency in mortality.”⁷⁹ Moreover, even if there *were* a way that people could be continually compelled to “do the right things,” Elder Oaks argues that they could not qualify to enter God’s presence without a concomitant transformation of their natures.⁸⁰ McLachlan insightfully observes: “There is a strong sense in LDS doctrine that Satan’s coercive plan is a lie from the beginning because it is a rejection of reality itself which is based on the agency, creativity, and co-eternality of intelligences.”⁸¹

In light of these considerations, should the element of compulsion as the central feature of Satan’s premortal proposal be assumed without question? It is difficult to imagine that the Devil could have won so many followers in the premortal world on the basis of a plan that seems to be so thoroughly unworkable, if not impossible. Perhaps there is another way of looking at the situation. Our examination of the account of the Fall below attempts to provide a reasonable alternative to the traditional view on the nature of Satan’s efforts to “destroy the agency of man.”⁸²

3. Why Was It Essential That Premortal Spirits Be Given the Opportunity to Receive a Body?

Mormons believe that God has a glorified resurrected body, and that man was created in His literal image and likeness. Despite its imperfect and provisional nature, they regard the human body as a divine gift, provided to enable an essential next step in their eternal progression. Joseph Smith taught: “We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment.”⁸³ In LDS discussions of the purpose of the body in mortality, the necessity of being able “to experience the pleasures and pains of being alive” and to seek “perfection and discipline of the spirit along with training and health of the body”⁸⁴ are the kinds of reasons most often mentioned. However, as important as these reasons are, the teachings of Joseph Smith also include the idea that the clothing of spirits with bodies would provide power and protection for them. As Matthew Brown succinctly summarizes:⁸⁵

All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not,” said the Prophet Joseph Smith.⁸⁶ The “spirits of the eternal world”

are as diverse from each other in their dispositions as mortals are on the earth. Some of them are aspiring, ambitious, and even desire to bring other spirits into subjection to them. “As man is liable to [have] enemies [in the spirit world] as well as [on the earth] it is necessary for him to be placed beyond their power in order to be saved. This is done by our taking bodies ([having kept] our first estate) and having the power of the resurrection pass upon us whereby we are enabled to gain the ascendancy over the disembodied spirits.”⁸⁷ It might be said, therefore, that “the express purpose of God in giving [His spirit children] a tabernacle was to arm [them] against the power of darkness.”⁸⁸

The reasons for the importance of a body that Joseph Smith most often emphasized are frequently forgotten in Mormon discussions of the purpose of earth life, yet they seem vital to the LDS understanding of Satan’s efforts to undermine God’s plan.

In recap, we have presented three issues that bring into question core features of popular Mormon assumptions about Satan’s premortal role and objectives. It is difficult to achieve theological precision in these matters, but closer examination of the writings of Joseph Smith and his successors has led us to consider the following as tentative possibilities for a more faithful representation of these teachings: 1. Satan’s claim that he would “redeem all mankind” may have been of primary interest only for the most wicked minority of God’s spirit children; 2. Satan’s ploy “to destroy the agency of man” was something other than the exercise of coercive power to force mortals to do right; and 3. The acquisition of a body in mortality was to enable not only the new experiences of pleasure, pain, and parenthood, but also to provide a protective power from the influences of Satan. After a discussion of the circumstances of the Fall, we will argue that the significance of these possibilities goes beyond their potential value in revealing questionable assumptions about what the Prophet taught, providing, in addition, a cogent rationale for Satan’s actions in the Garden of Eden.

Satan’s Temptation in the Garden of Eden

Before discussing Satan’s temptation in the Garden of Eden, we return to the central question of this paper: Given the divine expedience of the Fall and the trials and temptations which beset God’s children in mortality, precisely what was objectionable in Satan’s actions? With regard to the Fall in the Garden, Mor-

mon Satanology offers certain surprises to those not acquainted with its teachings. For example, the Mormon understanding is that Satan justified his actions in offering the fruit to Eve by virtue of the fact that he was merely doing what was “known and done in other worlds”⁸⁹—a claim that, astonishingly perhaps, goes unchallenged by God. Indeed, according to the book of Moses, the serpent’s temptation began a chain of events which opened the way to eternal life: “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.”⁹⁰ The implication here is not only that the Fall was a forward step in the progression of humankind, but also that the Mormon Devil is not God’s enemy simply because he tempts humans. Instead, his evil must be sought beyond his role as a tempter and in the exact nature of the temptation itself. If our reading of the premortal Satan in Mormon thought is correct, then this temptation will have the goal of permanently arresting the possibility of further progression for Adam and Eve and their descendants. This goal becomes further apparent in the Garden narrative, and especially as we examine the role of the Tree of Life.

The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge

The Tree of Life is the most significant object in the Garden of Eden and it is our contention that Mormon theology can understand the (unauthorized) partaking of its fruit as the ultimate goal of Lucifer’s temptation in the Garden. Its presence has always been somewhat of a puzzle to students of the Bible, however, because it is only briefly mentioned in Genesis: once at the beginning of the story, in connection with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,⁹¹ and once at the end when cherubim and a flaming sword are placed before it to prevent Adam and Eve from partaking of its fruit.⁹² For this reason, some scholars have concluded that there was originally only one special tree, the Tree of Knowledge, in the Garden of Eden story, and that the Tree of Life was added only later as an afterthought.⁹³ The Book of Mormon, however, seems to preclude such a view⁹⁴ in passages such as Alma 12:21 ff. that explicitly speak of both the “forbidden fruit” and the fruit of the Tree of Life.

The idea of a second special tree in the Garden of Eden is generally seen by scholars as unique to the Biblical account, though a case can be made for two trees with analogous descriptions in the *Qur’an*⁹⁵ and in the Zoroastrian *Bundahishn*.⁹⁶ If only a single tree is mentioned in ancient accounts, it is often an

analogue to the Tree of Life,⁹⁷ though the theme of the protagonist's search for knowledge or wisdom frequently appears in such stories one form or another.⁹⁸

The Hebrew expression “knowledge of good and evil” in the description of one of the trees can mean knowledge of what is good and bad, or of happiness and misery—or else knowledge of “everything” if good and evil is taken as a merism. Perhaps the most relevant hint on the meaning of the phrase comes from Deuteronomy 1:39, which speaks of little children “who... have no knowledge of good and evil,” suggesting “that they are not legally responsible for their actions.”⁹⁹ In this sense, the term aptly refers not to abstract conceptual knowledge but rather to the kind of “knowledge which infancy lacks and experience acquires.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, Solomon fittingly prayed for the ability “to discern between good and evil” so that he would be able to function in his royal role.¹⁰¹ Consistent with this interpretation, LDS scripture refers to the ability to know good *from* evil,¹⁰² which presupposes “man’s power to choose the sweet even when it is temporarily harmful and reject the bitter even when seemingly beneficial.”¹⁰³ What is common to both scriptural and extracanonical references is that they are, as Westerman writes,

... concerned with knowledge (or wisdom) in the general, comprehensive sense. Any limitation of the meaning of “the knowledge of good and evil” is thereby excluded. It can mean neither moral nor sexual¹⁰⁴ nor any other partial knowledge, but only that knowledge which includes and determines human existence as a whole, [the ability to master]... one’s own existence.¹⁰⁵

The commandment specifying the prohibition of eating from the Tree of Knowledge is given in Moses 3:16-17:

16 And I, the Lord God, commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat,

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou¹⁰⁶ 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.

The form of the expression “thou shalt surely die” is “characteristic of divine or royal threats” demonstrating “God’s seriousness in prohibiting access

to the tree.”¹⁰⁷ The phrase “thou mayest choose for thyself” is a book of Moses addition to the Genesis account, making it clear that Adam and Eve are to be placed in a situation where they must exercise their agency in order to continue their progression. Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, speaking while an LDS apostle, offered the following paraphrase of the command:

The Lord said to Adam, here is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you want to stay here then you cannot eat of that fruit. If you want to stay here, then I forbid you to eat it. But you may act for yourself and you may eat of it if you want to. And if you eat of it you will die.¹⁰⁸

Since the Tree of Life is not specifically included in the prohibition, commentators have speculated as to whether Adam and Eve may have eaten from it to prolong their lives so long as they remained in the Garden. For example, Trent Stephens, an LDS scholar of evolution,¹⁰⁹ argues that Adam and Eve were inherently mortal at the time they were created but remained immortal so long as they were in the Garden because they had continual access to the Tree of Life.¹¹⁰ If they had hair and skin like ours, he reasons, then their bodies must have contained dead cells and, to a biologist, there is little difference between cell death and organismal death. However, this is a different matter if death is defined as the separation of an individual spirit from the body. Regarding this question, the Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “When God breathed into man’s nostrils he became a living soul, before that he did not live, and when that was taken away his body died.”¹¹¹

A close reading of Genesis itself actually seems to counter the argument that the prohibition against taking of the Tree of Life was only in effect after the transgression of Adam and Eve. For example, the use of the term “also” (Hebrew *gam*) in Genesis 3:22 (“and take *also* of the tree of life”) suggests that they had not yet partaken of the fruit of the Tree of Life at the time these words were spoken. Moreover, evidence for the use of *gam* in the sense of “new and additional activity” is provided in Genesis 3:6 (“and *also* gave to her husband”).¹¹² Additionally, Barr studied 131 cases of “lest” (Hebrew *pen*, “lest he put for his hand... and eat”) in the Bible “and found none which means ‘lest someone continue to do what they are already doing.’”¹¹³ Specifically affirming such a reading is a unique Samaritan exegesis of Genesis 2:16 that specifically excludes the Tree of Life from the original permission given to Adam and Eve to eat from the trees of the Garden.¹¹⁴

The case for such a reading is strengthened conclusively if eating of the fruit of the Tree of Life is taken not merely as the means of ensuring immortality, but as representing, in Mormon parlance, the “gift of eternal life.”¹¹⁵ In LDS theology, the fulness of this gift equates to “exaltation,” the possibility of postmortal life as a resurrected being in the presence of God, coupled with the enjoyment of permanent family relationships.¹¹⁶ Non-Mormon scholar Vos concurs with this sort of reading, concluding that “the tree was associated with the higher, the unchangeable, the eternal life to be secured by obedience throughout the probation.”¹¹⁷ According to this view, Adam and Eve never would have been permitted to partake of the fruit of the Tree of Life at their own discretion. Rather, it would follow, paradoxically, that their only *approach* to the Tree of Life would be by way of *leaving* the Garden to pass into mortality,¹¹⁸ and finally returning at last to take of the sweet fruit only if and when they had completed their probation and were authoritatively invited to do so.¹¹⁹ In short, Mormons believe that there can be no exaltation without probation.

The Forbidden Fruit

LDS teachings about the nature of the “forbidden fruit” include a wide variety of opinions. For example, while President Brigham Young¹²⁰ and Elder James E. Talmage¹²¹ understood the scriptures as describing a literal ingestion of “food” of some sort, Elder Bruce R. McConkie left the door open for a figurative interpretation: “What is meant by partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil is that our first parents complied with whatever laws were involved so that their bodies would change from their state of paradisiacal immortality to a state of natural mortality.”¹²²

Whether one takes the nature of the fruit to be literal or figurative, the insightful comments of Kass on the aptness of the “metaphor that lets prohibited eating stand for prohibited knowing” are pertinent:

Eating is the incorporation of “other” and its transformation into “same.” Eating the proper food maintains oneself and one’s own wholeness. But eating improper food, food that cannot be assimilated, means taking in material that remains indigestible, that remains separate and alien. Taking in wrong food thus produces a certain duality and negativity within; it invites self-attention and judgmental

self-consciousness, precisely the result (in our story) of the act of transgressive eating.¹²³

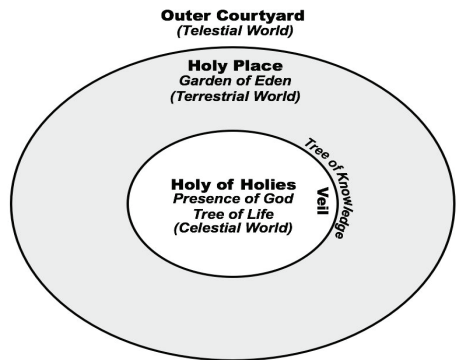
The message about the results of eating of one or the other tree is clear. In both cases, those who eat become “partakers of the divine nature”¹²⁴—the Tree of Life symbolizing the means by which eternal life is granted to the faithful, while the Tree of Knowledge enables those who ingest its fruit to become “as gods, knowing good and evil.”¹²⁵ The LDS story of the Fall seems to teach, however, that eating of either tree in an unprepared state may bring disastrous consequences.

The Symbolism of the Center

The subtle conflation of the location of two trees “in the midst” of the Garden of Eden seems intentional, preparing readers for the confusion that later ensues in the dialogue with the serpent. The dramatic irony of the story is heightened by the fact that while the reader is informed about both trees, Adam and Eve are only specifically told about the Tree of Knowledge.¹²⁶ In the story of the Fall, Satan will exploit their ignorance to his advantage.

Perhaps the most interesting tradition about the placement of the two trees is the Jewish idea that the foliage of the Tree of Knowledge hid the Tree of Life from direct view, and that “God did not specifically prohibit eating from the Tree of Life because the Tree of Knowledge formed a hedge around it; only after one had partaken of the latter and cleared a path for himself could one come close to the Tree of Life.”¹²⁷

It is in this same sense that Ephrem the Syrian, a brilliant and devoted fourth-century Christian, could call the Tree of Knowledge “the veil for the sanctuary.”¹²⁸ He pictured Paradise as a great mountain, with the Tree of Knowledge providing an inner boundary partway up the slopes. The Tree of Knowledge, Ephrem concludes, “acts as a sanctuary curtain [i.e., veil] hiding the Holy of Holies which is the Tree of Life higher up.”¹²⁹ Likewise, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sources sometimes speak of an additional outer “wall” surrounding the



Ephrem's View of the Zones of Sacredness in Eden (adapted from G. A. Anderson, Perfection, p. 80).

whole of the Garden, separating it from the “outer courtyard” of the mortal world.¹³⁰

Consistent with this idea for the layout of the Garden of Eden, Barker sees evidence that in the first temple a Tree of Life was symbolized *within* the Holy of Holies, rather than *outside* the veil as is more typically portrayed.¹³¹ She concludes that the menorah was both removed from the temple and diminished in stature in later Jewish literature as the result of a “very ancient feud” concerning its significance.¹³²

For those who took the Tree of Life to be a representation withing the Holy of Holies, it was natural to see the Tree of Life as the locus of God’s throne.¹³³ “[T]he garden, at the center of which stands the throne of glory, is the royal audience room, which only those admitted to the sovereign’s presence can enter.”¹³⁴ Likewise, Ephrem’s view suggests that the Tree of Life was planted in an inner place so holy that Adam and Eve would court mortal danger if they entered unbidden and unprepared. Though God could minister to them in the Garden, they could not safely enter His world.¹³⁵

The Temptation and the Fall

The battle begun by Satan in the premortal councils was waged again in the Garden of Eden.¹³⁶ It should be remembered, however, that although Adam and Eve’s temptation is usually framed as a question of obedience, the actual prize at stake was knowledge—the knowledge required for them to be saved and, ultimately, to be exalted. The Prophet taught that the “principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation,”¹³⁷ therefore “anyone that cannot get knowledge to be saved will be damned.”¹³⁸

This raises a question: Since salvation was to come through knowledge (the partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge ultimately being a step in the right direction), why did Satan encourage—rather than prevent—the eating of the forbidden fruit by Adam and Eve? It is evident that their transgression—and the access to knowledge that came with it—must have been as much an important part of the Devil’s strategy as it was a central feature of the Father’s plan. How this can be will become more clear as we carefully examine the story of the Fall in light of the previous discussion.

The serpent, Satan’s alias in the story, is described as “subtle.” The Hebrew term behind the word thus depicts it as shrewd, cunning, and crafty, but

not as wise.¹³⁹ “Subtle,” in this context, also has to do with the ability to make something appear one way when it is actually another. Thus, it will not be in the least out of character later for Satan both to disguise his identity and to distort the true nature of a situation in order to deceive.¹⁴⁰

At the moment of temptation, Satan deliberately tries to confuse Eve.¹⁴¹ The Devil—and the astute reader—know that there are two trees in the midst of the Garden, but only one of them is visible to Eve. Moreover, as Barker explains:

... he made the two trees seem identical: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil would open her eyes, and she would be like God, knowing both good and evil. Almost the same was true of the Tree of Life, for Wisdom opened the eyes of those who ate her fruit, and as they became wise, they became divine.¹⁴²

The plausibility of the theme of confusion between the two trees in the record of Moses is strengthened by its appearance in Islamic accounts. For example, in the *Qur’an* Satan does more than simply say that Eve will not suffer death if she eats the forbidden fruit. Instead, he goes beyond mere denial to make the false claim that it is “the tree of immortality.”¹⁴³ However, in reality the tree was just the opposite of what the Devil stated it to be: “It was the tree of death, the spiritual death of man.”¹⁴⁴

A second theme of confusion stems from Satan’s efforts to mask his identity. Depictions of the story often show the Tempter in the dual guise of a serpent and a woman whose hair and facial features exactly mirror those of Eve. This common form of portrayal was not intended to assert that the woman was devilish, but rather to depict the Devil as trying to allay Eve’s fears, deceptively appealing to her by appearing in a form that resembled her own.¹⁴⁵

Of great significance here is the fact that the serpent is a frequently used symbol of life-giving power.¹⁴⁶ In the context of the temptation of Eve, LDS scholars Draper, Brown, and Rhodes conclude that Satan “has effectively come as the Messiah, offering a promise that only the Messiah can offer, for it is the Messiah who will control the powers of life and death and can promise life, not Satan.”¹⁴⁷ Not only has the Devil come in guise of the Holy One, he seems to have deliberately appeared, without authorization, at a most sacred place in the Garden of Eden.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, if it is true, as Ephrem the Syrian believed, that the Tree of Knowledge was a figure for “the veil for the sanctuary,”¹⁴⁹ then Satan has positioned himself, in the extreme of sacrilegious effrontery, as the very “keeper of the gate”¹⁵⁰ to the Tree of Life – symbolizing the possibility, under proper

circumstances, of “exaltation” in Mormon language. Thus, it seems, Eve’s deception consists in having taken the forbidden fruit “from the wrong hand, having listened to the wrong voice.”¹⁵¹

The fifteenth-century *Adamgirk* asks: “... if a good secret [or mystery]¹⁵² was in [the evil fruit], Why did [God] say not to draw near?”¹⁵³ and then answers its own question implicitly. Simply put, the gift by which Adam and Eve would “become divine,”¹⁵⁴ and for which the Tree of Knowledge constituted a part of the approach, was, as yet, “an unattainable thing [t]hat was not in its time.”¹⁵⁵ Satan’s actions seem to have been objectionable in the fact that he acted unilaterally and preemptively. By introducing the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge to Adam and Eve under circumstances of disobedience, the consequences of the Fall would come upon them, putting them in a position of vulnerability and danger. Satan intended to exploit this situation.

Remember that the knowledge itself was good—indeed it was absolutely necessary for their salvation—however, some kinds of knowledge are reserved to be revealed by God Himself “in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will.”¹⁵⁶ As Joseph Smith taught: “That which is wrong under one circumstance, may be, and often is, right under another.”¹⁵⁷ By way of analogy to the situation of Adam and Eve, ritual engagement under conditions of worthiness is intended to bestow glory upon the participants but, as taught in Levitical laws of purity, doing the same “while defiled by sin, was to court unnecessary danger, perhaps even death.”¹⁵⁸ Nibley elaborates: “Satan disobeyed orders when he revealed certain secrets to Adam and Eve, not because they were not known and done in other worlds, but because he was not authorized in that time and place to convey them.”¹⁵⁹ Although Satan had “given the fruit to Adam and Eve, it was not his prerogative to do so—regardless of what had been done in other worlds. (When the time comes for such fruit, it will be given us legitimately.)”¹⁶⁰

In any case, the temptation was not only about the Tree of Knowledge. The full measure of Satan’s intent in his presumptuous offering of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge to Adam and Eve became apparent when it was time for them to take the *next* step, and herein lies the second part of Satan’s diabolical strategem and symbol of his great rebellion against God. The scriptural account suggests that “the new situation to be avoided is... the eating from the [Tree of Life] after having taken from the Tree of Knowledge”:¹⁶¹

And I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten: Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil;¹⁶² and now lest he put forth his hand and partake also of the tree of life, and eat and live for-

ever... I drove out the man, and I placed at the east of the Garden of Eden, cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.”¹⁶³

By placing the cherubim and the flaming sword to guard the way to the Tree, the result of Satan’s deceitful manipulations to get Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was co-opted by God, and the risk of Adam and Eve’s partaking immediately of the fruit of the Tree of Life was averted. Though no direct justification is given in the biblical account as to why eating of the fruit of the Tree of Life would have been disastrous for the fallen couple, an understanding of Satan’s premortal objectives, coupled with explanations in the Book of Mormon, seems to provide valuable insight into the situation. We discuss some further conjectures below.

Satan’s Tactics in the Garden as Continued Pursuit of His Premortal Objectives

The Devil’s efforts to oppose God in the Garden of Eden appear to have been designed to further his premortal agenda in at least three ways:

1. His original proposal to “save” all mankind “in unrighteousness and corruption”¹⁶⁴ was briefly put into motion through his attempt to get Adam and Eve to take of the fruit of the Tree of Life immediately after taking of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. As Alma explains: “For behold, if Adam had put forth his hand immediately, and partaken of the tree of life, he would have lived forever,¹⁶⁵ according to the word of God, having no space for repentance; yea, and also the word of God would have been void, and the great plan of salvation would have been frustrated.”¹⁶⁶ Just as Satan’s rejected premortal plan had proposed to provide a limited measure of “salvation” for all while precluding the opportunity for exaltation, so it seems plausible that his unsuccessful scheme in the Garden was intended to impose an inferior form of immortality that would forestall the possibility of eternal life.¹⁶⁷

2. His intent to “destroy the agency of man,”¹⁶⁸ as argued above, should not be seen as a doomed attempt to compel people to “do right.” Rather, it may be more appropriately conceived as an effort to

eliminate the possibility of a period of probation whereby individuals could *exercise* their agency. LDS scripture teaches that, in preparation for eternal life, mankind must have their days “prolonged” and undergo a “state of probation” on earth while in mortality.¹⁶⁹ Otherwise “the great plan of salvation would be frustrated” because there would be “no probationary time”¹⁷⁰ before the spirits of Adam and Eve would be forever united with an immortal body.¹⁷¹ Only they “who are of a celestial spirit” can receive a body quickened with celestial glory,¹⁷² thus it is essential that each person be given sufficient opportunity to use their agency to “repent while in the flesh.”¹⁷³ If Adam and Eve had taken the fruit of the Tree of Life immediately after having eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, they would have been “forever miserable,”¹⁷⁴ having become “immortal in their fallen state.”¹⁷⁵

3. His ultimate objective in tempting Adam and Eve was to thwart the Father’s plan that they and His other spirit children could take on mortal bodies and eventually be resurrected in glory. On the one hand, Satan sought to preclude Adam and Eve from the possibility of providing bodies for children in mortality by cutting short their earthly probation. On the other hand, he planned to have them immediately take of the Tree of Life, which presumably would have brought Adam and Eve’s bodies into a state of immortal immutability before they were ready. Since only those who inherit celestial glory are promised a “continuation of the seeds”¹⁷⁶ it seems that this would have also prevented them from bearing children in eternity. Not implausibly, there may also have been the idea that a group of disembodied (or unembodied) spirits could be subjected to his power: “For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to... the devil... And 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.”¹⁷⁷

Conclusions

In this article, we have outlined a few of the key similarities and differences between the satan in the story of Job and the wider Old Testament, and in the LDS accounts of the premortal world and the life of Adam and Eve. We

believe that this perspective, based in LDS scripture and teachings but freed from some of the folk explanations of these ideas, offers a coherent reading of Satanology in Mormon theology, taking into account some of the paradoxes evident across scripture.

While in the book of Job the “satan” is portrayed as having received explicit permission for his actions, in the Garden, the Devil is shown to have acted in direct defiance of God’s instructions, as he had in the premortal councils. His objective was not simply to tempt Adam and Eve; rather it was to provide a Luciferian form of universal “redemption” which would have in fact have severely limited the potential of humankind for progression, abrogated their opportunities for the exercise of agency, and precluded the possibility for spirits to be embodied and saved from his dominating influence. Mormons see the goal of humankind’s eternal progression through the exercise of agency, the continuation of seed, and the worthy partaking of eternal life as fundamental to God’s plan. By opposing these objectives, “the satan” becomes Satan, the enemy of God.

Appendix: Parallels to the Story of the Fall

The unusual reading of the Fall in this article finds echoes elsewhere in scripture and tradition. In particular, Hendel makes the case that “the Primeval Cycle [Genesis 1-11] is characterized by a series of mythological transgressions of boundaries” between humans and God.¹⁷⁸ For instance, the “same stress on a borderline between the divine and human spheres is found in... [the] passage on the Tower of Babel [which] presents ‘the tower whose top assaults the sky—a perfect and natural metaphor for the human assault on the divinely ordained cosmos.’”¹⁷⁹ A similar assault in an opposite direction is evident in the story of the Watchers.¹⁸⁰

Another prime example is the story of Noah’s family after the Flood, which has often been compared to the account of Adam and Eve in the first chapters of Genesis. Immediately after their debarkation, God established his covenant with Noah, outlining dietary instructions and giving the commandment to “multiply and replenish” the renewed earth, in similitude of what He originally told Adam and Eve.¹⁸¹ The ever-obedient Noah also imitated the example of the first parents by beginning at once to till the earth.¹⁸² Then comes the scene of a “Fall” and consequent judgment.¹⁸³

Often, the instigator of this “Fall” is wrongfully seen to be Noah who, it is reported, succumbed to the intoxicating influence of wine from his vinyard

adn retreated to the privacy of his tent.¹⁸⁴ Note, however, that the scriptures omit any hint of wrongdoing by Noah, and instead reserve all condemnation for his son Ham and his grandson Canaan.¹⁸⁵ And what was their sin? If we have understood the situation in Eden correctly, it is a perfect parallel to the transgression of Adam and Eve. Without proper invitation, Ham approached the curtains of his father's lodgings and intrusively looked when he was "uncovered within [literally, "in the midst of"¹⁸⁶] his tent,"¹⁸⁷ violating Noah's sanctity and exposing what should have been left unseen.¹⁸⁸

Likewise, Ephrem compares the transgression of Adam to the story of King Uzziah, who, though not a priest, entered the sanctuary to burn incense and as a result was smitten with leprosy.¹⁸⁹ Ephrem writes that when "Adam snatched the fruit, casting aside the commandment... he beheld that Glory within, shining forth with its rays... Adam made bold to touch and was smitten like Uzziah: the king became leprous, Adam was stripped... both kings fled and hid in the shame of their bodies... [The trees] all blushed at Adam, who was suddenly found naked."¹⁹⁰ Note that, in contrast to the practice of priests in some Near East cultures, the Israelite code specified that it was improper for a man to appear naked before God; indeed the law described in great detail the particular dress that was suitable for the act of worship.¹⁹¹

Sounding a similar theme, a petitioner in the Islamic mystical text, *The Mother of Books*, is warned by God that if someone were to move "the curtain and the veil the slightest bit [to] make the high king visible [i.e., to see His presence within the place of His full glory]... their spirit would leave their body."¹⁹² By way of contrast, the Armenian *Descendants of Adam* says that the righteous Enoch refrained from looking at the heavens—which is equated to the fact that he did not eat of the:

... tree of meat [= tree of knowledge]... And he drew linen over his face, and did not look at the heavens, on account of the sin of Adam... And God had mercy upon Enoch and transferred him to immortality.¹⁹³

In some respects, the fall of Satan, who said aspiringly "I will ascend into heaven... I will be like the most High"¹⁹⁴ and "sought that [God] should give unto him [His] own power,"¹⁹⁵ parallels the Fall of Adam and Eve. The fifteenth-century *Adamgirk* text has Satan saying: "I fell, exiled from the heavens, Without fruit,¹⁹⁶ like Eve."¹⁹⁷ Nibley concludes that "dire consequences" may result from transgression of divinely-set bounds, citing the case of "Pistis Sophia],

who] went beyond her ‘degree’ and, becoming ambitious, ‘looked behind the veil’ [and] fell from glory.”¹⁹⁸

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NOTES

¹The individual that modern believers call the “Devil” is known by many names: “Satan,” “Lucifer,” “Beelzebub,” “the serpent,” and others. These names were not always synonymous, however, and each carries different shades of meaning. “Lucifer,” for example, refers to the morning or day star (Venus), an epithet applied to the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:12) and often interpreted typologically by Christians in reference to the fall from grace of one of God’s primordial luminaries. In current LDS parlance, the name “Lucifer” is often used to refer to the Devil in his premortal role as one “in authority in the presence of God,” as distinguished from the name “Satan,” which describes the adversarial being he “became” subsequent to his being “thrust down” from heaven (D&C 76:25-29; Moses 4:1-4).

²2 Nephi 2: 17-18.

³2 Nephi 28: 22.

⁴Matt. 4: 1

⁵Rev 20: 10.

⁶Mormons believe that Jesus Christ, though unique among God’s children in His perfection and in the combination of mortal and divine attributes He possessed, was also a spirit son of God the Father. Indeed, Mormons see each man and woman as a spirit son or daughter of God, and there is some aspect of their individual spirit that has always existed, although the exact nature of this eternal part of man has not been authoritatively settled (K. W. Godfrey, *Intelligence*; P. N. Hyde, *Intelligences*).

Finding the idea that Lucifer was a spirit child of God repugnant, some non-Mormon groups have publicly caricatured and ridiculed this doctrine in the media. For an official statement explaining this belief, see *Answering Questions: Jesus and Satan*. See also *Jesus Christ is the Brother*, where a statement by Lactantius is cited as one example of how this idea was not foreign to the orthodoxy of early Christians (Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 2.9, 7:52–53).

Some might regard Mormonism as a form of dualism—specifically procosmic (i.e., seeing the world as essentially good), monarchical (i.e., affirming the prior and greater authority of a supreme creator), and eschatological (i.e., where the positive principle ultimately prevails and re-establishes the original order) (L. Afloroaei, *Dualism*, pp. 89-90). However, closer examination reveals that it is not a true dualism since, like Bogomilism, “Satan, although a ‘high rank angel,’ is not the author/creator of the inferior world,” i.e., not a “real cosmogonic principle. In other words, he represents a power subordinated to God, playing his part only with God’s permission” (*ibid.*, p. 98; cf. I. P. Couliano, *Tree*, pp. 208-211). Mormonism does differ from most Christian thought, however, in its account of how evil’s appearance preceded even the Creation, rather than having its origins in the transgression of Adam and Eve. As Flake explains, in “traditional Christianity’s cosmic history: ‘Let there be light,’ says God over a perfect creation, into which evil has yet to appear and, when it does, comes as a result of human action. These words communicate that God has power over evil because evil is subordinate to—or comes after and is foreign to—God’s absolutely original and fundamentally good creation. In contrast, [Joseph] Smith’s addition of the premortal council to the traditional Genesis narrative teaches that the option

of evil existed, as did humans, primordially or prior to earthly creation”—though, of course, evil still is ultimately subordinate to God (K. Flake, *Translating Time*, p. 511). Even in traditional Christianity, however, there is an implicit notion of evil prior to original sin, in the fact that Satan’s presence in the Garden of Eden is not explained in Genesis. For additional perspectives on Joseph Smith’s teachings relating to the problem of evil, see D. L. Paulsen, *Evil*.

⁷ See “True to the Faith,” s.v. Satan, p. 154.

⁸ *Journal of Discourses*, 19 February 1854, 2:11.

⁹ In light of LDS teachings that the atonement of Jesus Christ was efficacious for other worlds in addition to our own (e.g., see, e.g., D&C 76:41-42; J. Smith, Jr. (or W. W. Phelps), *The Answer*, 19-20, cited in L. E. Dahl, *Vision*, p. 298; D&C 88:51-61; J. Taylor, *Government*, pp. 76-77), most modern Mormons would rather say: “every earth has *a* redeemer, and every earth has *a* tempter.”

¹⁰ B. Young, 10 July 1870, pp. 71-72. Brigham Young also said: “The plan of salvation is calculated to make devils as well as Saints, for by and by we shall need some to serve as devils; and it takes almost as much knowledge to make a complete devil as it does to fit a man to go to the celestial kingdom of God and become an heir to His kingdom.... Neither you nor I would ever be prepared to be crowned in the celestial kingdom of our Father and our God, without devils in this world. Do you know that the Saints never could be prepared to received the glory that is in reserve for them, without devils to help them to get it? Men and women never could be prepared to be judged and condemned out of their own mouths... without the power both of God and the devil. We are obliged to know and understand them, one as well as the other, in order to prepare us for the day that is coming, and for our exaltation. Some of you may think that this is a curious principle, but it is true.... We must know the evil in order to know the good. There must needs be an opposition in all things” (B. Young, 28 June 1857, pp. 372, 373).

¹¹ For example, John Hick’s “soul-making theodicy” (*Evil and the God of Love*), itself a adaptation of Irenaeus, suggests that the evils of this world are part of God’s pedagogy for his creation.

¹² As Hugh Nibley expresses it, a most astonishing aspect of God’s plan is that although “[t]he devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually” (Moroni 7:12) ... God permits it! He has expressly allowed Satan, the common enemy, to try men and to tempt them—that is the whole point of the thing; men must be exposed to both influences so each can make his own choice” (H. W. Nibley, *Prophetic*, p. 461).

¹³ *Abraham* 3:25.

¹⁴ D&C 29:39.

¹⁵ 2 *Nephi* 2:11.

¹⁶ B. Ostler, *Theism*, p. 6.

¹⁷ Augustine (*The City of God* xiv. 13) believed that Adam would have succumbed to sin even without the help of Satan, thus placing blame for the Fall wholly on man rather than an independent creation of God (i.e., Satan).

¹⁹ Compare with the Catechism of the Catholic Church ¶399 which speaks of the “tragic consequences of this first disobedience” (emphasis ours). The Catechism ¶395 also states

that “it is a great mystery that providence should permit diabolical activity.”

¹⁹J. Smith, Jr., History, 5 June 1844, 6:428.

²⁰It is in this sense that Nibley compares Satan to Mephistopheles, “who always wants to do evil and only succeeds in doing good. Of course, it drives him wild. He can’t win” (H. W. Nibley, Teachings of the PGP, 17, p. 208).

²¹Abraham 1:2.

²²M. Barker, Older, p. 238. She further argues that important elements of the wisdom traditions in Israel, including wisdom traditions specifically associated with Adam, have been obscured or lost through exclusion from the canon and deliberate alteration of what remained, and must be reconstructed from extracanonical sources that often blend wisdom with the apocalyptic.

²³R. A. Kraft, Job 48:4, p. 83.

²⁴R. P. Spittler, Testament of Job 40:2, p. 859; see also H. W. Nibley, Prayer Circle, p. 63.

²⁵H. W. Nibley, Prayer Circle, p. 63; cf. R. P. Spittler, Testament of Job 47:5, p. 865:

“Arise, gird your loins like a man. I shall question you, and you answer me.”

²⁶See H. W. Nibley, Prayer Circle, p. 63; H. W. Nibley, Consecration, p. 439; cf. R. P. Spittler, Testament of Job 23:3, p. 848: “Pay the price and take what you like.”

²⁷On the theme of divine testing in Job, and the book’s affinities with the story of the Fall, see T. N. D. Mettinger, Eden, p. 54-58.

²⁸Moses 4. See J.M. Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness*, pp. 214-453

²⁹Moses 1:12-22. See J.M. Bradshaw and D.J. Larsen, *Die Apokalypse Abrahams* and J.M. Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness*, pp. 694-96. For additional perspectives on heavenly ascent in the Old Testament, see J. M. Bradshaw, *The Ezekiel Mural*.

³⁰Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness*, pp. 32, 33, 53, 75, 403.

³¹The verb occurs only six times (Psalm 38:21; 71:13; 109:4, 20, 29; Zechariah 3:1) and lacks a Semitic cognate.

³²In 1 Maccabees 1:36, Antiochus IV is called diabolon ponēron—an “evil foe.” Diabolos needed to be qualified by ponēros to make it clear the person in question was indeed wicked. “Devil” in English has, of course, lost this ambiguity.

³³V. Hamilton, Satan, p. 986.

³⁴1 Sam 29:4.

³⁵2 Sam 19:22.

³⁶1 Kgs 5:4.

³⁷1 Kgs 11:14.

³⁸1 Kgs 11:23,25.

³⁹Dahood, against most modern commentators, argues for a celestial Satan in this passage. See M. Dahood, Psalms, pp. 101-102.

⁴⁰Usually translated as “adversary.”

⁴¹Numbers 22:22.

⁴²W. Gesenius, GKC,126e states that the definite article in such a case means “a certain

one of.” Here Satan is used as a title, not (yet) a personal name.

⁴³ Zechariah 3:1-2.

⁴⁴ This is taken by W. Gesenius, GKC,125f to refer to a real proper name, therefore referring to “Satan,” a demonic figure more closely related to the later Judeo-Christian Devil (Chronicles is a late, post-exilic book where a hint of later theology might be expected). But it could also mean simply “a satan.”

⁴⁵ 1 Chronicles 21:1. This passage emends 2 Samuel 24:1 where it is Yahweh that takes a census of Israel.

⁴⁶ Biblical scholars have provided various models for the creation and evolution of the literary character of “satan” in the book of Job. Forsyth, *Old Enemy*, p. 114 assumes a Persian period composition for Job (5th-4th centuries BCE). He sees the satan’s “roaming” as alluding to the spies of the Persian court who patrolled the empire, a system of control “that must have been especially irksome to subjects of the Great King and may suggest that at least the Satan part of the Book of Job was composed in Persian times.” In this model, the satan represents the transfer of a political situation to a theological level (A.L. Oppenheim, *Eyes*, p. 175). This suggestion has been made by various scholars and is followed by some of the commentaries (see J. Crenshaw, *Job*, pp. 863-4 and the somewhat idiosyncratic H. Torczyner, *Satan*, pp. 563-565). Reference is often made to Persian royal spies in the Greek sources:

The king has a thousand eyes and a thousand ears; and hence the fear of uttering anything against his interest since “he is sure to hear,” or “since he may be there to see.” (Xenophon, *Cyropedia*, VIII.2.10-12.

From this evidence it has been suggested that the Persian satrapies were watched over by royal “spies” who reported any rebellion or disloyalty to the king. Crucially, however, there is no Persian evidence that confirms the existence of the institution of the King’s Eye or Ear. Hirsch concludes that, “the known facts of Persian history provide no support to a belief in the existence of a comprehensive network of agents relaying information to the Great King” (S. Hirsch, *Friendship*, p. 129). Hirsch ascribes the Greek notion of a Persian spy network to the influence of Iranian mythological tradition, particularly the “Eyes of Mithra” (120f).

⁴⁷ šûṭ, “to roam”, probably a pun on šātān.

⁴⁸ P. Day, *Adversary*, p. 76.

⁴⁹ For discussion and references, see E. Mullen, *Divine Assembly*.

⁵⁰ The members of the divine court are called variously: “sons of gods/El” (Psalm 29:1; 89:7), “sons of God” (Deuteronomy 32:8; Genesis 6:2, 4; Job 1:6, 2:1, “sons of Elyon” (Psalm 82:6), “all the gods” (Psalm 97:7), “holy ones” (Deuteronomy 33:2-3 etc.), “host of heaven” (Isaiah 40:26; Psalm 148:3). The parallelism in Job 38:7—morning stars : sons of God—suggests that the “sons of God” are symbolized as heavenly bodies (stars).

⁵¹ T. Jacobsen, *Primitive Democracy*. Jacobsen believed that this was evidence for some kind of primitive democracy in early Mesopotamia. This goes too far, but the idea of governmental assemblies is beyond doubt. For an up-to-date summary of this issue see D. Fleming, *Ancestors*. For evidence closer to Israel, see J. Macdonald, *Assembly*.

⁵² In the Neo-Babylonian period, courts were headed by officials called sartenu (the Chief Bailiff). In the Neo-Assyrian empire the sartenu was a member of the state cabinet

and traveled through the empire trying cases. See R. Westbrook, *History* pp. 888-890, 919.

⁵³ See S. Meier, *Messenger*.

⁵⁴ Oppenheim, *Eyes*, 177ff.

⁵⁵ e.g., *Wisdom* 2:24.

⁵⁶ *Matt* 4:8-9.

⁵⁷ *Matt* 25:41.

⁵⁸ Our objective here is not to engage in scholarly debate as to the dating, provenance, and the degree of historicity of various passages in *Job*, but rather to treat these passages from a canonical perspective, ignoring for the purposes of this study the rather complex questions about how primary sources may have been authored and combined to form the scriptural text as we now have it. Importantly, Mormonism claims to offer new light on old passages, none of which are considered by Latter-day Saints to be inerrant or representative of the totality of God's truth.

⁵⁹ *D&C* 76:25-26, 28; see also *Isaiah* 14:4-23, *Revelation* 12:3-9, *D&C* 29:36-45, *Abraham* 3:27-28; cf. *Daniel* 8:10-12, *Ezekiel* 28:11-19, *Luke* 10:18, 2 *Enoch*, 29:4-5, p. 148; L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:62-64, 5:84-86 n. 35.

⁶⁰ Joseph Smith, cited retrospectively by George Laub (*E. England*, Laub, p. 28).

⁶¹ J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 14 May 1843, p. 201.

⁶² *Moses* 4:4.

⁶³ *Moses* 4:3.

⁶⁴ *Moses* 4:1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 7 April 1844, p. 357. The four WJS accounts of the discourse are given below. The first three were used to create the amalgamated statement in *TPJS*. In considering the additional detail given in Laub's account, it is significant that the statement about the premortal rebellion was given in the context of a discussion of the unpardonable sin.

Report of Wilford Woodruff: "All will suffer until they obey Christ himself. Even the devil said, I am a savior and can save all. He rose up in rebellion against God and was cast down. Jesus Christ will save all except the sons of perdition. What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? They must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto them, and know God, and then sin against him. This is the case with many apostates in this Church: they never cease to try to hurt me, they have got the same spirit the devil had, [and] you cannot save them. They make open war like the devil" (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 7 April 1844, p. 347, spelling and punctuation standardized).

Report of Thomas Bullock: "No man can commit the unpardonable sin after the dissolution of the body, but they must do it in this world. Hence the salvation of Jesus Christ was wrought out for all men to triumph over the devil. For he stood up for a Savior. Jesus contended that there would be certain souls that would be condemned and the devil said he could save them all. As the Grand Council gave in for Jesus Christ, so the devil fell, and all who put up their heads for him. All sin shall be forgiven except the sin against the Holy Ghost" (*Ibid.*, p. 353).

Report of William Clayton: "I said no man could commit the unpardonable sin after the

dissolution of the body. Hence the salvation that the Savior wrought out for the salvation of man—if it did not [indecipherable, TP]S says “catch” him in one place it would another. The contention in heaven was Jesus said there were certain men [who] would not be saved [i.e., because they would sin against the Holy Ghost], [and] the devil said he could save them. He rebelled against God and was thrust down” (Ibid., p. 361).

Report of George Laub: “Jesus Christ, being the greater light or of more intelligence, for he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, He being the elder brother, presented himself for to come and redeem this world as it was his right by inheritance. He stated [that] He could save all those who did not sin against the Holy Ghost and they would obey the code of laws that was given. But their circumstances were that all who would sin against the Holy Ghost should have no forgiveness neither in the world nor in the world to come. For they strove against light and knowledge after they had tasted of the good things of the world to come. They should not have any pardon in the world to come because they had a knowledge of the world to come and were not willing to abide the law. Therefore they can have no forgiveness there but must be most miserable of all and never can be renewed again [see Hebrews 6:4-8]. But Satan or Lucifer, being the next heir..., had allotted to him great power and authority, even Prince of the air. He spake immediately and boasted of himself saying, ‘Send me, I can save all, even those who sinned against the Holy Ghost.’ And he accused his brethren [see Revelation 12:10] and was hurled from the Council for striving to break the law immediately. And there was a warfare with Satan and the Gods. And they hurled Satan out of his place and all them that would not keep the law of the Council. But he himself being one of the council would not keep his or their first estate, for he was one of the sons of perdition and consequently all the sons of perdition became devils, etc.” (E. England, Laub, p. 22).

Note that Laub’s report, taken from his journal, is a retrospective summary. The value of Laub’s summary is in that it contains details not recorded elsewhere—the kinds of details that would have been implausible for him to construct on his own—however, it is certainly less reliable overall than the three contemporaneous accounts (J. Smith, Jr., Words, pp. xvi-xvii.), having probably been reconstructed in 1845 “from notes of actual speeches heard but not accurately dated and from memory of those speeches and other teachings he had heard” (E. England, *Laub*, p. 32 n. 24).

⁶⁷ D. Williams, *Idiot’s Guide*, p. 24.

⁶⁸ See D&C 76:43-44.

⁶⁹ J. Smith, Jr., cited in E. England, Laub, discourse apparently given 7 April 1844, p. 22, spelling and punctuation standardized. This statement is consistent with John 6:39-40.

⁷⁰ B. R. McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, pp. 271-275; cf. D&C 76:43-44, J. F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 434; J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 10 March 1844, p. 339.

⁷¹ E. England, Laub, p. 22.

⁷² Mormon writer and Seventy Spencer J. Condie gave his view as follows: “Because [the Devil’s] plan allowed for no mistakes it required no atonement for sin, and thus he could save his own satanic skin from any suffering” (S. J. Condie, *Agency*, p. 6).

⁷³ O. Pratt, 18 July 1880, p. 288; cf. Helaman 5:10-11. Compare Brigham Young: “if you undertake to save all, you must save them in unrighteousness and corruption” (B. Young, 30

October 1870, p. 282).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ J. M. McLachlan, *Modernism Controversy*, p. 62.

⁷⁶ C. C. Riddle, *Devils*, p. 379. That the slightest notion of compulsion is favored by God is explicitly repudiated in the stories of Genesis 1-11, which, as Gelande observes, “indicate that God preferred freedom of choice as the highest virtue, even above His own absolute goodness. The implication is that God’s morality is inherent in the idea that goodness which is compelled is neither good nor moral” (S. Gelande, *Creator*, pp. 9-10).

⁷⁷ V. L. Ludlow, *Principles*, p. 148.

⁷⁸ See D&C 101:78.

⁷⁹ D. H. Oaks, *Free Agency*. See also B. Ostler, *Theism*, pp. 7-8. In this sense, agency can be primarily conceived as “free independence of mind” (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 22 January 1834, p. 49).

⁸⁰ D. H. Oaks, *To Become*, p. 32; see also C. S. Lewis, *Mere*, 3:2, p. 77; J. E. Faulconer, *Self-Image*; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Moroni 7:47.

⁸¹ J. M. McLachlan, *Modernism Controversy*, p. 62.

⁸² *Moses* 4:3.

⁸³ J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 5 January 1841, p. 181. The Prophet continues: “He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man, and when cast out by the Savior he asked to go into the herd of swine, showing that he would prefer a swine’s body to having none.”

⁸⁴ K. M. Van de Graaf, *Body*, p. 1080.

⁸⁵ M. B. Brown, *Plan*, p. 33.

⁸⁶ J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 5 January 1841, p. 60. In the case of the exercise of this power by the righteous, Madsen clarifies that this is not “a dominating, exploiting, enslaving power. ‘Power over’ means more advanced, more Christ-like” (T. G. Madsen, *LDS View*, p. 101).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 21 May 1843, p. 208.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 19 January 1841, p. 62; cf. 2 Nephi 9:8-9. See additional quotations in M. B. Brown, *Plan*, p. 47n. See also Alma 34:35 regarding the fate of the wicked in the resurrection.

⁸⁹ H. W. Nibley, *Return*, p. 63; H. W. Nibley, *Gifts*, p. 92. Though Mormons believe that Satan was aware of what had been done in other worlds, they are also told in *Moses* 4:6 that he “knew not the mind of God” with respect to this one. Indeed, we might say that it was his very ignorance of God’s designs that paved the way of knowledge for Adam and Eve. The Adversary intended to thwart God’s plan by inducing their transgression, but instead unknowingly served as the required catalyst for the divinely-ordained exercise of human choice. In this set up for Satan, God had beat the Devil at his own game; in fact, we might say that He had out-tempted the great Tempter.

If, then, there was, as it seems we must assume, something different about this world as compared to the others Satan had known, what was it? Intriguingly, Mormon scripture mentions only one single respect in which this earth is unique, in contrast to all the other worlds belonging to the order of those created by Jesus Christ, namely that it was here, and here alone, that He wrought out His Atonement. Though LDS teachings affirm that all these many worlds shared the same Savior (see, e.g., D&C 76:41-42; J. Smith, Jr. (or W. W. Phelps), *The Answer*, 19-20, cited in L. E. Dahl, *Vision*, p. 298; D&C 88:51-61; J. Taylor,

Government, pp. 76-77), they are also clear in asserting that it took place, once and for all, here on the Earth. Moreover, Mormon scripture tells us why this planet was singled out: it was the only one among His creations that would be wicked enough to crucify their own Savior (2 Nephi 10:3; Moses 7:36; J. F. Smith, Jr., Signs, 14 October 1942, p. 5).

Building on this line of thought, is it possible, as C. S. Lewis tried to imagine, that there are at least some other worlds, more enlightened than our own, on which the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge was not forbidden at the outset and which there was no corresponding Fall (C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra*)? Certainly, Joseph Smith's teachings about "translated" beings who live on more glorious worlds in such a blessed state give hints of such ideas (J. Smith, Jr. Teachings, p. 170). Though any further speculation seems unwarranted, one conclusion, at least, seems compelling: in LDS theology, Satan's shortsighted strategy can only be explained in terms of an effort to opportunistically exploit his discovery of certain differences between this world and the "other worlds" of which he had cognizance; and God's success in co-opting the Devil's strategy depended on Satan's ignorance of the ultimate purpose for these differences.

⁹⁰ Moses 5:11.

⁹¹ Moses 3:9.

⁹² Moses 4:28-31.

⁹³ e.g., C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, p. 212. For brief a survey on the question of one or two trees, and related textual irregularities, see T. N. D. Mettinger, *Eden*, pp. 5-11.

⁹⁴ In his recent in-depth analysis of the question, Mettinger also concurs with the view that there were two trees in the story (T. N. D. Mettinger, *Eden*).

⁹⁵ Qur'an 2:35, 7:19ff. vs. 53:14; see J. O. Ryen, *Mandaean Vine*, p. 220; A. al-Tha'labi, *Lives*, p. 49.

⁹⁶ F. M. Müller, *Bundahis*, 9:5-6, 18:1, 18:9, 27:2-4, pp. 31, 65, 66, 99-100.

⁹⁷ M. Barker, *Creation theology*, p. 8.

⁹⁸ C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, pp. 245-248. See T. Stordalen, *Echoes*, pp. 294-296, 462-465 for a useful survey of literature on the Tree of Knowledge.

⁹⁹ V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, p. 166.

¹⁰⁰ J. H. Hertz, *Pentateuch*, p. 8; cf. J. E. Faulconer, *Adam and Eve*, 19-20.

¹⁰¹ 1 Kings 3:9; cf. Targum Yerushalmi: "the tree of knowledge, of which any one who ate would distinguish between good and evil" (cited in J. W. Etheridge, *Onkelos*).

¹⁰² Alma 12:31; 2 Nephi 2:26; Moses 6:55-56.

¹⁰³ A. Cohen, *Chumash*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁴ C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, pp. 247-248; cf. T. N. D. Mettinger, *Eden*, pp. 61-63. Supplementing Westermann's argument with additional considerations, Sarna writes: "Against the interpretation that [the fruit represented carnal knowledge] is the fact...that sexual differentiation is made by God Himself [Moses 2:27], that the institution of marriage is looked upon... as part of the divinely ordained order [Moses 2:25], and that... 'knowledge of good and bad' is a divine characteristic" (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 19; see Moses 4:11, 28). Westermann concurs, concluding that the opening of the eyes experienced by Adam and Eve in Moses 4:13 "does not mean that they become conscious of sexuality" (C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, p. 251). It is later, immediately following the account of their expulsion from Eden, that we are given the significant detail that "Adam knew his wife, and she bare unto him sons and

daughters” (Moses 5:2. See J. E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 30).

¹⁰⁵ C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, pp. 247-248.

¹⁰⁶ Whereas the Hebrew text uses the singular “thou,” implying that the commandment was given to Adam alone, the Greek Septuagint uses the plural “you” (L. C. L. Brenton, *Septuagint, Genesis 2:17*, p. 3; C. Dogniez et al., *Pentateuque, Genesis 2:17*, pp. 140-141). The idea that both Adam and Eve were both present to hear this command from God was not uncommon in Jewish and early Christian tradition (G. A. Anderson et al., *Synopsis*, 32:1, p. 36E; G. A. Anderson, *Perfection*, pp. 81-84).

¹⁰⁷ G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁸ J. F. Smith, Jr., *Fall*, reprinted in *Church Educational System, Charge*, p. 124. See also J. F. Smith, Jr., *Answers*, 4:81. The unique phrasing of this commandment is noted by Elder Smith: “In no other commandment the Lord ever gave to man, did he say: ‘But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself’” (J. F. Smith, Jr., *Doctrines*, 1:114).

¹⁰⁹ Mormon leaders have taken no official position on the question of evolution and the origin of man (W. E. Evenson, et al., *Evolution*; J. L. Sorenson, *Origin*).

¹¹⁰ T. D. Stephens et al., *Evolution*, pp. 181-185; T. D. Stephens, *Tree of Life*. Another divergent view of the theme of immortality is provided by Jack Sasson (J. M. Sasson, *Time and immortality*; J. M. Sasson, *Time and mortality*). He believes that Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the Tree of Life and it made them immortal, a situation that could not be tolerated by God. The woman was to bear children and becomes Eve, the mother of all the living. Thus human immortality is channeled from the soma to the germ plasm, immortality through procreation. Humans cannot again eat from the Tree of Life, so it is cut off from them. God then fashions coats of skins for the humans to forever remind them of their proximity to animal life, the life of mortality.

¹¹¹ J. Smith, Jr., *Spirits*, p. 746.

¹¹² V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, p. 209. See also T. N. D. Mettinger, *Eden*, p. 20.

¹¹³ T. Stordalen, *Echoes*, pp. 230-231. However, slightly weakening Barr’s claim, there are two exceptions among the 131 instances: Exodus 1:9 and 2 Samuel 12:27.

¹¹⁴ S. Lowy, *Principles*, p. 403

¹¹⁵ D&C 14:7. Such a view was maintained by, among others, LDS apostle Elder Bruce R. McConkie (B. R. McConkie, *New Witness*, p. 86). For LDS sources describing similar views, see e.g., A. Gileadi, *Studies*, p. 10; B. C. Hafen, *Broken*, p. 30; R. J. Matthews, *Probationary Nature*, p. 56. Though not uncommonly held among Mormons, this belief has not been authoritatively expressed as an official doctrine.

¹¹⁶ In addition to the highest gift of “exaltation,” the gift of immortality in a kingdom of glory will be bestowed in appropriate measure on all those who choose to partake of the fruits of Christ’s atonement in any degree (D&C 88:28-32). All people will eventually be given a full and fair opportunity to understand and accept these gifts, if they so desire them, whether in

this life or the next.

¹¹⁷ Cited in V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, p. 209 n. 6.

¹¹⁸ B. C. Hafen, *Broken*, p. 30.

¹¹⁹ *D&C* 88:68.

¹²⁰ B. Young, 8 October 1854, p. 98. President Young taught that Adam and Eve “partook of the fruit of the Earth, until their systems were charged with the nature of Earth.”

¹²¹ J. E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, p. 19. Elder Talmage describes Eve’s transgression as “indulgence in food unsuited to [her] nature.”

¹²² B. R. McConkie, *Sermons*, p. 189.

¹²³ L. R. Kass, *Wisdom*, pp. 65-66.

¹²⁴ 2 Peter 1:4. For recent exegesis of this phrase, see J. Starr, *Partakers*.

¹²⁵ *Moses* 4:11; cf. *Moses* 4:28.

¹²⁶ For a full and supportive analysis of this view, see T. N. D. Mettinger, *Eden*, especially pp. 34-41.

¹²⁷ R. M. Zlotowitz et al., *Bereishis*, p. 101, see also p. 96; see also L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:70, 5:91 n. 50.

¹²⁸ Ephrem the Syrian, *Paradise*, 3:5, p. 92. Note that the phrase “in the midst” was also used for the heavenly veil in the Creation account (*Moses* 2:6). For a full discussion of Ephrem’s view, see J. M. Bradshaw, *The Tree of Knowledge*.

¹²⁹ Brock in Ephrem the Syrian, *Paradise*, p. 52. Significantly, a Gnostic text describes the “color” of the Tree of Life as being “like the sun” while the “glory” of the Tree of Knowledge is said to be “like the moon” (H.-G. Bethge, *Origin*, 110:14, 20, p. 179).

¹³⁰ e.g., G. A. Anderson et al., *Synopsis*, 19:1a-19:1d, pp. 56E-57E; M. Herbert, *Irish Apocrypha*, p. 2; G. Weil, *Legends*, p. 53. In at least one version of the story, Eve’s transgression of the boundary God had set in the midst of the Garden had been preceded by her deliberate opening of the gate to let the serpent enter the Garden’s outer wall (G. A. Anderson, et al., *Synopsis*, 19:1a-19:1d, pp. 56E-57E).

¹³¹ E.g., M. Barker, *Hidden*, pp. 6-7; M. Barker, *Christmas*, pp. 85-86, 140. Although the trees of Eden have been associated with the Garden Room of LDS temples since the time of Nauvoo (D. F. Colvin, *Nauvoo Temple*, p. 220; S. B. Kimball, Heber C. Kimball, p. 117; M. McBride, *Nauvoo Temple*, pp. 264-265), representations relating to the ultimate Tree of Life are centered on the Celestial Room. For example, the Celestial Room of the Salt Lake Temple is “richly embellished with clusters of fruits and flowers” (J. E. Talmage, *House of the Lord*, p. 134). Note also the successive gradations of light in the ordinance rooms of modern LDS temples, “each increasing in color, light and richness in their order to the climax in the Celestial Room” (N. B. Lundwall, *Temples* 1968, p.193). The Celestial Room of the Palmyra New York Temple features a large stained-glass window depicting a Tree of Life with “twelve bright multifaceted crystal fruits” (G. E. Hansen, Jr. et al., *Sacred Walls*, p. 4). For correspondences in other temple cultures, see H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of*

Mormon, 12 (41), 2:155.

¹³² M. Barker, *Older*, p. 221, see pp. 221-232.

¹³³ Revelation 22:1-3, G. A. Anderson, et al., *Synopsis*, Greek 22:4, p. 62E.

¹³⁴ G. B. Eden, *Mystical Architecture*, p. 22; cf. the idea of “the luxuriant sacred tree or grove... as a place of divine habitation” in D. E. Callender, *Adam*, p. 51; cf. pp. 42-54. See also T. Stordalen, *Echoes*, pp. 173, 293. Recall the book of Esther, which recounts the law of the Persians that “whosoever... shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, [shall be] put... to death” (Esther 4:11). However, properly dressed in her royal apparel as a “true queen” instead of a “beauty queen” (see A. Berlin, *Esther*, pp. 51-52), Esther is—against all odds—granted safe admission to the presence of the king (Esther 5:1-2).

¹³⁵ See D&C 76:87, 112; Ephrem the Syrian, *Paradise*, 3:13-17, pp. 95-96.

¹³⁶ As Flake observes: “The serpent’s invitation to rebellion is simply Lucifer pursuing his earlier, failed agenda. This point is impressed upon the reader by the fact that the JST story of the council is inserted into the traditional Genesis narrative immediately after the command to humans not to eat of the fruit and before the serpent makes his entrance” (K. Flake, *Translating Time*, p. 513).

¹³⁷ J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 14 May 1843, p. 331; cf. D&C 130:18-19.

¹³⁸ J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, 14 May 1843, p. 200, spelling and punctuation standardized.

¹³⁹ V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, pp. 187-188.

¹⁴⁰ See e.g., *Moses* 1:19; D&C 50:2-3; 52:14; 128:20; 129:8; cf. G. A. Anderson et al., *Synopsis*, 44:1-2a, p. 51E; R. Giorgi, *Anges*, pp. 85-88.

¹⁴¹ In light of the LDS understanding that the Fall was a necessary prerequisite for mankind’s further progression and their rejection of the generally negative portrayals of Eve in historical Christianity, Mormon exegetes typically emphasize Eve’s perspicacity and interpret her role as ultimately constructive. A few, however, have taken this view to an untenable extreme, not only exonerating her from full accountability for her transgression and honoring her subsequent faithfulness (as would every Mormon), but in addition arguing that, for various reasons, she was not actually “beguiled” by Satan in her decision to take of the forbidden fruit (see, e.g., V. M. Adams, *Eve*; B. Campbell, *Eve*, pp. 70-73; A. L. Gaskill, *Savior and Serpent*; C. F. Olson, *Women*, p. 13; J. T. Summerhays, *Wisdom*). 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 (J. E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, pp. 18, 29). For a full discussion of this issue, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Was Eve Beguiled?*

¹⁴² M. Barker, *Wisdom*, p. 2.

¹⁴³ M. M. Ali, *Qur’an*, 20:120, p. 624; cf. A. al-Tha’labi, *Lives*, pp. 50-51.

¹⁴⁴ M. M. Ali, *Qur’an*, p. 20 n. 62.

¹⁴⁵ J. O’Reilly, *Iconography*, p. 168; see also E. A. W. Budge, *Cave*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁴⁶ *Numbers* 21:8-9; *John* 3:14-15; *2 Nephi* 25:20; *Alma* 33:19; *Helaman* 8:14-15. For a comprehensive study of the ambivalent symbolism of the serpent, see J. H. Charlesworth,

Serpent.

¹⁴⁷ R. D. Draper, et al., *Commentary*, p. 43. See John 5:25-26; 2 Nephi 9:3-26.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 150-151.

¹⁴⁹ Ephrem, *Paradise*, 3:5, p. 92.

¹⁵⁰ 2 Nephi 9:41. This, then, might be seen as a type for the scene to which Paul alludes in his description of events that were to precede the second coming of Christ: “for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

¹⁵¹ M. C. Thomas, *Women*, p. 53.

¹⁵² M. E. Stone, *Adamgirk*, p. 53 n. 108; cf. *ibid.*, 1:3:70, p. 101.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3:2:5, p. 53.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:3:71, p. 101. Providing an interesting comparison, Leviticus 19:23 specifically forbids partaking of fruit from a newly-planted tree before a fixed time has elapsed. Note, however, that this promise actually would be fulfilled in its complete sense through taking of the Tree of Life, not of the Tree of Knowledge as deceptively asserted here by Satan.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:3:27, p. 96.

¹⁵⁶ D&C 88:68.

¹⁵⁷ J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 11 April 1842, 5:135. Continuing, the Prophet wrote: “A parent may whip a child, and justly, too, because he stole an apple; whereas if the child had asked for the apple, and the parent had given it, the child would have eaten it with a better appetite; there would have been no stripes; all the pleasure of the apple would have been secured, all the misery of stealing lost. This principle will justly apply to all of God’s dealings with His children. Everything that God gives us is lawful and right; and it is proper that we should enjoy His gifts and blessings whenever and wherever He is disposed to bestow; but if we should seize upon those same blessings and enjoyments without law, without revelation, without commandment, those blessings and enjoyments would prove cursings and vexations” (*ibid.*).

¹⁵⁸ G. A. Anderson, *Perfection*, p. 129.

¹⁵⁹ H. W. Nibley, *Return*, p. 63. See T. N. D. Mettinger, *Eden*, pp. 90-92 for a discussion of how, in Job 15:7-8, we are made to understand that the “wisdom of the first human being is the quality that was seized by the first man in the divine council. The situation is not one of eavesdropping. Rather, the first man supposedly had access to the divine assembly... [and] this wisdom was attained without divine authorization.” Nibley’s characterization of the fruit as “secrets” recalls an Egyptian version of the story, which revolves around the presumption of the hero, Setne, “in taking the book of Knowledge, which was guarded by the endless serpent.” Nibley observes that “a book of knowledge is certainly more logical” as the object of temptation than would be a piece of literal fruit (H. W. Nibley, *Message 2005*, pp. 310-311). Islamic legend likewise insists on the idea that Satan was condemned for his claims that he would reveal a knowledge of certain things to Adam and Eve. He is portrayed as recruiting his accomplices (the “vain” peacock and the “fair and prudent” serpent, “the queen of all beasts... [who] was created a thousand years before Adam”) by deceptively promising them

that he would reveal to them “three mysterious words” which would “preserve [them] from sickness, age, and death” (G. Weil, *Legends*, p. 26). Having by this means won over the serpent, Satan then directly equates the effect of knowing these secret words with the eating of the forbidden fruit by promising the same protection from death to Eve if she will but partake (*ibid.*, p. 30). The story of the unauthorized revelation of divine secrets is recapitulated in the account of the Watchers (see, e.g., G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 9:6-7, p. 202; A. al-Tha’labi, *Lives*, p. 88).

In a related vein, scripture and pseudepigrapha speak of how a knowledge of eternity is available to those who are permitted to see the inside of the heavenly veil (see e.g., M. Barker, *Temple Theology*, p. 28; M. Barker, *Boundary*, pp. 215-217; H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, 10, p. 117; cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Documentary History*, 27 November 1832, 1:299).

¹⁶⁰ H. W. Nibley, *Gifts*, p. 92.

¹⁶¹ T. Stordalen, *Echoes*, p. 231; cf. H. W. Nibley, *Atonement*, p. 555; M. Maher, *Pseudo-Jonathan*, 3:22, p. 30.

¹⁶² In contrast to the Bible, which exclusively employs the term “good and evil,” (Genesis 2:9, 17; Genesis 3:5, 22; Deuteronomy 1:39; 2 Samuel 19:35; Proverbs 31:12; Isaiah 5:20; Jeremiah 24:3; Amos 5:14; Matthew 12:35; Luke 6:45; Hebrews 5:14; cf. 2 Nephi 2:18, 15:20; Alma 29:5, 42:3; Moses 3:9, 17; Moses 4:11, 28; Moses 5:11; Abraham 5:9, 13; JS-H 1:33), the Book of Mormon and the book of Moses contain nine instances of the similar phrase “good from evil” (2 Nephi 2:5, 26; Alma 12:31, 29:5; Helaman 14:31; Moroni 7:15-16, 19; Moses 6:56). Though, admittedly, the difference in connotation between these terms is not entirely consistent across all scriptural references to them (see e.g., Alma 12:31 and Moses 4:28), one might still argue for a distinction between the knowledge Adam and Eve initially acquired when they determined to eat the forbidden fruit (and would eventually receive in its fulness when they had successfully finished their probation), and that which they gained later through the experience of repeated choice in a fallen world. Unlike the former knowledge that had come in response to Satan’s deception and as the result of moral autonomy exercised in transgression of divine instruction, the essential knowledge attained gradually by Adam and Eve during their later period of mortal probation would depend on their hearkening to the “Spirit of Christ” (Moroni 7:16, 19), mercifully made available to them through the power of redemption (2 Nephi 2:26), and enabling them to “know good from evil... with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night” (Moroni 7:15).

¹⁶³ Moses 4:28, 31.

¹⁶⁴ B. Young, 30 October 1870, p. 282.

¹⁶⁵ The means by which Adam and Eve, in their fallen state, could have received an immortal body and “lived forever” prior to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the “firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20), is not explained in scripture.

¹⁶⁶ Alma 42:5; cf. Alma 12:26.

¹⁶⁷ R. J. Matthews, *Probationary Nature*, pp. 56-57.

¹⁶⁸ Moses 4:3.

¹⁶⁹ 2 Nephi 2:21.

¹⁷⁰ Alma 42:4.

¹⁷¹ See also Alma 12:21-27; D&C 132:19; W. C. Skousen, *First 2,000*, pp. 42-44, 66-68; R.

J. Matthews, Probationary Nature, pp. 56-57.

¹⁷² D&C 88:28.

¹⁷³ 2 Nephi 2:21. This period of probation also extends for a time in the spirit world until the time of resurrection. While repentance is also possible in the spirit world (1 Peter 4:6; Alma 42:10), it seems that it is more difficult there than in mortal life, due to the absence of a body (M. J. Ballard, *Three Degrees* 1949, p. 241).

¹⁷⁴ Alma 12:26.

¹⁷⁵ W. C. Skousen, *First 2,000*, p. 68.

¹⁷⁶ D&C 132:19.

¹⁷⁷ 2 Nephi 9:8-9.

¹⁷⁸ R. S. Hendel, *Demigods*, p. 23.

¹⁷⁹ T. N. D. Mettinger, *Eden*, p. 127. Mettinger quotes from R. A. Oden, Jr., *Divine Aspirations*, p. 211.

¹⁸⁰ J. J. Collins, *Sons of God*, p. 263.

¹⁸¹ Genesis 9:1-77, cf. JST Genesis 9:1-25.

¹⁸² Genesis 9:20.

¹⁸³ Genesis 9:21-27.

¹⁸⁴ While some traditions take the fruit of the vine as an analogue to the Tree of Knowledge (e.g., L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:168), it is better understood in this instance as a representation of the Tree of Life (e.g., H. W. Nibley, *Since*, p. 189). Note that the fruit of the Tree of Life is sometimes described as being like a “white grape” (H.-G. Bethge et al., *Origin*, 110:15-16, p. 179; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 32:4, p. 320), and according to 3 Baruch, Noah planted it at God’s insistence, and with the promise that it would be a blessing to him (H. E. Gaylord, Jr., *3 Baruch*, 4:15 (Greek), p. 669). Nibley cites a parallel to “the most ancient of all recorded festivals, the wine feast of intoxication that celebrates the ending of the Flood” (H. W. Nibley, *Sacred*, pp. 578-579; cf. H. W. Nibley, *Abraham 2000*, pp. 475-476).

Cohen, having explored the “symbolic meaning of wine in ancient cultures,” concludes that Noah’s actions in this regard have been completely misunderstood, the result of “biblical scholarship’s failure” in explaining the meaning of the enigmatic incident. Summarizing Cohen’s view, Haynes writes:

Cohen explores Israelite and other traditions to elucidate a complex relationship between alcohol, fire, and sexuality. Drawing on this connection, he surmises that Noah’s drunkenness is indicative not of a deficiency in character but of a good-faith attempt to replenish the earth following the Flood. Indeed, Noah’s “determination to maintain his procreative ability at full strength resulted in drinking himself into a state of helpless intoxication.” How ironic, Cohen notes, that in acceding to the divine command to renew the earth’s population, Noah suffered the opprobrium of drunkenness. In Cohen’s view, he “deserves not censure but acclaim for having played so well the role of God’s devoted servant” (S. R. Haynes, *Curse*, pp. 188-189; see H. H. Cohen, *Drunkenness*, pp. 8, 12).

¹⁸⁵T. L. Brodie, *Dialogue*, p. 192.

¹⁸⁶Compare *Moses* 3:9; 4:9, 14.

¹⁸⁷*Genesis* 9:21.

¹⁸⁸Though a variety of speculations have arisen to explain the severity of the condemnation received by Ham/Canaan, “there is no clear evidence that Ham actually did anything other than see the nakedness of his uncovered father” (Ross in J. M. Boice, *Genesis* 1-11, pp. 397-398). So concludes Hamilton:

We are on much safer ground in limiting Ham’s transgression simply to observing the exposure of the genitalia and failing to cover his naked father. Otherwise, the two brothers’ act of covering their father’s nakedness becomes incomprehensible. We deliberately entitled this section “The Nakedness of Noah” rather than “The Drunkenness of Noah.” Noah’s drunkenness is only circumstantial to his nakedness. It is Noah’s nudity, not his inebriated state, which Ham saw, and then passed on to his brothers. His sin would have been equally reprehensible had his father been sober. (V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, p. 323)

Nibley cites ancient accounts arguing that Ham’s disregard for this father was part of an effort to steal Noah’s priesthood garment and authority (H. W. Nibley, *Lehi* 1988, pp. 168-170; H. W. Nibley, *What*, p. 366; H. W. Nibley, *Vestments*, pp. 128-131; H. W. Nibley, *Message* 2005, p. 309)—a further parallel to Satan’s attempts in the Garden of Eden. Because of the faithfulness of Shem and Japheth, they received the reward of special garments themselves. They had entered their father’s presence facing backward as they properly restored his covering (H. W. Nibley, *Vestments*, p. 129; Rashi, *Torah Commentary*, 9:23, 1:97; cf. *Numbers* 15:37-41, J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah* 2, 36:6:1B, p. 31). In a temple context, of course, there are important associations between the veil as the covering of the tent and the garment as the covering of the body (A. L. Gaskill, *Lost*, p. 71; see also B. T. Ostler, *Clothed*; J. W. Welch, et al., *Gammadia*).

¹⁸⁹*2 Chronicles* 26:16-21.

¹⁹⁰Ephrem the Syrian, *Paradise*, 3:13-15, pp. 95-96.

¹⁹¹N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 26 and *Exodus* 20:26; 28:42-43.

¹⁹²W. Barnstone, et al., *Mother*, p. 672.

¹⁹³M. E. Stone, *Descendants*, 14-22, p. 85; in some texts Enoch is seen as having reversed the Fall of Adam (A. A. Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron*, p. 248).

¹⁹⁴*Isaiah* 14:13, 14.

¹⁹⁵*Moses* 4:3.

¹⁹⁶This phrase only makes sense if the fruit referred to is the fruit from the Tree of Life, now eternally unattainable for the Devil but reserved at a future time of readiness for Adam and Eve.

¹⁹⁷M. E. Stone, *Adamgirk* 3:7:3, p. 65.

¹⁹⁸H. W. Nibley, *Message* 2005, p. 443; see C. Schmidt, *Pistis*, 1:29-30, pp. 83-91; G. R. S. Mead, *Pistis*, 1:29-30, pp. 33-36. For a general discussion of such dangers, see J. Dan, *Mysticism*, 1:261-309.

