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Since the early years of the Church, Latter-day Saints have commonly understood that a Mother in Heaven exists, but that little has been said beyond acknowledging her reality and procreative powers. BYU Professor David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido document Church teachings that depict a Mother in Heaven who fulfills important and varied roles in the work of salvation. *Star of Wonder* (detail) by Annie Henrie, 2010. Courtesy Annie Henrie.

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BYU STUDIES
SYMPOSIUM

"A Mother There"

A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven

David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido

In the heav'ns are parents single?
No, the thought makes reason stare;
Truth is reason—truth eternal
Tells me I've a mother there.

When I leave this frail existence—
When I lay this mortal by
Father, mother, may I meet you
In your royal courts on high?[1]

Penned in 1845 by Sister Eliza R. Snow (who would later serve as the Relief Society general president from December 18, 1867–December 5, 1887), these lines from our beloved hymn "O My Father" are perhaps the best-known reference in Latter-day Saint literature to a Mother in Heaven. Written and published within months of Joseph Smith's death, these and other lines give considerable evidence that the Prophet taught of a Mother in Heaven, even if he did so only implicitly[2] or restrictively to certain limited audiences.[3]

Since the 1840s, this cherished doctrine has been an important, although relatively obscure, part of the Latter-day Saint understanding of the premortal origins and divine nature of mankind. This doctrine may well be among those that Joseph Smith anticipated, in which God would someday "reveal many great and important things" (A of F 9). Still, we feel it is appropriate to look carefully at all that has (and has not) been said about Mother in Heaven over the past 165 years, in order to promote clarity in

David L. Paulsen

For as long as I can remember, our beloved hymn "O My Father" has been a source of wonder, comfort, and inspiration. It was sung frequently in the Ephraim (Utah) North Ward where I was blessed as a baby and grew to young adulthood. It was sung—providentially, I believe—in a Sunday morning meeting of the Rock Island (Illinois) Branch when an investigator made her first visit to church. The spirit that she felt during the singing of the hymn was a clincher in her conversion to the restored gospel. It was the favorite hymn of my sister-in-law, Barbara Bryner, and, at the request of her family, it was sung at her funeral. Her family asked me to center my funeral talk around the teachings of the hymn. I did, and we were all comforted. My dad, who lived to age eighty-eight, survived my mother by several years. In his last days, he often pulled a photograph of Mom from his wallet and asked: "Do you remember who this is? We all miss her, don't we?" And then we would talk about our being embraced by her and Heavenly Parents when we left "this frail existence." In my paper "Are Christians Mormon?" published by *BYU Studies* in 2006, I summarized our belief in Heavenly Mother and pointed out growing interest in the divine feminine in a number of Christian quarters.

No wonder, then, my puzzlement when recently I began to hear with increasing frequency people speaking of the need for "sacred silence" with respect to Heavenly Mother. This stricture did not square with my life experience and motivated me to search what Church leaders had historically taught about her. The Women's Research Institute at BYU graciously provided funding, and members of my student staff, especially my coauthor Martin Pulido, have done extensive research. We reported our findings to appreciative, standing-room-only audiences at a Women's Research Institute meeting and at the BYU Studies 50th Anniversary Symposium. This article is the outcome of those findings.

academic discussions in particular and to avert possible confusion, misunderstanding, or contention in general.

Statements by Church Presidents

In 1909, the First Presidency of the Church wrote: "All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity."[4] In 1995, the Church officially reaffirmed the doctrine of a Heavenly Mother in "The Family: A Proclamation to the World": "All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of *heavenly parents*, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose."[5]

Four years earlier, President Gordon B. Hinckley (Counselor in the First Presidency, November 10, 1985–March 3, 1995) addressed at length the topic of a Mother in Heaven during the 1991 general Relief Society meeting. He taught: "Logic and reason would certainly suggest that if we have a Father in Heaven, we have a Mother in Heaven. That doctrine rests well with me. . . . The fact that we do not pray to our Mother in Heaven in no way belittles or denigrates her. . . . None of us can add to or diminish the glory of her of whom we have no revealed knowledge."[6] President Hinckley explained in the same address that, because of the Savior's instructions and example, one does not pray to Heavenly Mother.[7] In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructed, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9; 3 Ne. 13:9); he himself always prayed to the Father (Matt. 11:25; John 17:1; 3 Ne. 17:15; 19:19); he commanded his people to pray "unto the Father, always in my name" (3 Ne. 18:21; 27:9); and he concluded, "That which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do" (3 Ne. 27:21).

Statements by Some Claiming or Advising Silence

Because the Saints are instructed to pray to the Father, and, as President Hinckley pointed out, nothing has been authoritatively revealed about Heavenly Mother, some Latter-day Saints have thought that any mention of her is discouraged by the Church. Some within Mormon culture who see discussion of our Heavenly Mother as inappropriate believe that respecting her sacredness requires silence, as if to speak of her is to risk offending God. For instance, Hoyt W. Brewster Jr. claims, "The holy name of Deity is blasphemed when used in concert with gutter language and misused in everyday expressions. . . . Is it any wonder that our Father in Heaven has been so protective of the identity of our Mother in Heaven?"[8] Similarly, at the 1991 Women's Conference cosponsored by BYU and the Relief Society, Mormon

Methodology

We have attempted to identify each distinct reference to Heavenly Mother as found within content endorsed in some fashion by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1830 to present. We felt a statement could be appropriately included in this survey if it was spoken by a General Authority, recorded in a general conference, included in a Church publication, or published by a Church press. Our research has yielded an enormous amount of material, and we are unable to report all the discoveries. When we have omitted material, we have not done so out of disapproval or dislike, but out of the necessities forced upon us by a print journal's limited space. We have made every effort to act simply as surveyors of the available historical data. We leave the appraisal of this data to others more suited to the task.

In an effort to provide as much information as possible, we have developed a few specific conventions within this paper relative to General Authorities. First, we refer to all General Authorities by the title of the highest priesthood office they held in their lives, out of respect for their office and service, even if they were not in that office at the time of the statement. Thus, if an individual served in the First Presidency or as President of the Quorum of the Twelve, we refer to him as "President." If an individual served in another general priesthood office, we refer to him as "Elder." We also follow the convention of referring to individuals holding leadership positions within the Relief Society as "Sister." Second, when we first quote a General Authority, we include, in parentheses, the office the individual held at the time the statement was made as well as the dates during which the individual held that office. Subsequent quotes from the same General Authority include parenthetical information only if that person's office is different from what was reported in the immediately preceding statement of the individual's office.

In performing our research, we have consulted a wide variety of sources, including Church periodicals from 1832 to present, Church Conference Reports from 1897 to present, over three hundred volumes of works from Church leaders, over five hundred volumes of works from LDS scholars, and official Church documents, such as official proclamations, hymnals, and so on. For a list of these and other sources consulted, see note 16.

scholar Kathryn H. Shirts recalled a "Primary class, in which someone asked the teacher, 'If we have a Mother in Heaven, how come we never hear about her?' The teacher's reply was that God was protecting her name from the kinds of slander that human beings direct toward the names of the Father and the Son."[9] Likewise, in Amy Irvine's 2008 memoir *Trespass*, a fictional visitor at the Monticello Utah Temple open house asks a guide about the feminine aspect of the divine and is told "that the Heavenly Mother was so special that God had said we must never, ever talk about her—that He held her on a pedestal where she was never to be seen or spoken to, for fear that her purity would be sullied."[10]

Accounts like these have resulted in perceptions among the LDS community that Heavenly Mother deserves, or requires, a "sacred" censorship. Indeed, an informal Internet survey found that most Mormons believe that discourse about Heavenly Mother is forbidden or inappropriate.[11] This cultural perception has perhaps exacerbated academic claims that Heavenly Mother has *always* been, and continues to be, surrounded by a holy hush.[12] For instance, in his PhD dissertation on Heavenly Mother and Mormon women's literature, professor Grant Tucker Smith makes the sweeping assumption that during the hundred and fifty years between the lives of Eliza R. Snow and Terry Tempest Williams "the Mother in Heaven was for all intents and purposes ignored, silenced, and forgotten by the male Church leadership."[13]

While these scholars and writers admit that Latter-day Saints are not totally silent about Heavenly Mother, they lament that Latter-day Saints usually acknowledge her existence only, without delving further into her character or roles, or portray her as merely a silent, Victorian-type housewife valued only for her ability to reproduce.[14] For instance, professor Barbara J. MacHaffie asserts that from the beginning of Mormonism, Heavenly Mother was "pointed to only when the community wished to glorify motherhood."[15]

Overview of Research Regarding Statements by Church Leaders

These claims and expressions have persuaded us to research what Church leaders and others in Church-approved venues have actually taught about Heavenly Mother. Our investigation has led us to conclude that such claims—that the Church mandates silence or gives only simplistic portrayals of Mother in Heaven—are mostly false. In this paper, we will share important historical accounts that cast serious doubt on the specific claims that, first, a sacred silence has always surrounded this treasured Mormon doctrine and that, second, Heavenly Mother's ascribed roles have been marginalized or trivialized. With respect to the second claim, we will share

historical portrayals of Heavenly Mother as procreator and parent, as a divine person, as co-creator of worlds, as coframer of the plan of salvation with the Father, and as a concerned and loving parent involved in our mortal probation. Finally, we will sketch portrayals of her role in the eschaton.

In this paper, we will only *report* historical portrayals of Heavenly Mother's roles. It is not our province to appraise this material. As a further disclaimer, we note that there has been much more discourse and reflection about our Heavenly Mother than we can include in this article. We have compiled over six hundred sources of all types referencing a Heavenly Mother in Mormon and academic discourse since 1844.[16] While this research has been extensive, it is far from exhaustive, and we expect further investigations to uncover more information. So far, we have gathered an illuminating collection of thoughts about Mother in Heaven, her roles, her significance, and her character as given by prophets, Apostles, Church authorities, and other leaders since the restoration of the gospel. And although we do not have authoritative revelation on the specific roles and nature of Heavenly Mother, Church leaders have extrapolated much about her from our understanding of the plan of salvation, the nature of godhood, and the qualities of motherhood.

Heavenly Wife and Parent

Perhaps the most accepted and easily understood role of Heavenly Mother is her role as procreator and parent. Church leaders have frequently affirmed this point. The First Presidency under President Joseph F. Smith (Church President, October 17, 1901–November 19, 1918) published a declaration titled "The Father and the Son," in which they assert that our heavenly parents passed through "several stages or estates by which [they] have attained exaltation" and *together* "propagate[d] that higher order of beings called spirits."[17] Apparently, neither of them alone could beget our spirit bodies.

Several Church leaders have testified how we as their offspring have learned and inherited several divine, moral, and intellectual attributes from them.[18] President Boyd K. Packer (Acting President of Quorum of the Twelve, June 5, 1994–January 27, 2008) has taught that after this primordial birth each of us "lived in a premortal existence as an individual spirit child of heavenly parents,"[19] where we were reared and nurtured. In the development of our characters, our Heavenly Mother was perhaps particularly nurturing.[20] Brigham Young's daughter, Sister Susa Young Gates (member of the YLMIA[21] general board and famous women's rights activist) insisted that in the formation of Father Abraham's individuality, "our great heavenly

Mother was the greater molder"[22]—greater than his genetics, his prenatal impressions, his cultural or natural environment, or even his earthly mother's nurturing. Gates speculated that Heavenly Mother has played a significant role in all our lives, looking over us with "watchful care" and providing "careful training."[23] The 1995 "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" affirms that in the eternal realms above we were reared to premortal maturity through the tutelage of our heavenly parents.[24]

Obviously, these references to our heavenly parents show that Mormon leaders considered Heavenly Mother to be the wife of our Heavenly Father, an idea clearly explained by President George Q. Cannon (First Presidency, October 10, 1880–July 25, 1887) when he said, "God is a married being, has a wife. . . . We are the offspring of Him and His wife."[25] President Spencer W. Kimball (Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, January 23, 1970–July 2, 1972) taught that God "made women in the image of his wife-partner."[26] Others have taught that Heavenly Mother's relationship with Heavenly Father exemplifies and ennobles the office of wife. In 1938, the Church published *A Short History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* that taught, "The theological conception of a Mother in heaven as well as a Father lends dignity to motherhood and wifehood."[27] Elder B. H. Roberts (First Council of the Seventy, October 7, 1888–September 27, 1933) challenged the rest of Christianity to offer a doctrine that presents a "conception of the nobility of woman and of motherhood and of wifehood—placing her side by side with the Divine Father" as does our doctrine of Heavenly Mother.[28] We are to emulate the family structure exemplified by our Father and Mother, because, as Sister Susa Young Gates taught, "the home is patterned after the heavenly dwelling of our Divine parents."[29] President Joseph F. Smith taught that "it is marriage, sanctified and God-sanctioned, upon which a glorified home is founded—that blesses, happifies, exalts, and leads at length to companionship with our Heavenly parents, and to eternal, united life, and increase."[30]

A Divine Person

Some statements by Church authorities have led to the understanding that before Heavenly Mother became exalted and helped beget us, she was once mortal and dwelt on an earth. Elder Orson F. Whitney (bishop, July 14, 1878–April 1906) explained that "there was a time when that being whom we now worship—that our eternal Father and Mother were once man and woman in mortality."[31] The soul-making trials of her earthly experience, coupled with continuing growth after a celestial resurrection, helped her hone the qualities of divinity to move her from "womanhood to Godhood."[32]

Several Church leaders have affirmed that Heavenly Mother is a fully divine person and have used reverential titles such as "Mother God," "God Mother," "God the Mother," "God their Eternal Mother," and "Eternal Mother" in referring to her.[33] Elder John A. Widtsoe (Quorum of the Twelve, March 17, 1921–November 29, 1952) wrote: "The glorious vision of life hereafter . . . is given radiant warmth by the thought that . . . [we have] a mother who possesses the attributes of Godhood."[34] This is echoed by Elder James E. Talmage (Quorum of the Twelve, December 8, 1911–July 27, 1933): "We . . . [are] literally the sons and daughters of divine parents, the spiritual progeny of God our Eternal Father, and of our God Mother."[35] Furthermore, President Brigham Young (President of the Church, December 27, 1947–August 29, 1877) taught that "we were created . . . in the image of our father and our mother, the image of our God," indicating that calling Heavenly Mother "God" is consistent with the biblical account of the creation of both "male and female" being in "the image of God" (Gen. 1:26–27).[36] Sister Susa Young Gates urged that "the divine Mother, side by side with the divine Father, [has] the equal sharing of equal rights, privileges and responsibilities."[37]

However, at least one Mormon leader may have taken the opposite stance on these positions. President George Q. Cannon cautioned that

> there is too much of this inclination to deify "our mother in heaven." . . .
>
> Our Father in heaven should be the object of our worship. He will not have any divided worship. . . .
>
> In the revelation of God the Eternal Father to the Prophet Joseph Smith there was no revelation of the feminine element as part of the Godhead, and no idea was conveyed that any such element "was equal in power and glory with the masculine."
>
> Therefore, we are warranted in pronouncing all tendencies to glorify the feminine element and to exalt it as part of the Godhead as wrong and untrue, not only because of the revelation of the Lord in our day but because it has no warrant in scripture, and any attempt to put such a construction on the word of God is false and erroneous.[38]

President Cannon refers to a lack of scriptural evidence and contemporary revelation as reasons for denying Heavenly Mother's inclusion in the Godhead and for doubting (but not going so far as to deny) that her divinity is on par "with the masculine," and he condemns referencing scripture to provide implied evidence for Heavenly Mother's divinity. But Mormon leaders—including Cannon in other articles—used scriptures referring to the children of God, the female image of God, spiritual parenthood, and queens in heaven as testifying of a Heavenly Mother.[39] In reference to scriptures affirming that male and female are created in the image of God, Elder

Orson F. Whitney (Quorum of the Twelve, April 9, 1906–May 16, 1931) asked, "What is this but a virtual recognition of the feminine principle as well as the masculine principle of Deity?"[40] Furthermore, President Rudger Clawson (Quorum of the Twelve, October 10, 1989–June 21, 1943) disagreed that deifying our Heavenly Mother risked divided worship. He urged, "It doesn't take from our worship of the Eternal Father, to adore our Eternal Mother, any more than it diminishes the love we bear our earthly fathers, to include our earthly mothers in our affections."[41] Rather, "we honor woman when we acknowledge Godhood in her eternal prototype."[42]

The doctrine of a Heavenly Mother appears to be in tension with Mormonism's trinitarian heritage.[43] Overemphasizing the Trinity, or the Godhead, while underemphasizing a Heavenly Mother raises questions concerning the equality of deified males and females and the nature and importance of marriage. On the other hand, overemphasizing Heavenly Mother breaks with traditional Christian, and even Mormon, understandings of the Trinity, but highlights the Church's own proclamation that the most important social unit in eternity is the family. It is no simple feat to understand how these two social relationships—the Trinity and the eternal family—can best be understood together. For one, given traditional Mormon premises, a Heavenly Mother interacts with the Trinity in a certain and irresolvable sense. As there can be no spirit children without her, presumably there would be no Son[44] without her and perhaps no Holy Ghost[45]—no Heavenly Mother, perhaps no Trinity. It should be no surprise, then, that most Mormon leaders could not understand how Father or Mother could be divine alone. For either to be fully God, each must have a partner with whom to share the power of endless lives. As Elder Erastus Snow (Quorum of the Twelve, February 12, 1849–May 27, 1888) avowed:

> "What," says one, "do you mean we should understand that Deity consists of man and woman?" Most certainly I do. If I believe anything that God has ever said about himself . . . I must believe that deity consists of man and woman. . . .
>
> There can be no God except he is composed of the man and woman united, and there is not in all the eternities that exist, or ever will be a God in any other way.[46]
>
> We may never hope to attain unto the eternal power and the Godhead upon any other principle . . . this Godhead composing two parts, male and female.[47]

These sentiments were later reaffirmed by President Hugh B. Brown (Quorum of the Twelve, April 10, 1958–December 2, 1975), by Elders James E. Talmage, Melvin J. Ballard (Quorum of the Twelve, January 7, 1919–July 30, 1939), and by Bruce R. McConkie (First Council of the Seventy, October 6,

1946–October 12, 1972).[48] Given the popular contemporary LDS view that the highest form of worship is to emulate character, worship of the Father is also, indirectly, worship of the Mother, as each has equally perfect moral character. Perhaps part of the disagreement among Mormon thinkers is that most have not clearly explained what they mean by "divinity," and they are consequently uncertain what it signifies to predicate this attribute to Heavenly Mother.[49] No one denies her omnibenevolent character or divine intelligence, so the concern seems to be with her cosmic authority or status for worship. Obviously, defining divinity demands further attention, but we do not suggest any solution, for such is not our province nor is it within the scope of this paper.

Co-creator with the Father

Regardless of the exact nature of her divinity, some authorities have described Heavenly Mother was an active participant in the process of creation. In his 1876 semiannual general conference address, Brigham Young included "eternal mothers" and "eternal daughters" as beings after the resurrection who will "be prepared to frame earth's [sic] like unto ours and to people them in the same manner as we have been brought forth by our [heavenly] parents."[50] *The Women of Mormondom,* written by critic and playwright Edward Tullidge and edited by Sister Eliza R. Snow, affirms that the "eternal Mother [is] the partner with the Father in the creation of worlds."[51] An article in the *Deseret News*, presumably written by President Charles W. Penrose (editor of the *Deseret News*, later ordained an Apostle on July 7, 1904) argued that there is a Mother in Heaven and cited the feminine gender of the divine Spirit in the morning of creation that moved upon the face of the waters as evidence.[52] Elder Milton R. Hunter (First Council of the Seventy, April 6, 1945–June 27, 1975) taught that the exaltation and endless lives that celestial women and men share include "the power to create or organize mortal worlds."[53] Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (First Quorum of the Seventy, April 1, 1989–June 23, 1994) and his wife, Patricia, have taught that our Mother and our Father are involved in the ongoing process of creating everything around us, and "are doing so lovingly and carefully and masterfully."[54]

Coframer of the Plan of Salvation

In addition to her participation in creation, Heavenly Mother helped the Father direct the plan of salvation. Elder M. Russell Ballard (Quorum of the Twelve, October 6, 1985–present) taught that "we are part of a divine

plan designed by Heavenly Parents who love us."[55] The Church's 1978 *Gospel Principles* manual adds:

> Our heavenly parents provided us with a celestial home more glorious and beautiful than any place on earth. We were happy there. Yet they knew we could not progress beyond a certain point unless we left them for a time. They wanted us to develop the godlike qualities that they have. To do this, we needed to leave our celestial home to be tested and to gain experience.[56]

While serving as the first counselor in the general presidency of the Relief Society, Sister Chieko Okazaki (March 31, 1990–April 5, 1997) noted that "at the end of this process, our Heavenly Parents will have sons and daughters who are their peers, their friends, and their colleagues."[57] According to Elder Theodore M. Burton (First Quorum of the Seventy, October 1, 1976–September 30, 1989), this is "their goal, their work, and their glory."[58]

Elder Milton R. Hunter explained the way by which both our heavenly parents learned to design a plan for our progression:

> Wherever there have been intelligences, . . . fundamental principles . . . have existed. They constitute . . . the laws of eternal truth. Our Heavenly Parents have through aeons of time . . . applied in Their lives an untold number of these everlasting laws. As They learned these verities and how to operate them, these laws thereby became subject unto Elohim.[59]

The 1978 *Gospel Principles* manual goes on to state that as the beloved Son, Christ "was chosen to be our Savior when we all attended the great council with our heavenly parents."[60] This would have been a moment of mixed emotion for the divine couple, when, as Sister Chieko Okazaki noted, "with . . . increased love, mingled with pride and grief, [they] accepted the willing offer of Jesus Christ."[61] According to Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (Quorum of the Twelve, June 23, 1994–present), each of us also chose to endure the hardships that would be present in mortality because we "wanted the chance to become like our heavenly parents."[62] Lula L. Greene Richards (Primary Association General Board) wrote that Heavenly Mother smiled on her righteous children as they voted to uphold the will of the Council in Heaven and chose to come to earth.[63] Elder Mark E. Petersen (Quorum of the Twelve, April 20, 1944–January 11, 1984) explained that once the council was completed and the Savior chosen, our heavenly parents "sent [us to earth] to receive further instruction under different circumstances"[64] than those of our premortal state. President Thomas S. Monson (Counselor in the First Presidency, March 12, 1995–January 27, 2008) affirmed that this instruction "could come only through separation from our heavenly parents."[65]

Heavenly Mother's role in this process has been dramatized and embellished by some Mormon authors. The fourth stanza in Sister Eliza R. Snow's "O My Father" speaks of Heavenly Mother acting in the role of sending us forth to undergo the trials of mortality.[66] Ruth May Fox composed a short dialogue entitled "The Parable of Ten Talents,"[67] which converts Christ's parable into a thinly veiled story of daughters leaving the presence of their Heavenly Mother to experience mortality.[68] Before their separation, the Mother gathers them together and grants each of them a divine character trait[69] to prepare them "for the battle of life."[70] She also advises that upon their return she will require a reporting of their accomplishments.[71]

Both Elder Orson F. Whitney and President Harold B. Lee (Quorum of the Twelve, April 10, 1941–January 23, 1970) taught that our farewell from our Heavenly Mother and Father was a bittersweet occasion.[72] President Lee wrote:

> There came a day, then, when Mother and Father said, "Now, my son, my daughter, it is now your time to go. This is the greatest time in the history of the world. This is the fulness of times, and now because of your faithfulness you are permitted to go down in this fulness of time upon the earth." I suppose as Father and Mother bade us good-bye, there may have been some sadness there because they knew Satan was here and one-third of all the hosts were here [with him]. We walked, as it were, through an open door. The door was closed behind us.[73]

Elder John Longden (Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, October 6, 1951–August 30, 1969) added, "It must be quite an occasion in heaven when our Heavenly Mother bids us a loving farewell for the time being! Perhaps, like earthly mothers, she thinks, 'They are so young, and they might forget [the rules and regulations].'"[74] Longden imagined that before we parted we promised them we would remember. President George F. Richards (Quorum of the Twelve, April 9, 1906–August 8, 1950) taught that our heavenly parents are "counting on [us] to honor them, to love them, and obey them. 'Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.'"[75] This commandment applies to both earthly and heavenly parents.

Involved Parent in Our Mortality

Mormon leaders have affirmed that Heavenly Mother's involvement did not completely end with premortality, but continues throughout our second estate. Sister Eliza R. Snow believed in Heavenly Mother's continuing influence, and told a friend that the Saints would with "pray'r and supplication / plead for [her] before the throne / Of the great eternal mother."[76] Others have emphasized that Heavenly Mother—along with the Father—

watches over us from heaven and strives to help us in our trials. In 1963, President Harold B. Lee taught:

> Sometimes we think the whole job is up to us, forgetful that there are loved ones beyond our sight who are thinking about us and our children. We forget that we have a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother who are even more concerned, probably, than our earthly father and mother, and that influences from beyond are constantly working to try to help us when we do all we can.[77]

After noting our Heavenly Mother's concern for us, President Lee cited the story of William Dudley Pelley, who recalled one day in his office taking "a package of cigarettes from [his] desk. About to apply a light to one of them, [he] *heard a voice as gently as any worried mother might caution a careless son*, 'Oh, Bill, give up your cigarettes!'"[78] Pelley quickly complied by throwing the cigarettes into the trash.

Sister Okazaki has written that our heavenly parents are cosufferers with us in our mortal trials.[79] Elder M. Russell Ballard (Quorum of the Twelve, October 6, 1985–present) has also taught that "Our Heavenly Parents' love and concern for us continues to this very moment," and the First Presidency under President Spencer W. Kimball (President of the Church, December 30, 1973–November 5, 1985) affirmed that this love and concern never ends.[80] Similarly, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (President of BYU, May 1980 to April 1, 1989) has written how important his own children are to him and his wife. And yet he asks that if they, as parents, "can love so much and try so hard, what does that say of a more Godly love that differs from our own as the stars differ from the sun? On a particularly difficult day, . . . what would this world's inhabitants pay to know that heavenly parents are reaching across those same streams and mountains and deserts, anxious to hold them close?"[81] Sister Okazaki explained that "when our rising love and joyful gratitude meet the shower of mercy and love from the Savior and from our heavenly parents, in that contact is the pure radiance and the brilliant light of glory."[82]

Others state that although we are away from our Parents' celestial home, we are not completely severed from them. Elder John A. Widtsoe told members of the Church that the promises made to us in the temple "will help us understand the nearness of our heavenly parents."[83] Righteous living draws us toward them and their guiding influences, but as Milton R. Hunter has written, sin and ignorance draw us farther away.[84]

Throughout this mortal journey, both of our heavenly parents are examples of the divine nature. In a recent address to Harvard Law School on the "fundamental premises of our faith," Elder Dallin H. Oaks (Quorum of the Twelve, April 7, 1984–present) affirmed that our theology "teaches

that our highest aspiration is to become like our Heavenly Parents."[85] Men and women alike are to seek after and develop the divine traits exemplified by both Father and Mother. Notwithstanding this teaching that Heavenly Mother is an exemplar in our mortality, we must keep in mind the counsel given by President Gordon B. Hinckley: "I regard it as inappropriate for anyone in the Church to pray to our Mother in Heaven."[86]

Mother in Heaven in the Hereafter

Many believe that after the end of our mortal probation, each of us will return to our heavenly parents' presence. This homecoming has been a rich topic of thought for many Mormons.[87] The fourth stanza of Joseph L. Townsend's "O, What Songs of the Heart" describes the joyous reunion that awaits: "Oh, what songs we'll employ! / Oh, what welcome we'll hear! / While our transports of love are complete, / As the heart swells with joy / In embraces most dear / When our heavenly parents we meet!"[88] Elder Neal A. Maxwell (First Quorum of the Seventy, October 1, 1976–July 23, 1981) mused that "such a regal homecoming [could not] be possible without the anticipatory arrangements of a Heavenly Mother."[89] For Elder Orson Pratt (Quorum of the Twelve, April 26, 1835–Aug 20, 1842 and January 20, 1843–October 3, 1881) and President George Q. Cannon, this reunion would include vividly recalling our former life with them.[90] Other leaders have stressed that only the pure in heart who obey the gospel will return to permanently reside in their presence.[91] As Ruth May Fox imagined in her narrative, Heavenly Mother will ask for a report of our accomplishments. Matilda E. Teasdale wrote, "You . . . [will] go home to Father and Mother to 'give an account of your labors.'"[92]

This accounting includes our parenting. In the April 1909 general conference, Elder James G. Duffin (who previously served as president of the Southwestern and Central States Missions, 1900–1904 and 1904–1906 respectively) declared, "We, as parents, give an account to our Father and Mother in heaven of the manner in which we have conducted ourselves toward the precious souls entrusted to us."[93] Charles Lowell Walker recorded how Elders Heber J. Grant (Quorum of the Twelve, October 16, 1882–November 23, 1918) and Anthony W. Ivins (who later served in the First Presidency, March 10, 1921–September 23, 1934) taught that parents are obligated to teach their children the first principles of the gospel before they reach the age of accountability; otherwise, they will stand in "condemnation before our Heavenly Parents."[94]

Some say that for the righteous Saints, the heavenly reunion will mark a new stage in their association with their Parents. Elder Orson F. Whitney believed that the knowledge of "return[ing] to them, and resum[ing] the

relations of the previous life" conquered the sting of death.[95] President Spencer W. Kimball supposed that our renewed relationship with our Heavenly Mother would be immensely influential. He reasoned, "Knowing how profoundly our mortal mothers have shaped us here, do we suppose her influence on us as individuals to be less if we live so as to return [to heaven]?"[96] Accordingly, the loving support and example of *both* Father and Mother will guide us in the eternities.

Conclusion

In this paper we have briefly shown that, historically, there has been substantial discussion and elaboration on the roles and divinity of our Heavenly Mother. Our investigation marshals evidence against some claims that General Authorities and other Church leaders have limited Heavenly Mother's role to reproduction. It also refutes the suspicion that General Authorities have advocated a position of total sacred silence about her. As Latter-day Saints should be deeply reverent when speaking about any sacred subject, Church leaders may well caution an individual to be respectful of and to avoid teaching unorthodox views about Heavenly Mother. At the same time, we have found no public record of a General Authority advising us to be silent about our Heavenly Mother; indeed, as we have amply demonstrated, many General Authorities have openly taught about her.

While some have claimed that Heavenly Mother's role has been marginalized or trivialized, we feel that the historical data provides a highly elevated view of Heavenly Mother. The Heavenly Mother portrayed in the teachings we have examined is a procreator and parent, a divine person, a co-creator, a coframer of the plan of salvation, and is involved in this life and the next. Certainly, consideration of these points reinforces several unquestionably important LDS doctrines: divine embodiment, eternal families, divine relationality, the deification of women, the eternal nature and value of gender, and the shared lineage of Gods and humans. Far from degrading either the Heavenly Feminine or the earthly feminine, we feel that these teachings exalt both.

In acknowledgment of this, we can think of no more fitting conclusion than the words uttered by Elder Glenn L. Pace (First Quorum of the Seventy, October 3, 1992–October 2, 2010) at a 2010 BYU devotional: "Sisters, I testify that when you stand in front of your heavenly parents in those royal courts on high and you look into Her eyes and behold Her countenance, any question you ever had about the role of women in the kingdom will evaporate into the rich celestial air, because at that moment you will see standing directly in front of you, your divine nature and destiny."[97]

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1. Eliza R. Snow, *Eliza R. Snow: The Complete Poetry,* ed. Jill Mulvay Derr and Karen Lynn Davidson (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press; Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009), 313–14.

2. David L. Paulsen, "Are Christians Mormon? Reassessing Joseph Smith's Theology in His Bicentennial," *BYU Studies* 45, no. 1 (2006): 97–98.

3. Jill Mulvay Derr, "The Significance of 'O My Father' in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow," *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996): 97–100.

4. "The Origin and Destiny of Man," *Improvement Era* 12 (November 1909): 78.

5. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* 25 (November 1995): 102; emphasis added.

6. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," *Ensign* 31 (November 1991): 100.

7. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," 100.

8. Hoyt J. Brewster Jr., *Behold, I Come Quickly: The Last Days and Beyond* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 50. Brewster is a Mormon scholar and managing director of the Church's Priesthood Department.

9. Shirts continued: "It was a clever reply, and, at the time, we all thought it was quite satisfying. None of us realized then that this answer described a lady not quite up to taking care of herself in a tough world, an image drawn purely from certain human conventions and not from divine reality." Kathryn H. Shirts, "Women in the Image of the Son: Being Female and Being Like Christ," in *Women Steadfast in Christ: Talks Selected from the 1991 Women's Conference Co-sponsored by Brigham Young University and the Relief Society,* ed. Dawn Hall Anderson and Marie Cornwall (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 95. Shirts earned a master of

theological studies degree at the Harvard Divinity School and is an author and a reviewer for *BYU Studies*.

10. Amy Irvine, *Trespass: Living at the Edge of the Promised Land* (New York: North Point, 2008), 302. Irvine is an author and wilderness activist.

11. Margaret Merrill Toscano, "Is There a Place for Heavenly Mother in Mormon Theology? An Investigation into Discourses of Power," *Sunstone* 133 (July 2004): 14–15.

12. Linda P. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," *Sunstone* 5 (September-October 1980): 9.

13. Grant Tucker Smith, "I've a Mother There: Identity, Language, and Experience in Mormon Women's Literature" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 1993), 20. Smith is a professor at Viterbo University. Aaltje Baumgart also recently claimed, "The LDS Church discourages speaking of the Mother in Heaven. . . . Even articulating Her name 'is akin to profanity.'" Aaltje Baumgart, "Mormon *and* Feminist? Feminist Reactions to LDS Scripture, Doctrine, and Practices," *AMERICAN@* 1, no. 2 (2003): 7, http://www.uhu.es/hum676/revista/baugmart.pdf. Baumgart attributes the phrase "akin to profanity" to Martha Pierce, "Personal Discourse on God the Mother," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, ed. Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 249. Baumgart earned her master's degree in divinity from the University of Chicago in 2008. She is currently a chaplain resident at the Advocate Christ Medical Center. Terry Tempest Williams is a Mormon author, environmental activist, and professor at the University of Utah.

14. Robert A. Rees complains, "What we are left with is an image of our Heavenly Mother staying at home having billions of children while the men—the Father and his sons—go off to create worlds, spin galaxies, take business trips to outer space. She is happy, it would seem, to let them have all the recognition, all the glory." See Robert A. Rees, "Our Mother in Heaven," *Sunstone* 15 (April 1991): 49–50. See also Jerrie W. Hurd, "The Unnamed Women in Scripture," *Sunstone* 10 (July 1985): 23–25.

15. Barbara J. MacHaffie, *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, 2d ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 245. MacHaffie is a professor of history and religion at Marietta College. Susanna Morrill likewise claims, "Even in the early days of Mormonism, however, church leaders rarely described or even mentioned the Mother in Heaven." Besides a few statements by leaders, Morrill believes that Heavenly Mother appeared only in the private folk theology explored in Mormon women's journals and periodicals. See Susanna Morrill, *White Roses on the Floor of Heaven: Mormon Women's Popular Theology, 1880–1920* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 56.

Danny L. Jorgensen's survey of Mormon theological history leads him to conclude, "Everything known about the Eternal Mother confirms that she was subordinate to the Eternal Father's authority," and that she was not "equal to the Father God." See Danny L. Jorgensen, "Gender-Inclusive Images of God: A Sociological Interpretation of Early Shakerism and Mormonism," *Nova Religio* 4, no. 1 (2000): 72, 75. Carrie A. Miles's words manifest the sad fact that some Mormon women take perceptions about Heavenly Mother's supposed subordination personally, seeing their own roles as theologically marginalized: "We are faced with the possibility that woman's subordination is not only universal, it is eternal

as well." See Carrie A. Miles, "The Genesis of Gender, or Why Mother in Heaven Can't Save You," *Sunstone* 20 (July 1997): 16. While rare, there is limited precedent for what might be perceived as eternal gender subordination. See for instance, Elder S. Dilworth Young, "The Eternal Conflict" (devotional address, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, May 30, 1978), transcript available at http://speeches.byu.edu./?act=viewitem&id=1064. He envisages Heavenly Mother "not making earths nor giving . . . law, But doing what a heavenly mother does, Teaching her spirit children to be true . . . What do heavenly mothers say to heavenly children? Faintly to our souls we hear her sweet reply. Obey! That is the law, Hear all of His commands. Obey each one."

16. More specifically, we have consulted First Presidency messages; the *Journal of Discourses*; the *Collected Discourses*; Church manuals; the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*; Church periodicals and newspapers like *New York Messenger and Advocate*, *The Prophet*, *Times and Seasons*, *Millennial Star, The Seer*, *The Western Standard*, *Deseret News*, *The Mormon*, *Deseret Weekly News*, *Woman's Exponent*, *Juvenile Instructor*, *The Contributor*, *Young Woman's Journal, Improvement Era*, *Latter-day Saints Southern Star, Deseret Evening News*, *Liahona: The Elders' Journal*, *Relief Society Magazine, Children's Friend*, *Ensign*, *Friend*, *New Era*, *Liahona*, and *Church News*; BYU devotional speeches; Women's Conference addresses; books written by prophets, Apostles, and other General Authorities and Church leaders; books written by Latter-day Saint historians and scholars; early Mormon almanacs; personal journals and letters of prominent Latter-day Saints; Utah and Mormon journals and newspapers like *Logan Leader*, *Salt Lake Herald*, *Salt Lake Tribune*, *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, and *Morgan County News*; histories of Utah; academic journals like *Church History*, *Populations Studies*, *Pacific Historical Review*, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, *Sociological Spectrum*, *Women's Review of Books*, *Western Historical Quarterly*, *Journal of American History*, *Religion and American Culture*, *Religious Studies*, *Review of Religious Research*, *Nova Religio*, *Sociology of Religion*, *Journal of Feminist Studies*, *AMERICAN@*, *Intercultural Education*, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, *Feminist Theology*, *BYU Studies*, *Sunstone*, *Exponent II*, and *Dialogue*; and master's theses and doctoral dissertations.

It should be noted that material from some time periods, such as the period from 1940 to 1970, are likely lower in frequency due to our inability to access digitized or more easily available sources. Thus, some trends in the historical teachings could be corrected through further research.

17. Joseph F. Smith, "The Father and the Son," *Improvement Era* 19 (August 1916): 942. The message stipulates that "so far as the stages of eternal progression and attainment have been made known through divine revelation, we are to understand that only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring." See also Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," *The Seer* 1 (October 1853): 158.

18. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855), 171; "The Origin and Destiny of Woman," *Latter-day Saints Southern Star* 1 (January 7, 1899): 45 (this article was first published on August 29, 1857, in a periodical published in New York and edited by John Taylor); Orson F. Whitney, "What Is Education?" *Deseret News* 20, no. 41 (1885): 1; Rulon S. Wells, "Believe

the Truth for Truth's Sake," *Liahona: The Elders' Journal* 10 (November 19, 1912): 338; James E. Talmage, *The Vitality of Mormonism: Brief Essays on Distinctive Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Boston: Gorham, 1919), 244; Milton R. Hunter, *Pearl of Great Price Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1951), 105–6; "The Origin of Man," in *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint*, comp. James R. Clark, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970), 4:206; Ezra Taft Benson, *So Shall Ye Reap* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1960), 170.

19. Boyd K. Packer, "Counsel to Young Men," *Ensign* 39 (May 2009): 50.

20. Orson F. Whitney, "Latter-day Saint Ideals and Institutions," *Improvement Era* 30 (August 1927): 851.

21. Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association.

22. Susa Young Gates, "The Editor's Department," *Young Woman's Journal* 2 (July 1891): 475. Sister Susa Young Gates was Brigham Young's daughter, a famous LDS feminist, and the editor of the Church's officialized *Young Woman's Journal* and *Relief Society Magazine*.

23. Susa Young Gates, "In the Realm of Girlhood: Lesson V," *Young Woman's Journal* 17 (January 1906): 41.

24. See "Family: A Proclamation," 102; "Origin of Man," 205. See also The First Presidency, "'Mormon' View of Evolution," *Improvement Era* 28 (September 1925): 1090.

25. George Q. Cannon, "Mr. Canon's [*sic*] Lecture," *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, April 15, 1884, 8.

26. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, Twelfth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 25.

27. John Henry Evans, *A Short History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. Gordon B. Hinckley (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1938), 163.

28. B. H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1912), 2:439.

29. Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1911), 234.

30. Joseph F. Smith, "Marriage God-Ordained and Sanctioned," *Improvement Era* 5, no. 9 (1902): 717–18. This quote was republished in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998), 181.

31. Orson F. Whitney, "Bishop O. F. Whitney," *Woman's Exponent* 24 (June 15, 1895): 9. Whitney was a ward bishop and professor at the time of this pronouncement. In support of Whitney's statement, James E. Talmage claimed, "It is within [man's] power to follow in the footsteps of his celestial parents and to reach the rank and station occupied by those who have trodden that path before." See James E. Talmage, "What Mormonism Stands For," *Deseret Evening News,* January 16, 1909, 25. See also Hunter, *Pearl of Great Price Commentary,* 104–6; and Eldred G. Smith, "Opposition in Order to Strength Us," *Ensign* 4 (January 1974): 62. Joseph Smith taught that the Father "was once a man like us," at least in that he "dwelt on an earth" as did Jesus Christ. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the*

Prophet Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 376. Just as the Son was more than merely mortal during his sojourn on an earth, logically Heavenly Father and Mother may have been so as well.

32. Orson F. Whitney, "What Is Education?" *Contributor* 6, no. 9 (1885): 347; Orson Pratt, "Sunday Services," *Logan Leader* 1 (November 13, 1879): 3.

33. For instance, see Melvin J. Ballard, "The Pre-existence of Man," *Liahona: The Elders' Journal* 24 (June 29, 1926): 5–10; Sarah M. Kimball, "Demonstration in Honor of Bishop Hunter," *Woman's Exponent* 8, no. 3 (1879): 22; Hunter, *Pearl of Great Price Commentary*, 104; James E. Talmage, "The Philosophical Basis of 'Mormonism,'" *Liahona: The Elders' Journal* 13 (November 9, 1915): 307; Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 18:32; James E. Talmage, "The Eternity of Sex," *Young Woman's Journal* 25 (October 1914): 603; James E. Talmage, "Relationship of Jesus Christ to the Eternal Father," *Liahona: The Elders' Journal* 13 (August 24, 1915): 133; Milton R. Hunter, *Will a Man Rob God? The Laws and Doctrine of Tithing, Fast Offerings, and Observance of Fast Day* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1952), 183.

34. John A. Widtsoe, "Everlasting Motherhood," *Millennial Star* 90 (May 10, 1928): 298. Similarly, Widtsoe would write later that "since we have a Father, who is our God, we must also have a mother, who possesses the attributes of Godhood." John A. Widtsoe, *A Rational Theology: As Taught by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1937), 69.

35. James E. Talmage, "The Philosophical Basis of 'Mormonism,'" *Improvement Era* 18 (September 1915): 950.

36. Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, ed. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 51.

37. Susa Young Gates, "The Vision Beautiful," *Improvement Era* 23 (April 1920): 542. Sister Gates was the corresponding secretary of the Relief Society Presidency when this article was written.

38. George Q. Cannon, *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon,* ed. Jerreld L. Newquist, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Zion's Book Store, 1957), 1:135–36. Cannon's remarks were first published as "Topics of the Times: The Worship of Female Deities," *Juvenile Instructor* 30 (May 15, 1895): 314–17. Here, Cannon seems to be responding to the writings of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stanton was in close association with Sister Emmeline B. Wells (general secretary of the Relief Society; 1888–1910), who worked as editor for the *Woman's Exponent*, an LDS-themed publication. A month and a half prior to Cannon's remarks in the *Juvenile Instructor*, Sister Wells published an excerpt from Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* in the "The Woman's Bible," *Woman's Exponent* 23 (April 1, 1895): 248. In the excerpt, Stanton claims that Genesis 1:26–27 clearly shows "a consultation in the Godhead" where "masculine and feminine elements are equally represented." This consultation involves the doctrine of a trinity, but not that of three male personages; Stanton's trinity comprises instead "Heavenly Father, Mother, and Son." Stanton claims women's dignity is being raised by this depiction and that women are recognizing that their prayers should be addressed to a Heavenly Mother as well as to a Father. She thought the biblical text made it plain that there is "a feminine element in the Godhead, equal in power and glory with the masculine." Stanton claimed that the masculine and feminine forces in the image of God . . . must have existed eternally, in all forms of matter and

mind." Cannon's remarks use Stanton's wording and no doubt seem spurred by this excerpt.

39. Cannon, *Gospel Truth,* 3–4, 129. Regarding queens, many Mormons look at the "queen of heaven" mentioned in Jeremiah and the queen in Psalm 45:9 as referring to the wife of God. Benjamin G. Ferris noted this in his *Utah and the Mormons: The History, Government, Doctrines, Customs, and Prospects of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1856), 242. The Psalms reference was also noted by Appleton Milo Harmon in his journal. He copied a letter, written in May 1852 by William W. Phelps, that defended polygamy. The letter contained the following statement: "When the suffering female kind over the great globe are acquainted with the fact that 'the daughters of Kings are among the Lord's honour-able wives in heavn (Psalm 45) and on the right hand the Queen in Gold of Opher,' you will hear of more honourable women clinging to the Holy priesthood than you ever thought of. . . . Brother Gordon look into my almanac for this year and you will observe an account of the 'Eternal Mother' on the thirty second page, and on the 37th 'the philosophy of the heavns.' Try a little of the mormon clasick." See Appleton Milo Harmon, *Appleton Milo Harmon's Early History and Journal for His Travels through the United States, England, and Scotland in 1850, 1851, and 1852* (s.l., n.d.), 292, copy in Americana Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

40. Orson F. Whitney, "Our Mother in Heaven His Theme," *Deseret Evening News*, July 16, 1906, 5. At the time, Whitney was a newly ordained member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

41. [Rudger Clawson], "Our Mother in Heaven," *Millennial Star* 72 (September 29, 1910): 619–20. Rudger Clawson, being editor at the time, has traditionally been assumed to be the author of the article.

42. [Clawson], "Our Mother in Heaven," 620.

43. For discussions of LDS understandings of the Trinity, especially as contrasted with classical Christian views, see David L. Paulsen, "Are Christians Mormon? Reassessing Joseph Sith's Theology in His Bicentennial," *BYU Studies* 45, no. 1 (2006): 63–72; and David L. Paulsen and Brett McDonald, "Joseph Smith and the Trinity: An Analysis and Defense of the Social Model of the Godhead," *Faith and Philosophy* 25, no. 1 (2008): 47–74.

44. Elder LeGrand Richards (Quorum of the Twelve, April 6, 1952–January 11, 1983) reported having said the following while addressing an audience of evangelical and congregational clergymen: "Toward the close of my remarks, the man in charge said, 'Now, Mr. Richards, we've heard it said that you believe God has a wife. Would you explain that to us?' I think he thought he had me over a barrel or in a corner that I couldn't get out of. Rather facetiously I said, 'Well, I don't see how in the world God could have a son without a wife, do you?' They all began to twitter, and I didn't have any trouble with that question." LeGrand Richards, "Missionary Experiences" (devotional address, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, October 20, 1981), available at http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=499.

45. As to the origin of the Holy Ghost, latter-day revelation does not provide, to our knowledge, any definitive statement. Yet some Latter-day Saints have taught that he is a spiritual son of God. For instance, Mormon scholar Joseph Fielding McConkie wrote: "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that the Holy Ghost is a spirit man, a spirit son of God the Father." See

Joseph Fielding McConkie, "Holy Ghost," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:649. However, owing to the paucity of revealed information on the subject, such cannot be claimed with complete certitude.

46. Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses,* 19:269–70, March 3, 1878. There has been a history of misreading this passage to suggest that Snow was presenting a God who is a hermaphrodite. The first speculation we found started with Linda P. Wilcox in "Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," *Sunstone* 5 (September/October 1980): 11. Allen W. Litchfield duplicated this error in his master's thesis, "Behind the Veil: The Heavenly Mother Concept among Members of Women's Support Groups in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (Brigham Young University, 1987), 6. Clearly these writers are not fully considering Erastus Snow's writings on the subject. The passage reads much clearer within Mormon discourse and Snow's own declarations if read from a perspective describing social unity in marriage. Snow declared, "It is left for us to infer this from what we see and know of all living things in the earth including man. The male and female principle is united and both necessary to the accomplishment of the object of their being, and if this be not the case with our Father in heaven after whose image we are created, then it is an anomaly in nature. But to our minds the idea of a Father suggests that of a Mother. . . . Hence when it is said that God created our first parents in His likeness—'in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them'—it is intimated in language sufficiently plain to my understanding that the male and female principle was present with the Gods as it is with man." Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:214, May 31, 1885. Such sentiments do not imply that God is some sort of divine hermaphrodite.

In another discourse, Snow would teach, "To [the Saints] this great truth is most precious, precious to contemplate, and it is an inexpressible privilege to be able to draw nigh unto Him and say 'Our Father' in simplicity and faith, knowing that He is indeed our Father and that we are His children. And immediately this great truth is impressed upon our minds, we very naturally begin to associate with it the idea of mother. This is a natural result of our knowledge and experience of human affairs; that earthly tabernacles owe their origin to mother as well as to father; that the two principles are associated together, and that by the union of the two principles, male and female, God has ordained an increase, not alone to his children but to all other branches of the animal kingdom . . . the two principles going hand and hand together. Without the two principles being thus united there is no increase. Further, we are taught that things on earth are organized after the pattern of heavenly things. Need it, therefore, be a marvel and a wonder to the world that we should irresistibly be carried forward to this conclusion—that if we have a Father in heaven we have also a Mother there." Erastus Snow, "Discourse by Apostle Erastus Snow," *Deseret News,* October 22, 1884, 2. The unity of the male and female principles seem to harmonize better with the statement in Genesis that male and female shall cleave one to another and "be one flesh" and Paul's affirmation that "neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord," than with urging that God is a divine hermaphrodite (Gen. 2:24; 1 Cor. 11:11). In the same discourse, Snow said, "That is, in the eternal power and Godhead the two principles must necessarily be connected to accomplish the objects and purposes of their being; that they cannot attain to exaltation and glory

otherwise. This is also set forth by Moses in the history of the first part of Genesis, when the Father said unto the Gods that were with Him, 'Let us make man in our image,' and they went to and made man in the image of God. 'In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.' This is the language we find in Genesis used by Moses to illustrate this great truth. 'In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.' That being the case—that they were created both male and female and in the likeness of the Godhead—can we come to any other conclusion than that the Godhead is composed of the two same principles—male and female—and that the Apostle Paul comprehended this truth when he said that the woman was not without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord." Snow, "Discourse by Apostle Erastus Snow," 2.

It also echoes the language of another statement of Snow's that stresses marriage: "There is no Lord, there is no God in which the two principles are not blended, nor can be . . . but this Godhead composing two parts, male and female." Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses,* 19:272, March 3, 1878. Latter-day Saint scripture has taught that no person can reach the highest degree of the celestial kingdom without being sealed to a spouse (D&C 131:1–3). Nowhere in Mormon discourse is there teaching that individuals will become androgynous or hermaphroditic via deification. Rather, deification follows through the righteous social unity of husband and wife in the hereafter. For instance, Orson Pratt would affirm, "No man can be 'in the Lord,' in the full sense of this passage, that is, he cannot enter into all the fullness of his glory, 'without the woman.' And no woman can be 'in the Lord,' or in the enjoyment of a fullness, 'without the man.'" Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," *The Seer* 1 (April 1853): 59.

47. Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses,* 19:272–73, March 3, 1878.

48. Bryant S. Hinckley, ed., *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1949), 205–6; Hugh B. Brown, *Continuing the Quest* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1961), 8; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine,* 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 516-17. James E. Talmage would write, "Neither of the sexes is complete in itself as a counterpart of Deity. We are expressly told that God is the Father of spirits, and to apprehend the literalness of this solemn truth we must know that a mother of spirits is an existent personality." James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 442–43. Patriarch to the Church Eldred G. Smith remarked likewise in an address to BYU students on March 10, 1964: "The only one I know of who has been resurrected and had children—that I know of—is my Father in heaven and my Mother in heaven. You could not have a Father in heaven without a Mother in heaven. . . . Our Father in heaven must have gone through a life of mortality and become resurrected, and we have to have a Mother in heaven, because we could not have a Father without a Mother at any time, in any life. We were their children born after their resurrection." Eldred G. Smith, "Exaltation," in *Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, 1963–64* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1964), 6.

49. Orson Pratt is a noted exception to the usual lack of specificity. In defining "divinity," Orson Pratt claimed, "Gods . . . possess a fullness of truth, of knowledge, of wisdom, of light, of intelligence. . . . The fullness of all these attributes is what constitutes God." Then he asserted that both males and females enjoy this fullness. Orson Pratt, "The Pre-Existence of Man," *The Seer* 1 (February

1853): 24. He would also write: "The Celestial male and female, after the resurrection, will be perfected in knowledge, and in holiness, and in pure affection and love: they will know as God knows; be pure as He is pure, and love as He loves: their knowledge, their purity, and their affections, before their celestial glorification, will increase alike, and keep pace with each other, until they are perfected, when they will enjoy in fullness every attribute and affection which God himself enjoys, and will be like Him in all these things." Orson Pratt, "Celestial Marriage," *The Seer* 1 (October 1853): 158.

50. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses,* 18:259, October 8, 1876; italics added.

51. Edward Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge and Crandall, 1877), 193–94.

52. [Charles W. Penrose], "Women in Heaven," *Millennial Star* 64 (June 26, 1902): 410. This article was originally printed in the *Deseret News*; Penrose is presumed to have been the author because he was editor of the *Deseret News* at the time.

53. Hunter, *Will a Man Rob God?* 183–84. See also Milton R. Hunter, "God's Greatest Gift," *Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, 1964–1965* (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1965), 6–7, available online at http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=973.

54. Patricia T. Holland, "Filling the Measure of Our Creation," in Jeffrey R. Holland and Patricia T. Holland, *On Earth As It Is in Heaven* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 4.

55. M. Russell Ballard, *When Thou Art Converted: Continuing Our Search for Happiness* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 62.

56. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), 10.

57. Chieko N. Okazaki, *Sanctuary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 59.

58. Theodore M. Burton, "A Marriage to Last through Eternity," *Ensign* 17 (June 1987): 14.

59. Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel through the* Ages (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, 1945), 4. Hunter's work was written and published under the direction of the General Priesthood Committee of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

60. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Gospel Principles* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 19.

61. Chieko N. Okazaki, "Grace and Glory: Strength from Our Savior," in *Women in the Covenant of Grace: Talks Selected from the 1993 Women's Conference Sponsored by Brigham Young University and the Relief Society,* ed. Dawn Hall Anderson and Susette Fletcher Green (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 243–44.

62. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 204.

63. L[ula] L. Greene Richards, "A Thread of Thought," *Woman's Exponent* 29 (August 15 and September 1, 1900): 27.

64. Mark E. Petersen, "Be Ye an Exponent of Christ," in *Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year, 1965–1966* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1966), 4, available online at http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=533. Elder Neil L. Anderson recently shared a similar message: "We are sons and daughters

of heavenly parents who love us and who have sent us on a course to become more like Them." Neil L. Anderson, "Looking Back and Looking Forward," *New Era* 39 (August 2009): 2–4.

65. Thomas S. Monson, *An Invitation to Exaltation* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 4.

66. Snow wrote this poem while living in Nauvoo, and the text was published in *Times and Seasons* in 1845 under the title "My Father in Heaven." Snow, *Complete Poetry*, 313–14. Snow also published this as the first poem in her first published volume of poems under the title "Invocation or the Eternal Father and Mother." See Jill Mulvay Derr, "The Significance of 'O My Father' in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow," *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996–97): 84–126. This hymn is frequently cited for espousing the unique doctrine of heavenly parentage; Elder Bruce R. McConkie comments: "Implicit in the Christian verity that all men are the spirit children of an *Eternal Father* is the usually unspoken truth that they are also the offspring of an *Eternal Mother*. . . . This glorious truth of celestial parentage, including specifically both a Father and a Mother, is heralded forth by song in one of the greatest of Latter-day Saint hymns, *O My Father* by Eliza R. Snow." McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine,* 516–17; italics in original.

67. Ruth May Fox, "The Parable of the Ten Talents: A Dialogue," *Young Woman's Journal* 17 (April 1906): 172–75. At the time this story was composed, Fox was the first counselor in the general presidency of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association. She would later become its third president.

68. Fox chooses ten daughters to receive the ten talents. The ten daughters are ten biblical characters: Rachel, Leah, Rebecca, Sarah, Hagar, Deborah, Naomi, Hannah, Mary, and Ruth. The character traits bestowed upon each daughter generally correspond with the positive characteristic that manifests itself through the character as depicted in the biblical text. For instance, Sarah's laughter and hope is noted, Leah is blessed with patience, and Deborah exemplifies gratitude. Fox, "Parable of the Ten Talents," 172–75.

69. This is another instance where the Heavenly Mother is seen as responsible for the shaping of our talents and nature.

70. Fox, "Parable of the Ten Talents," 172.

71. Fox, "Parable of the Ten Talents," 173–75.

72. Orson F. Whitney, "Death," *Young Woman's Journal* 27 (April 1916): 200.

73. Harold B. Lee, *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee: Eleventh President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 20–21.

74. John Longden, "The Worth of Souls," *Relief Society Magazine* 44 (August 1957): 492, 494.

75. "The Twelve Apostles Today," *First Intermediate Sunday School Lessons: What It Means to Be a Latter-day Saint* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, 1944), 73.

76. As quoted in Smith, *I've a Mother There*, 57 n. 5. Smith references the work to Sister Eliza R. Snow's Trail Diary, which is held in the Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. The poem dates from May 2, 1847. Interestingly, the trail diary version of the poem is different from the published version, which claims the saints "Will, with "prayers and supplication, / Plead thy cause before the throne / Of the great Eternal Father, / Where

thy works of love are known." The original trail diary suggests it can be read as "mother," especially in light of the many other poems of Sister Eliza R. Snow that refer to heavenly parents, Heavenly Mother, or the exalted mother Eve. See Snow, *Complete Poetry*, 358.

77. Harold B. Lee, "The Influence and Responsibility of Women," *Relief Society Magazine* 51 (February 1964): 85. At this time, Harold B. Lee was serving as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and made these remarks during the October general Relief Society meeting.

78. Lee, "Influence and Responsibility of Women," 85, citing William Dudley Pelley, "Seven Minutes in Heaven," *Improvement Era* 32 (July 1029): 717; italics in original.

79. Okazaki, *Sanctuary*, 149; see also Neal A. Maxwell, *If Thou Endure It Well* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 129.

80. M. Russell Ballard, *Our Search for Happiness* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 70; The First Presidency, "Christmas Message to Children of the Church in All the World," *Friend* 4 (December 1974): 2–3. Sister Chieko Okazaki noted that our heavenly parents' "hearts yearn over [us] in joy and love. They want to give [us] all the treasures of eternity, and they hope steadfastly that [we] will be the kind of [people] who will want the riches of eternity." Okazaki, *Sanctuary*, 98. See also Spencer W. Kimball, "Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters," *Ensign* 8 (November 1978): 101–5; Paul H. Dunn, "The Cheering Section," *Ensign* 10 (June 1980): 4.

81. Jeffrey R. Holland, *However Long and Hard the Road* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 47. When this was published, Holland was a regional representative and president of BYU.

82. Okazaki, "Grace and Glory," 244.

83. John A. Widtsoe, "Looking toward the Temple," *Ensign* 2 (January 1972): 56.

84. Hunter, *Gospel through the Ages*, 44–45.

85. Dallin H. Oaks, "Fundamental Premises of Our Faith," *Deseret News*, 7 http://www.deseretnews.com/media/pdf/24370.pdf. This speech was given February 26, 2010, in Ames Courtroom, Harvard Law School. Elder Oaks had previously taught this principle in general conference: "Our theology begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them." Dallin H. Oaks, "Apostasy and Restoration," *Ensign* 25 (May 1995): 84.

86. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," *Ensign* 21 (November 1991): 100. See John 14:6: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." See also 3 Ne. 18:19: "Ye must always pray unto the Father in my name."

87. David C. Kimball, "Reflections on the Destiny of Man," *Millennial Star* 7 (June 15, 1846): 184; Nephi Anderson, "A Little Visit to Glory-Land," *Millennial Star* 67 (September 7, 1905): 562–63; Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 25.

88. "Oh, What Songs of the Heart" was first published in the *Juvenile Instructor* and then was included in the *Deseret Sunday School Song Book* in 1892. It is hymn number 286 in the current LDS hymnal. See Karen Lynn Davidson, *Our Latter-day Hymns: The Stories and the Messages* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 288–89.

Sister Matilda E. Teasdale also thought the reunion would be very joyous. She wrote, "How proud our parents are of a son who has filled an honorable mission!

with what joy they welcome him home! Do you not think that our heavenly parents have greater joy in welcoming home their children who have been faithful and true while on their earthly missions? I think so." M.[atilda] E. Teasdale, "To the Young Ladies of Zion," *Young Woman's Journal* 3 (July 1892): 472. Sister Matilda E. Picton Teasdale was the wife of LDS Apostle George Teasdale. She held responsible positions in the Relief Society and the YLMIA. At the organization of the Mexican Mission, she was sustained as president of the YLMIA of the mission, and as the secretary of the Relief Society of the mission. She was a frequent contributor to the first several volumes of the *Young Woman's Journal*.

89. Neal A. Maxwell, "The Women of God," *Ensign* 8 (May 1978): 11.

90. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses,* 14:241–42, August 20, 1871; George Q. Cannon, "Discourse by President George Q. Cannon," *Millennial Star* 51 (July 22, 1889): 450.

91. James E. Talmage, "Obtaining Divine Forgiveness," *Millennial Star* 54 (March 28, 1892): 194. Orson F. Whitney urged that "we must be begotten and born again, in the similitude of those other begettings and births, or we cannot regain the presence of our eternal Father and Mother." Orson F. Whitney, *Gospel Themes: A Treatise on Salient Features of "Mormonism"* (Salt Lake City, 1914), 65. Elder Hyrum G. Smith, as presiding patriarch of the Church, addressed the Saints and told them that their reunion with heavenly parents was conditional on their faithfulness. See Hyrum G. Smith, in *Ninety-fifth Semi-annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924), 16. Elder Robert L. Simpson (member of the First Quorum of the Seventy) taught how "the lofty goal of exaltation or living eternally again in the presence of our Heavenly Parents can only be achieved as a family unit, and only after that family has developed a Christlike pattern of living within a frame work of conformity to priesthood principles." Robert L. Simpson, "Q&A: Questions and Answers," *New Era* 7 (July 1977): 11. See also Norma B. Smith, "Remember, Enjoy, Prepare," *New Era* 10 (July 1980): 10–13; James T. Duke, "Marriage: Eternal Marriage," in Ludlow, *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* 2:859.

92. Teasdale, "To the Young Ladies," 472.

93. Elder James G. Duffin, in *The 79th Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1909), 24.

94. Charles Lowell Walker, *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, ed. A. Karl Larson and Katharine Miles Larson (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2:100. This journal entry is dated January 19, 1896.

95. Orson F. Whitney, "We Walk by Faith," *Improvement Era* 19 (May 1916): 609.

96. Spencer W. Kimball, "The True Way of Life and Salvation," *Ensign* 8 (May 1978): 6.

97. Glenn L. Pace, "The Divine Nature and Destiny of Women" (devotional address, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, March 9, 2010), available online at http://speeches.byu.edu/?act=viewitem&id=1886.