

Background and Methodology

1. “Our theology begins with heavenly parents, and our highest aspiration is to attain the fulness of eternal exaltation.”

Dallin H. Oaks, “No Other Gods,” *Ensign* (November 2013): 73.

Why don’t we talk about Her?

2. “I remember 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. 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.

#1: “This understanding is rooted in scriptural and prophetic teachings about the nature of God, our relationship to Deity, and the godly potential of men and women.”

3. Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 82:6; Romans 8:16-17; Moses 3:4-7; Doctrine and Covenants 132:19-20
4. “Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of Heavenly Parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, as an offspring of celestial parentage. . . . All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity.”
“The Origin and Destiny of Man,” *Improvement Era* (November 1909): 78.
5. “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.”
“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* (November 1995); 102; emphasis added.
6. “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.”
Gordon B. Hinckley, “Daughters of God,” *Ensign* (November 1991): 100.
7. “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.”
Harold B. Lee, “The Influence and Responsibility of Women,” *Relief Society Magazine*, no. 2 (February 1964); 85.

#2: “Prophets have taught that our heavenly parents work together for the salvation of the human family.”

8. “. . . [M]ormon leaders considered Heavenly Mother to be the wife of our Heavenly Father, an idea clearly explained by President George Q. Cannon when he said, ‘God is a married being, has a wife. . . . We are the offspring of Him and His wife.’ President Spencer W. Kimball taught that God “made women in the image of his wife-partner.’ 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 wifeness.’ Elder B.H. Roberts challenged the rest of Christianity to offer a doctrine that presents a ‘conception of the nobility of woman and of motherhood and of wifeness—placing her side by side with the Divine Father’ as does our doctrine of Heavenly Mother.”

David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, "A Mother There: A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven," *BYU Studies*, no. 1 (2011), 77.

9. "We are part of a divine plan designed by Heavenly Parents who love us."
Elder M. Russell Ballard, *When Thou Art Converted: Continuing Our Search for Happiness* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 62.
10. ". . . [E]ternal mothers and eternal daughters will be prepared to frame earths like ours and to people them in the same manner as we have been brought forth by our heavenly parents."
Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:259, October 8, 1876;.

#3: "[W]e have been given sufficient knowledge to appreciate the sacredness of this doctrine and to comprehend the divine pattern established for us as children of heavenly parents."

11. "In our Heavenly Father's great priesthood-endowed plan, men have the unique responsibility to administer the priesthood, but they are not the priesthood. Men and women have different but equally valued roles. Just as a woman cannot conceive a child without a man, so a man cannot fully exercise the power of the priesthood to establish an eternal family without a woman. In other words, in the eternal perspective, both the procreative power and the priesthood power are shared by husband and wife."
Elder M. Russell Ballard, "This is My Work and My Glory," *Ensign* 43 (May 2013), 19.
12. "Woman has filled a wonderful part in the march or progress, but most important of all the duties that have been laid upon the gentler sex, is the duty of bringing into the world and rearing, the children of our Heavenly Father."
President George Albert Smith, *Sharing the Gospel with Others*, p 139
13. "Motherhood consists of three principal attributes or qualities: namely (1) the power to bear, (2) the ability to rear, (3) the gift to love. . . . This ability and willingness properly to rear children, the gift of love, and eagerness, yes, longing to express it in soul development, make motherhood the noblest office or calling in the world."
President David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals*, 453
14. "When we speak of marriage as a partnership, let us speak of marriage as a full partnership. We do not want our LDS women to be silent partners or limited partners in that eternal assignment! Please be a contributing and full partner."
President Spencer W. Kimball, "Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters," *Ensign* (November 1978): 106.
15. "The Lord organized the whole program in the beginning with a father who procreates, provides, and loves and directs, and a mother who conceives and bears and nurtures and feeds and trains. The Lord could have organized it otherwise but chose to have a unit with responsibility and purposeful associations where children train and discipline each other and come to love, honor, and appreciate each other. The family is the great plan of life as conceived and organized by our Father in Heaven."
President Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign* (July 1973): 15.
16. "A mother's role is also God-ordained. Mothers are to conceive, bear, nourish, love, and train. They are to be helpmates, and are to counsel with their husbands. There is no inequality between the sexes in God's plan. It is a matter of division of responsibility. . . . When parents, in companionship, love, and unity, fulfill their heaven-imposed responsibility and children respond with love and obedience, great joy is the result."
President Ezra Taft Benson, *Ensign*, May 1984, 6.
17. "[F]or they are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment, and to fulfil the promise which was given by my Father before the foundation of the world, and for their exaltation in the eternal worlds, that they may bear the souls of men; for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified."
Doctrine and Covenants 132:63

CONCLUSION:

18. “Women are endowed with special traits and attributes that come trailing down through eternity from a divine mother. Young women have special God-given feelings about charity, love, and obedience. Coarseness and vulgarity are contrary to their natures. They have a modifying, softening influence on young men. Young women were not foreordained to do what priesthood holders do. Theirs is a sacred, God-given role, and the traits they received from Heavenly Mother are equally as important as those given to the young men.

“Sometimes misguided women or men direct our youth away from their divinely appointed role. Worlds without end, men will never be able to bear children. Every young woman may be a procreator with God and carry a little one under her breast either in this life or in the eternal worlds. Motherhood is a wonderful, priceless blessing no matter what all the world may say. Priesthood ordination is a blessing to men. There are serious consequences when either motherhood or priesthood is abused or laid aside.”

Vaughn J. Featherstone, “A Champion of Youth,” *Ensign* (November 1987)

19. “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 in front of you, your divine nature and destiny.”

Glenn L. Pace, “The Divine Nature and Destiny of Women” (devotional address, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, March 9, 2010).

Mother in Heaven

Gospel Topics Essay, accessed on August 1, 2017 (<https://www.lds.org/topics/mother-in-heaven?lang=eng>)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that all human beings, male and female, are beloved spirit children of heavenly parents, a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother. This understanding is rooted in scriptural and prophetic teachings about the nature of God, our relationship to Deity, and the godly potential of men and women.¹ The doctrine of a Heavenly Mother is a cherished and distinctive belief among Latter-day Saints.²

While there is no record of a formal revelation to Joseph Smith on this doctrine, some early Latter-day Saint women recalled that he personally taught them about a Mother in Heaven.³ The earliest published references to the doctrine appeared shortly after Joseph Smith’s death in 1844, in documents written by his close associates.⁴ The most notable expression of the idea is found in a poem by Eliza R. Snow, entitled “My Father in Heaven” and now known as the hymn “O My Father.” This text declares: “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.”⁵

Subsequent Church leaders have affirmed the existence of a Mother in Heaven. In 1909, the First Presidency taught that “all men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity.”⁶ Susa Young Gates, a prominent leader in the Church, wrote in 1920 that Joseph Smith’s visions and teachings revealed the truth that “the divine Mother, [is] side by side with the divine Father.”⁷ And in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” issued in 1995, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declared, “Each [person] is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny.”⁸

Prophets have taught that our heavenly parents work together for the salvation of the human family. “We are part of a divine plan designed by Heavenly Parents who love us,” taught Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.⁹ President Harold B. Lee stated, “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."¹⁰

Latter-day Saints direct their worship to Heavenly Father, in the name of Christ, and do not pray to Heavenly Mother. In this, they follow the pattern set by Jesus Christ, who taught His disciples to "always pray unto the Father in my name."¹¹ Latter-day Saints are taught to pray to Heavenly Father, but as President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "The fact that we do not pray to our Mother in Heaven in no way belittles or denigrates her."¹² Indeed, as Elder Rudger Clawson wrote, "We honor woman when we acknowledge Godhood in her eternal Prototype."¹³

As with many other truths of the gospel, our present knowledge about a Mother in Heaven is limited. Nevertheless, we have been given sufficient knowledge to appreciate the sacredness of this doctrine and to comprehend the divine pattern established for us as children of heavenly parents. Latter-day Saints believe that this pattern is reflected in Paul's statement that "neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."¹⁴ Men and women cannot be exalted without each other. Just as we have a Father in Heaven, we have a Mother in Heaven. As Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said, "Our theology begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them."¹⁵

NOTES

1. Genesis 1:26–27; Moses 3:4–7; Romans 8:16–17; Psalm 82:6; Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20.
2. See "Becoming Like God"; see also Elaine Anderson Cannon, "Mother in Heaven," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 5 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:961. For an extensive survey of these teachings, see David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, "A Mother There': A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven," *BYU Studies* 50, no. 1 (2011): 70–97.
3. Zina Diantha Huntington Young recalled that when her mother died in 1839, Joseph Smith consoled her by telling her that in heaven she would see her own mother again and become acquainted with her eternal Mother. (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], 15–16.)
4. See W. W. Phelps, "Come to Me," in "Poetry, for the Times and Seasons," *Times and Seasons* 6 (Jan. 15, 1845): 783.
5. "My Father in Heaven," in "Poetry, for the Times and Seasons," *Times and Seasons* 6 (Nov. 15, 1845): 1039; "O My Father," *Hymns*, no. 292; see also 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.
6. "The Origin of Man," *Improvement Era* 13, no. 1 (Nov. 1909): 78.
7. "The Vision Beautiful," *Improvement Era* 23, no. 6 (Apr. 1920): 542. At this time, Gates was the recording secretary of the Relief Society general presidency.
8. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
9. M. Russell Ballard, *When Thou Art Converted: Continuing Our Search for Happiness* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2001), 62.
10. Harold B. Lee, "The Influence and Responsibility of Women," *Relief Society Magazine* 51, no. 2 (Feb. 1964): 85.
11. 3 Nephi 18:19–21; Matthew 6:6–9; John 17:1, 5, 21, 24–25; see also Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8; and 3 Nephi 13:9; 17:15.
12. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 100.
13. "Our Mother in Heaven," *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 72, no. 39 (Sept. 29, 1910): 620. Rudger Clawson was the editor of the periodical and likely author of this editorial.
14. 1 Corinthians 11:11.
15. Dallin H. Oaks, "Apostasy and Restoration," *Ensign*, May 1995, 84.

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