

Eve's Role in the Creation and the Fall to Mortality

from *Women and the Power Within*, (Salt Lake City:Deseret Book, 1991), p. 49-62.

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For more than two thousand years, Eve has been blamed for woes ranging from the origin of sin to the presumed inferiority of the female sex. Much of this tradition has been so ingrained in our Judeo-Christian culture that we are often unaware of its presence or origin. Because of Eve, women have been cursed, their subordination to man has been justified, and their feminine weaknesses have been stereotyped—all because of a short section of Hebrew poetry in Genesis 1-3 which tells the highly symbolic story of the beginnings of time.

Like Genesis, the Latter-day Saint scriptural accounts in Moses and Abraham are figurative rather than historical stories. We know that the Creation and the Fall did occur and that Adam and Eve were real people, but all the other elements of the story—the serpent, the tree, the fruit, the rib story—all are symbols.

Church leaders have reiterated this truth numerous times. Spencer W. Kimball, for instance, as president of the Church, stated that the rib story was figurative.² Brigham Young, Joseph Smith, Joseph Fielding Smith, and others stated that Adam and Eve's bodies were engendered and born by natural sexual functioning and that they were placed in Eden as adult beings.³ Orson Pratt and, more recently, Hugh Nibley taught that the pair were tempted on

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² Spencer W. Kimball, "The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood," *Ensign*, Mar. 1976, p. 71.

³ Brigham Young, 9 Apr. 1852, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:50; 23 Oct. 1853, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:6; 20 Apr. 1856, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:319; 9 Oct. 1859, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:285; Orson Pratt, 13 Apr. 1856, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:344; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols., comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1954-56) 1:97. The reader may note here and in many following instances that teachings in the doctrine of the Church and the accounts given in the books of Moses, Abraham, and Genesis may seem to differ from the depiction of the Creation and the Fall in the temple ceremony. The intent of the temple ceremony seems to be much the same as the intent of the Genesis account: to present ideas through symbols and figurative language, which have many layers of meaning. It is perhaps appropriate that the Creation story in the temple is presented in a symbolic fashion, as the rest of the endowment is highly ritualistic and has numerous levels of meaning. To interpret the visual (film) depiction of the Creation and the Fall as only history rather than also as a figurative representation of underlying truths would deviate from the intent of the temple experience as a whole. One part cannot be interpreted as strictly symbolic and another as strictly historical. (See Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* [Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1980], pp. 38-41, on the symbolic nature of temple instruction.) Hyrum Andrus, in noting the difference between the temple portrayal and the books of Abraham and Moses said: "A study of the problem suggests that the temple ceremony gives merely a general portrayal and not an actual account of the creation." Hyrum Andrus, *God, Man and the Universe*, 2d

numerous occasions, not only by the serpent but by other "beings" who had been "angels of light and truth" in the premortal existence but had then become followers of Satan.⁴ Other Latter-day Saint authorities have taught that Adam and Eve became mortal by eating a substance that was poisonous to their immortal systems and that the tree and the fruit were symbols representing the process by which the Fall came about.⁵

Symbolism has always been used to focus attention away from historical facts to the meaning behind the events. What, then, was the intended meaning of the Adam and Eve story? An examination of the original Hebrew text of Genesis 1-5 answers this question as it brings out some very interesting points that can help us understand Eve and the role she played in the Creation and the Fall.

First, Adam and Eve were created symbolically as two equal parts of one unified whole and were united in all their actions. The word translated as man is the Hebrew '*adam*, meaning "humankind," or man in a collective sense.⁶ It is used throughout most of the story rather than the more specific Hebrew noun '*ish*, meaning "one man," or "husband." The plural sense of *ha-'adam* is seen when it is used with "them," a plural pronoun, in "Let us make man in our image . . . and let them have dominion. . . . So God created man . . . male and female created he them." (Genesis 1:26-27.)⁷

ed., 4 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1970), 1:333-34, footnote. This footnote does not appear in later editions. See also Packer, *Holy Temple*, pp. 191-94; John K. Edmunds, *Through Temple Doors*, 4th ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1979), pp. 73-74.

⁴ Orson Pratt, 22 Nov. 1873, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:318; Hugh Nibley, "Patriarchy and Matriarchy," in *Blueprints for Living*, ed. Maren M. Mouritsen (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1980), p. 46.

⁵ See, for instance, Erastus Snow, 3 Mar. 1878, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:271-72.

⁶ In English, '*adam* could have several different meanings, and ambiguity leading to inconsistency in English translations of Genesis. If '*adam* appears alone without the Hebrew definitive article *ha-* preceding it, it could mean either "man" as a collective (mankind, humanity) or "Adam" as a proper name. There are only two places in the text where it definitely occurs this way, and in both places the context dictates translation as a collective humankind: one is in Gen. 1:27 where '*adam* is used with a plural pronoun "them," and the other is in Gen. 2:5, where the presence of the negative before '*adam* would make translation of '*adam* as a proper name awkward: "there was not a man to till the ground." Three other places in the text are uncertain because the word '*adam* is preceded by a preposition which in Hebrew would eliminate the *ha-*: 2:20, 3:17, and 3:21. See John Ellington, "Man and Adam in Genesis 1-5," *The Bible Translator* 30 (April 1979): 210-15; Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis*, 2d Lussier, " '*Adam* in Genesis 1, 1-4, 24": 137-39.

⁷ *Ha-'adam* in the King James translation has been inconsistently translated, most often as a proper name, Adam. See Lussier, " '*Adam* in Genesis 1, 1-4, 24": 137-39. For more extensive discussion of this and other issues relating to Hebrew usage, see Jolene Rockwood, "The Redemption of Eve," in *Sisters in Spirit*, ed. Maureen

Many verses in the Book of Mormon indicate similar usage of adam and man as plural nouns. In 2 Nephi 9:6, man is used as a plural for the first couple, just as in the Hebrew version of Genesis: "And because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord" (*italics added*).

Church authorities have also generally affirmed that the Genesis account describes the first couple as united in their actions in Eden and have recognized '*adam*' as a plural word representing both the man and the woman. For example, Erastus Snow, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, said in 1878: "Male and female created he them and called their name Adam, which in the original in which these scriptures were written by Moses, signifies 'the first man.' There was no effort at distinguishing between the one half and the other, and calling one man and the other woman. This was an after distinction, but the explanation of it is—one man, one being, and he called their name Adam."⁸ Spencer W. Kimball made a similar scriptural gloss in 1976:

" 'And I, God, blessed them [Man here is always in the plural. It was plural from the beginning.] . . . ' (Moses 2:27-28.) . . .

" 'And I, God said unto mine Only Begotten, which was with me from the beginning: Let us make man [not a separate man, but a complete man, which is husband and wife] in our image . . . ' (Moses 2:26.) . . .

" 'Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam [Mr. and Mrs. Adam, I suppose, or Brother and Sister Adam], in the day when they were created.' (Gen. 5:12)."⁹

The unity of Adam and Eve is further clarified in the "rib" story where the Hebrew words translated help meet and rib shed light on the author's intent.

The Lord states, "It is not good that the man [collective] should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." (Genesis 2:18.) This phrase "help meet" (Hebrew '*ezer kenegdo*') is an interesting one. '*Ezer*', which in this context is translated as "help" (meaning "helper"), has the unfortunate connotation in English of an assistant of lesser status, a subordinate, or

Urnsbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), pp. 3-36.

⁸ Erastus Snow, 3 Mar. 1878, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:269.

⁹ Kimball, p. 71; bracketed interpolations his.

inferior—for instance, a willing but not very competent child.¹⁰ In Hebrew, however, the word describes an equal, if not a superior. The other usages of *'ezer* in the Old Testament show that in most cases God is an *'ezer* to human beings,¹¹ a fact which makes us question whether "helper" is an accurate translation in any of the instances it is used. A more accurate translation in this context would be "strength" or "power." Evidence indicates that the word *'ezer* originally had two roots, each beginning with different guttural sounds.¹² Over time, the two gutturals were merged into one word, but the two meanings, "to save" and "to be strong," remained. Later, the meanings also merged into one word, "to help." Therefore, if we use the more archaic meanings of *'ezer*, and translate *'ezer* as either "savior" or "strength," we clarify not only the context we are discussing but also the other passages in the Old Testament where *'ezer* is used, especially when *'ezer* refers to God in his relationship with humankind.

'Ezer translated as "strength" or "power" also fits in nicely with the second word in the phrase, *kenegdo*, which has traditionally been translated as "meet for" or "fit for." Because *kenegdo* appears only this one time in the Old Testament, earlier translators had little upon which to base their translations. An important clue to the meaning of this word is found in its usage in Mishnaic Hebrew, where the root means "equal." *Kenegdo*, then, means "equal to" and the entire phrase *'ezer kenegdo* means "power or strength equal to." Thus, when God makes *ha-'adam* into two beings, he creates woman, a power or strength equal to man.

The King James translation of *kenegdo* as "meet for" is based on the seventeenth-century meaning of meet, "worthy of," a meaning no longer in current English usage. This

¹⁰ Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 90; also John L. McKenzie, "The Literary Characteristics of Genesis 2-3," *Theological Studies* 15 (1954):559; Clarence J. Voz, *Woman in Old Testament Worship* (Amsterdam: N.V. Verenigde Drukkerijen Judels and Brinkman-Delft, n.d.), p. 16.

¹¹ From Voz, *Woman in Old Testament Worship*, p. 16: "Besides Genesis 2:18, 20, this word [*'ezer*] appears in the Old Testament nineteen times. Of these it is used once in a question. (Ps. 121:1--the answer to the question is given in the following verse in which it is said that one's help comes from the Lord.) It is used three times of man as a help, (Is. 30:5; Ezk. 12:14; Dn. 11:34), but in each instance it is clear that man's help is not effectual. (Dn. 11:34 could refer to God); fifteen times it is used of God as the one who brings succor to the needy and desperate. Thus, if one excluded Gen. 2:18, 20, it could be said that only God gives effectual help (*'ezer*) to man. . . . Viewing woman as created to be a subordinate assistant to man finds no basis in the word (*'ezer*)." See also Jean Higgins, "Anastasis Sinaita and the Superiority of the Woman," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97, No. 2 (1978):255: "Of forty-five occurrences of the word in the LXX. [Septuagint], forty-two unmistakably refer to help from a stronger one."

¹² R. David Freedman, "Woman, a Power Equal to Man," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9 (January-February 1983):56-58.

archaic translation has led uninformed readers over the years to hyphenate the noun and adjective as "help-meet," detach the sense of "meet for," and then develop the neologism "help-mate," a term that never existed either in the original Hebrew or in the King James version. The phrase has, however, become so much a part of the Christian vernacular that references to wives as help-meets and help-mates are common.

The Lord then removes a "rib" from which he forms man's companion. (Genesis 2:21-22.) The Hebrew *sela'* is used more than forty times in the Old Testament to mean "side"; only in this passage has it been translated as "rib." Nearly every other usage gives construction details for the tabernacle or temple (i.e., side of the tabernacle, side of the altar, etc.).¹³

Sela' in Genesis 1:21-22 thus should be similarly read as construction information, though the object being constructed is a life form. The Lord, as master builder, takes the "side" (*sela'*) of the human and uses it to "build" (*banah*) another person. Reading *sela'* as "side" rather than as "rib" also better dramatizes the unity of the man and the woman, enhances the phrase "power equal to him," and makes the man's later characterization of woman as "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" even more meaningful. Thus, when God causes the human to sleep, he takes one of his sides and creates two beings out of one.

When the two are presented to one another as companions, the man seems to react with surprise and delight¹⁴: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (Genesis 2:23.) Up to this point, the human has been *ha-'adam*. Now the words man (*'ish*) and woman (*'ishah*) are used for the first time. These are definite nouns that signify man and woman as separate individuals with gender. In addition, the man uses the feminine *zo't* ("this") for the first time: ("This is now

¹³ A complete listing of usages is found in George V. Wigram, *The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament*, 5th ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), pp. 1073-74; see also Walter Brueggemann, "Of the Same Flesh and Bone (Gn. 2, 23a)" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32 (1970): 532-42. Only two other usages refer to a human being: Job 18:12, where it is translated as "side" ("destruction shall be ready at his side"), and Jeremiah 20:10, which has uncertain meaning ("all my familiars [friends] watched for my halting [KJV], "for my fall" [RSV], or, "at my side"). *Sela'* refers to the side of a hill in 2 Samuel 16:13, but every other usage gives construction details for the tabernacle or temple.

¹⁴ James N. Robinson, ed., "The Apocryphan of John" and "The Gospel of Philip," in *The Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 110, 141; Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 12th ed., 7 vols. (1909; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1937), 1:66.

bone of my bones").¹⁵ The man at this point is not naming the woman, however. *Issah* is not a name; it is a common noun that designates gender. The word appears also in the previous verse. The man is actually making a pun on the origin of woman. As the human (*ha-'adam*) received his existence from the earth (*ha-'adamah*), now the man (*'ish*) has been used to form the woman (*'ishah*).¹⁶

The honorific and descriptive title Eve (or Life) is found in the book of Moses. The Lord states: "And worlds without number have I created; . . . And the first man of all men have I called Adam, which is many. . . . And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living; for thus have I, the Lord God, called the first of all women, which are many." (Moses 1:33-34; 4:26; italics added.) Adam and Eve appear to be general titles that the Creator had used numerous times to signify the first parents of a world. Adam, then, did not name Eve. Adam uses her title in a way similar to the Near Eastern formula for titles given to goddesses.¹⁷ He was calling her by her title, previously conferred by God. In the book of Moses, Moses calls the woman Eve even before Adam does. (Moses 4:6.)

It is significant that the man calls the woman "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," a statement he could not have made about the animals. In Hebrew, these phrases indicate a closeness, a blood relationship between the two parties, and in this case a unified companionship between the man and the woman. But the phrases are also used in other places in the Old Testament to describe two parties who are not necessarily blood relatives but who have made a covenant with David, their new king, confirming it by saying, "Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh." (2 Samuel 5:1.) David makes a similar covenant with the elders of Judah: "Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh," referring to a covenant the two parties have made with each other. (2 Samuel 19:12.)¹⁸

The word for bone in Hebrew symbolizes power, and the word for flesh signifies weakness. "Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" thus becomes a ritual pledge to be bound in the best of circumstances (power) as well as in the worst (weakness). The man's use of this

¹⁵ Genesis 2:23; Tribble, p. 97; John A. Bailey, "Initiation and the Primal Woman in Gilgamesh and Genesis 2-3," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (1970): 142-43.

¹⁶ Tribble, pp. 98, 100; McKenzie, pp. 556-59.

¹⁷ Isaac M. Kikawada, "Two Notes on Eve," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972):33-37.

¹⁸ Brueggemann, pp. 532-42.

phrase in Genesis 2:23 implies a covenant similar to a marriage agreement and is, in fact, reminiscent of the phrase "for better or for worse" used in marriage vows. Thus it would be a mistake to read this verse as an expression of Eve's "subordination" (totally "derived" from Adam) or as an expression of Adam's possessiveness (she is "his" because she is part of him). Instead it acknowledges a total union of two creatures who have both strength and weakness.

Latter-day Saint authorities have persistently taught that Adam and Eve were sealed by an eternal marriage covenant, paralleling the Hebrew sense of the phrase "bone of my bones." Orson Pratt, an apostle, preached in 1875 that God himself officiated in a "marriage for eternity" linking Adam and Eve.¹⁹ "What a beautiful partnership!" exclaimed Spencer W. Kimball in 1975. "Adam and Eve were married for eternity by the Lord. Such a marriage extends beyond the grave."²⁰

Another interesting point in the Hebrew is that until the woman and the man actually partake of the fruit, the use of plural Hebrew pronouns in the text indicates a union in their actions. The serpent addresses the woman with the plural Hebrew you form, and she replies with the plural we and us: "And he [the serpent] said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye [plural Hebrew] shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye [Hebrew plural] shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye [Hebrew plural] die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye [Hebrew plural] shall not surely die." (Genesis 3:1-4.) After she partook of the fruit, she then gave some to "her man" (King James Version, husband) who was "with her." (Genesis 3:6.)²¹

The use of the plural pronouns you, we, and us and the phrase "her man" and "[who was] with her" imply that they are still united in thought and action. We can infer, consequently, that whatever action one would take, the other would take also. The same wording appears in the book of Moses as in the Hebrew text. (Moses 4:7-12.)

¹⁹ Orson Pratt, 11 July 1875, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:48; see also Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:115.

²⁰ Kimball, p. 72.

²¹ Tribble, pp. 112-13; Jean M. Higgins, "The Myth of Eve: The Temptress," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 44 (1976): 645-47.

In Genesis 3:8-24, after the fruit has been eaten, the unity of the man and woman becomes suddenly separateness. Adam and Eve use the singular Hebrew pronouns for the first time as the Lord confronts them: "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself," explains Adam, speaking only for himself. (Genesis 3:10.) Adam's shift to first person singular is even more interesting when we realize that both the man and the woman heard God's voice, both were afraid, and both of them hid. Although their actions are identical, their unity is ruptured. Eve also uses the first person singular to answer the Lord's question: "the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." (Genesis 3:13.)

Thus, the Hebrew text clearly indicates that Adam and Eve were united in their actions before the Fall. Latter-day Saint church leaders as well have generally affirmed that the Genesis account describes the first couple as united in their actions in Eden. Because Latter-day Saint doctrine regards the Fall to mortality as an essential part of the premortal plan and finds the first parents "sacrificing" their immortality that mankind might be, both the man and the woman have been treated as equally responsible for the transgression. Brigham Young and others taught that Adam had a knowledge of the plan of salvation dating to his premortal existence as a spirit without a body and was foreordained to partake of the fruit as the "design of the Lord."²² Eve must also have been foreordained for, as we have seen, they acted in unison. Elder Bruce McConkie stated that "Christ and Mary, Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, and a host of mighty men and equally glorious women comprised that group of 'the noble and great ones,' to whom the Lord Jesus said: 'We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell.' (Abraham 3:22-24.)"²³

Many Church authorities have stated that both Adam and Eve shared the transgression in Eden. Throughout the Book of Mormon, the transgression is almost always referred to as Adam's, suggesting that *'adam* was probably used in the Hebrew sense to designate the first

²² Brigham Young, 3 June 1855, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:302; Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormonism* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), pp. 197-99, stated that Mother Eve chose to be the first to partake of the fruit to symbolize the great maternal sacrifice.

²³ Bruce R. McConkie, "Eve and the Fall," in *Woman* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1979), p. 59.

couple as a unit.²⁴ In 2 Nephi 2:18-26, Eve is singled out, but as the object of temptation by Satan, to whom the guilt is assigned. Doctrine and Covenants 29:36, 40 states that "Adam [was] tempted of the devil" and "partook of the forbidden fruit" (italics added), indicating that the name is being used as a collective word for Adam and Eve as a unit. Because of this unity, who was tempted first or who yielded first becomes irrelevant; they both were acting as one.

The judgments the Lord pronounced upon them after they partook of the fruit were essentially the same. The serpent is the only one who is directly cursed. When we view this text as a structural element of the story, these judgments are shown to be statements of cause and effect, which describe the result of the mortal condition. God's descriptions of mortality parallel the earlier warning in Genesis 2:17 that mortality will result in a knowledge of good and evil (thus a loss of innocence), and death. Here he instructs them more about their new state: the man must now labor by the sweat of his brow to survive. That is so because not only the man but all orders of creation fell to a mortal existence. The earth is now cursed (fallen) and will no longer automatically supply the man with all his needs. The plant kingdom will provide not only fruitful trees but also thistles and thorns. Subject to death, the man is told "unto dust shalt thou return." (Genesis 3:19.) Likewise, the woman has become mortal and must suffer the hardship and pain of bearing children.

Brigham Young University specialist in ancient scriptures, Hugh Nibley, felt the judgments the man and the woman received were identical: "To our surprise," he remarks, "the identical curse was placed on Adam [and Eve]. . . . For Eve, God 'will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception. In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.' The key is the word for sorrow, *tsavadh*, meaning to labor, to toil, to sweat, to do something very hard. To multiply does not mean to add or increase but to repeat over and over again; . . . Both the conception and the labor of Eve will be multiple; she will have many children. Then the Lord says to Adam, 'In sorrow shalt thou eat of [the bread of your labor] all the days of thy life.' . . . The identical word is used in both cases, the root meaning is to work hard . . . ; both the man and the woman must sorrow and both must labor. It means not to be sorry, but to have a hard

²⁴ See, for example, Mosiah 3:11, 19; 4:7; Alma 12:21-23; Alma 22:12-14; 42:2-4; Helaman 14:16-17; Mormon 9:12. In some of these references, Adam and Eve are mentioned together as the first parents. See also 1 Nephi 5:11; Mosiah 16:3-4.

time. . . . Both of them bring forth life with sweat and tears, and Adam is not the favored party. If his labor is not as severe as hers, it is more protracted."²⁵

The "curse" for both the man and the woman, then, simply amounts to feeling the results of mortality, which made them imperfect, "carnal," and subject to temptation and sin. Many scriptures from the Book of Mormon state the same philosophy: with mortality came sin, but the effects of sin can be overcome. In Mosiah 3:19 we read: "For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord." That verse continues, enumerating the characteristics of the redeemed person; he or she "becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him [or her], even as a child doth submit to his [or her] father." The "natural" or fallen person does not spontaneously have these traits, for with mortality comes inequality in our relationships, pride, and a tendency toward selfishness rather than love.

Needless to say, all of these traits tend to create differences where there were none, to magnify small differences into great differences, and to reinforce the tendency toward hierarchy, division, and the rule of the "superior" over the perceived inferior. Any relationship in which one member "rules" over the other seems to be associated more with the fallen state than with the redeemed state.

Spencer W. Kimball, in discussing Genesis 3:16, redefined it: "I have a question about the word rule. It gives the wrong impression. I would prefer to use the word preside because that's what he does. A righteous husband presides over his wife and family."²⁶

Doctrine and Covenants 121 sheds some light on the distinction between the words rule and preside. Oft-quoted as relevant to any situation in which a priesthood holder might be presumed to have some authority, whether ecclesiastically, maritally, paternally, or socially, it begins with a warning: "We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion." (V. 39.)

²⁵ Hugh Nibley, pp. 45-46. *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*, 47th ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964), states a similar meaning in its translation of Genesis 3:16, 17: "Unto the woman He said: I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy travail; in pain thou shalt bring forth children . . . And unto Adam He said . . . cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil thou shalt eat of it."

The contrasting "righteous dominion" is described a few verses later: "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile. . . . Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dew from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever." (Vv. 41-42, 45-46.)

Dominion based on "righteousness and truth . . . without compulsory means" does not describe a relationship of subordination. The goal of mortality is to overcome such "carnal" tendencies as unrighteous dominion and to strive for oneness in relationships with others and with God.

This is the Hebrew meaning for the heavily symbolic Adam and Eve story: that Adam and Eve were created as two incomplete halves of one united whole, that they were united in their actions, and that both mutually sacrificed their immortality to bring about the Fall.

Genesis 2:24 summarizes their mortal situation: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." The man and the woman, who have just been created, have no physical father or mother in the story. But they symbolically represent all men and women. Male and female were created from one flesh; as separate individuals who are now companions to one another, they strive to again become as one in their relationship. Note that it is the man who leaves his parents and cleaves unto his wife. (Genesis 2:24.) In view of the patriarchal society in which this passage was written, one would instead expect to hear the reverse: a woman leaves her parents and cleaves unto her husband. Three important insights are, then, encapsulated in this summary statement: the woman is an independent and equal creation, marriage does not make her the possession of the man, and achieving oneness should be the common goal of both.

The book of Moses supplies more details about Adam and Eve after they were sent from the Garden of Eden. In Moses 5:1 we see Eve working alongside Adam in the fields;

²⁶ Kimball, p. 72.

likewise in 5:12 we see Adam participating in the child rearing. The text further states that they prayed together, had children together, rejoiced for revelations, and grieved for their disobedient children together. Neither is silent; both speak freely. Neither blames the other for the transgression, but both share a view of the Fall as a great blessing: "Blessed be the name of God," rejoices Adam, "for because of my [not Eve's] transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God. And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient." (Moses 5:2, 4, 10-11, 16, 27.)

Adam and Eve did not feel cursed; they recognized that the great blessings of mortality were now theirs. This sense of oneness and purpose has permeated Latter-day Saint doctrine since the beginning: from the oneness of the celestialized Father and Mother in Heaven, to the oneness of the Godhead, to the oneness that must exist among the Saints before Zion can be established before the second coming of Christ. "And the Lord called his people ZION because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness." (Moses 7:18.)

Ida Smith, then director of the Brigham Young University Women's Research Institute, speaking at the BYU Women's Conference in 1980, said that a relationship in which inequality exists cannot be a celestial relationship: "A just God would not require the yoking of two unequal beings for eternity. . . . It is important for a woman to learn in this life her eternal role so that when she is sealed she will be prepared and ready—with all her heart—to function in and glorify that role. That means being ready and prepared to function as a full partner in a celestial team—without having to look up because of any feeling of inferiority, or look down because of any feeling of superiority, but look across into the eyes of an equally prepared, equally magnificent eternal mate." She maintained that the gospel of Christ should free men and women from the sexual stereotypes we sometimes attach to one another in mortality and pointed out that Christ openly displayed traits which have often been thought of as "feminine": he embraced children, openly wept, was gentle and compassionate. We have also many examples of intelligence, wisdom, and initiative, sometimes presumed to be masculine traits, in the great women of the Church.²⁷ Carolyn J. Rasmus, then administrative

²⁷ Ida Smith, "The Lord As a Role Model for Men and Women," *Ensign*, Aug. 1980, pp. 66-67.

assistant to the president of BYU, in another address given at the same conference, corroborated: "The differences between men and women are designed to be complementary and unifying, not divisive and separating. The ultimate plan is for achievement of a perfect balance, with neither sex to be unduly emphasized."²⁸

In conclusion, then, the Adam and Eve account in Genesis 1-3 must be viewed as a symbolic representation rather than as an historical account. Before the Fall the man and woman are united in equal stature before their creator. The rib (or side) story is symbolic of the completeness and perfection of their union. They both were mutually responsible for the Fall to mortality.

The judgments pronounced upon them by the Lord were not curses but symbolic statements about the essential characteristics of mortality for all humanity. To say that because of Eve all women are cursed is not only a misunderstanding of the intent of the Genesis story but also a misunderstanding of the eternal doctrine of free agency and personal responsibility. As a literal tenet of Latter-day Saint faith, Mormons "believe that men [and women] will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's [and Eve's] transgression." (Articles of Faith 1:2.) Women and men feel the results of that transgression in that they are mortal and subject to imperfections of the flesh—sin, illness, fatigue, pain, etc. If we conclude that the judgments enumerated in Genesis 3:4-20 are results of the mortal condition, the implications are that first, these imperfections, such as pain in childbirth or man's "ruling" over woman, did not exist before the Fall and cannot be assumed to continue after mortality, and second, that we, like Adam and Eve, can strive to overcome our mortal weaknesses while still in mortality by understanding Christ's atonement and by obeying his commandments. The promise is that we will eventually be able to return to a state of unity and oneness with God and with others, similar to Adam and Eve's unity before the Fall.

Much depends on our pondering Eve's role in the Creation and the Fall to mortality. For only when we understand the real purpose and significance of the events in Eden can we truly appreciate the magnitude of the opportunity and challenge Jesus Christ gave to the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve when he commanded: "I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine." (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27.)

²⁸ Carolyn J. Rasmus, "Mormon Women: A Convert's Perspective," *Ensign*, Aug. 1980, p. 69.