

THE ◊ MORMON ◊ CONCEPT ◊ OF ◊ A



MOTHER ◊ IN ◊ HEAVEN ◊

Linda Wilcox

Editors' Note

This paper and response were delivered at SUNSTONE's 1980 Mormon Theological Symposium

The idea of a Mother in Heaven is a shadowy and elusive one floating around the edges of Mormon consciousness. Mormons who grow up singing "O My Father" are familiar with the concept of a Heavenly Mother, but few hear much else about her. She exists, apparently, but has not been very evident in Mormon meetings or writings, and little if any "theology" has been developed to elucidate her nature and characterize our relationship to her.

While nearly all world religions have had female divinities and feminine symbolism, the god of western Judeo-Christian culture and scripture has been almost unremittingly masculine.¹ Still, the idea of a heavenly mother or a female counterpart to the male father-god is not unknown in Christianity. Recently discovered gnostic texts from the first century after Christ reveal doctrinal teachings about a divine Mother as well as Father. In some texts God is conceived of as a dyad, both male and female. There is also a body of writings which identifies the divine Mother as the Holy Spirit, the third member of

MOTHER IN HEAVEN

Here is a Heavenly Mother who is a competent, productive female figure who is also a sexual being.

the Trinity, which then becomes a family group—the Father, Mother, and Son.²

Christianity has also had the elevation of Mary in Catholicism. From first being the Mother of God, Mary eventually became the mother of everyone as she took on a mediating function and became a divine presence to whom prayers could be addressed. This feminization of the divine made possible some further theological developments such as the fourteenth-century thought of Dame Julian of Norwich, who wrote about the Motherhood as well as Fatherhood of God and developed a symbolism of Christ as Mother.³

The nineteenth-century American milieu from which Mormonism sprang had some prototypes for a female deity as well. Ann Lee had proclaimed herself as the feminine incarnation of the Messiah, as Christ had been the male incarnation—a necessary balance in her system since she described a god which was both male and female, Father and Mother. The Father-Mother god of the Shakers and Christian Scientists included both sexes in a form of divine androgyny, as in this prayer by Mary Baker Eddy:

Father-Mother Gōd
Loving Me
Guard me while I sleep
Guide my little feet up to Thee.⁴

By the end of the century Elizabeth Cady Stanton in her *Woman's Bible* was explaining Genesis 1:26-28 ("And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . .") as implying the "simultaneous creation of both sexes, in the image of God. It is evident from the language," she writes, "that the masculine and feminine elements were equally represented" in the Godhead which planned the peopling of the earth. To her, as in the gnostic texts, a trinity of Father, Mother and Son was more rational, and she called for "the recognition by the rising generation of an ideal Heavenly Mother, to whom their prayers should be addressed, as well as to a Father."⁵

Half a century before Mrs. Stanton's *Woman's Bible* the Mormon religion had begun to develop a doctrine of just such a Heavenly Mother—a glorified goddess, spouse to an actual Heavenly Father, and therefore the literal mother of our spirits. While the need for a divine feminine element in religion is perhaps universal, the form it took in Mormonism was particularly well suited to other aspects of Mormon theology. The Mother in Heaven concept was a logical and natural extension of a theology which posited both an anthropomorphic God who had once been a man and the possibility of eternal procreation of spirit children.

Origins in Mormonism

The origins of the Heavenly Mother concept in Mor-

monism are shadowy. The best known exposition is, of course, Eliza R. Snow's poem, "O My Father," or—the title it was known by earlier—"Invocation, or the Eternal Father and Mother." When the poem was first published in the *Times and Seasons* it carried the notation, "City of Joseph, Oct. 1845," but the actual date of composition is not known. (It does not appear in Eliza's notebook/diary for the years 1842-1844.)⁶

Although President Wilford Woodruff gave Eliza R. Snow credit for originating the idea—"That hymn is a revelation, though it was given unto us by a woman."⁷—it is more likely that Joseph Smith was the first to expound the doctrine of a Mother in Heaven. Joseph F. Smith claimed that God revealed that principle ('that we have a mother as well as a father in heaven') to Joseph Smith; Joseph Smith revealed it to Eliza Snow Smith, his wife; and Eliza Snow was inspired, being a poet, to put it into verse.⁸

Other incidents tend to confirm this latter view. Susa Young Gates told of Joseph's consoling Zina Diantha Huntington on the death of her mother in 1839 by telling her that not only would she know her mother again on the other side, but, "More than that, you will meet and become acquainted with your eternal Mother, the wife of your Father in Heaven." Susa went on to say that about this same time Eliza R. Snow "learned the same glorious truth from the same inspired lips" and was then moved to put this truth into verse.⁹ Since Zina Huntington and Eliza were close friends as well, it was also a likely possibility that Zina might have spoken of this idea to Eliza.¹⁰

Women were not the only ones to have had some acquaintance with the idea of a Mother in Heaven during the lifetime of Joseph Smith. There is a third-hand account of an experience related by Zebedee Coltrin:

One day the Prophet Joseph asked him and Sidney Rigdon to accompany him into the woods to pray. When they had reached a secluded spot Joseph laid down on his back and stretched out his arms. He told the brethren to lie one on each arm, and then shut their eyes. After they had prayed he told them to open their eyes. They did so and saw a brilliant light surrounding a pedestal which seemed to rest on the earth. They closed their eyes and again prayed. They then saw, on opening them, the Father seated upon a throne; they prayed again and on looking saw the Mother also; after praying and looking the fourth time they saw the Savior added to the group.¹¹

Church leaders of the nineteenth century, though they did not speak much about a Mother in Heaven, seemed to accept the idea as a commonsense one, that for God to be a father implied the existence of a mother as well. Brigham Young said that God "created man, as we create our children; for there is no other process of creation in heaven, on the earth, in the earth, or under the earth, or in all the eternities, that is, that were, or that ever will be"¹²—an indirect reference to the necessity of a

mother for the process of creation. He also quoted Heber C. Kimball's recollection of Joseph Smith's saying "that he would not worship a God who had not a Father; and I do not know that he would if he had not a mother; the one would be as absurd as the other."¹³

Erastus Snow also used indirect inference in explaining the logic of the Heavenly Mother concept. "Now, it is not said in so many words in the Scriptures, that we have a Mother in heaven as well as a Father," he admitted. "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."¹⁴

Snow was somewhat distinct from other Mormon leaders in that he described God as a unity of male and female elements, much like the Shakers' Father-Mother God.

"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, and anything pertaining to the creation and organization of man upon the earth, 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, nor ever will be, a God in any other way . . . There never was a God, and there never will be in all eternities, except they are made of these two component parts; a man and a woman; the male and the female.¹⁵

To Erastus Snow, God was not a male personage, with a Heavenly Mother being a second divine personage; both of them together constituted God.

This development of theology by means of inference and commonsense extension of ordinary earth-life experience continued on into the twentieth century. In fact, it is the primary approach taken by most of those who have made mention of a Mother in Heaven. Bruce R. McConkie in *Mormon Doctrine*, for example, says that "An exalted and glorified Man of Holiness (Moses 6:57) could not be a Father unless a Woman of like glory, perfection, and holiness was associated with him as a Mother. The begetting of children makes a man a father and a woman a mother whether we are dealing with man in his mortal or immortal state."¹⁶

One reason why little theology was developed about a Heavenly Mother is that the scriptural basis for the doctrine was very slim. But Joseph Fielding Smith noted that "the fact that there is no reference to a mother in heaven either in the Bible, Book of Mormon or Doctrine and Covenants, is not sufficient proof that no such thing as a mother did exist there."¹⁷ One possible reason for this gap in the scriptures is offered by a twentieth-century



Seminary teacher: "Considering the way man has profaned the name of God, the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ, is it any wonder that the name of our Mother in Heaven has been withheld, not to mention the fact that the mention of Her is practically nil in scripture?"¹⁸

The Twentieth Century

In looking now at statements by Church leaders in the twentieth century, I should like to zero in briefly on three time periods. (The examples presented here are not exhaustive, and I suspect that similar ideas on the subject turn up at other times throughout the century.) The three periods are: the first decade of the century, the 1920s and 1930s, and finally the more recent period of the 1960s and 1970s, and I would like to take note of some themes which are apparent in these time periods—themes which may be illustrative of developments in the larger society as well.

For example, right after the turn of the century one noticeable thread which ran through several comments about the Mother in Heaven was an association of that doctrine with the movement for women's rights, a major issue in the last years of the nineteenth century, especially in Utah. James E. Talmage in discussing the status and mission of women spoke of the early granting of the franchise to women in Utah and the Mormon church's claim that woman is man's equal. In this context he then went on to say,

The Church is bold enough to go so far as to declare that man has an Eternal Mother in the Heavens as well as an Eternal Father, and in the same sense "we look upon woman as a being, essential in every particular to the carrying out of God's purposes in respect to mankind."¹⁹

An article in the *Deseret News* noted that the truthfulness of the doctrine of a Mother in Heaven would eventually be accepted by the world—that "it is a truth from which, when fully realized, the perfect 'emancipation' and en-

nobling of woman will result."²⁰ To many, the concept of a Mother in Heaven was a fitting expression of a larger movement which aimed at raising the status of women and expanding their rights and opportunities.

Another theme, evident elsewhere in American thought as well as in Mormonism, was the yearning for a female divinity—the need for a nurturing presence in the universe. A Mother in Heaven thus exemplified and embodied all those maternal qualities which men had experienced as so warm and soul-filling in their own mothers (or which they perhaps had not experienced and so now desperately wanted) and which were generally absent in a male god that perhaps reflected a stern, closed-in image of Victorian manhood. A national article excerpted in the *Deseret News* said that the world was coming to accept the idea of a Mother in Heaven. It spoke of the tendency for human beings to crave, especially in times of grief and anguish, the tenderness, gentleness, and sympathy of a mother-figure which must in some way "be resident in the Divine Being."²¹ And in the *Millennial Star* an article noted how not only small children but also adults need and want a mother figure as a divine personage. "The heart of man craves this faith and has from time immemorial demanded the deification of woman."²²

But also in that first decade the Mormon church's teaching of the Mother in Heaven doctrine was criticized and challenged by the Salt Lake Ministerial Association in 1907 as being unchristian.²³ B.H. Roberts responded by claiming that the ministers were inconsistent. They object to the idea of Jesus having a literal Heavenly Father, he said, but then they also complain because "we believe that we have for our spirits a heavenly mother as well as a heavenly father!"

Now observe the peculiar position of these critics: It is all right for Jesus to have a mother; but it is all wrong for him to have a father. On the other hand, it is all right for men's spirits to have a Father in heaven, but our reviewers object to our doctrine of their having a mother there.²⁴

Two years later the First Presidency of the Mormon Church issued a statement entitled "The Origin of Man." Although much of this message was concerned with explicating a Mormon view of man's (and woman's) earthly origins, the statement also took up the question of man's (and woman's) spiritual beginnings as well. While couching the doctrine partially in abstract generalities such as that "man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents," the statement also made a clear and explicit reference to a Mother in Heaven. "All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother," it said, "and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity."²⁵ By 1909, then, if not before, the Mother in Heaven was an official part of Mormon belief. Joseph Fielding Smith described this as one of (presumably several) "official and authoritative statements" about this doctrine.²⁶

Everlasting Motherhood

In the 1920s and 1930s there seemed to be an emphasis on the idea of "eternal" motherhood or "everlasting" motherhood, with several sermons or articles having titles of this sort or dealing with this theme. Somehow it seemed important to emphasize that motherhood was as

ongoing and eternal as was godhood. Joseph A. Widtsoe, for example, found a "radiant warmth" in the

thought that among the exalted beings in the world to come we shall find a mother who possesses the attributes of Godhood.

Such conceptions raise motherhood to a high position. They explain the generous provision made for women in the Church of Christ. To be a mother is to engage in the eternal work of God.²⁷

Melvin J. Ballard carried on the theme of everlasting motherhood when he noted that "motherhood is eternal with Godhood, and there is no such thing as eternal or endless life without the eternal and endless continuation of motherhood." With more fervor than accuracy, Ballard claimed that there was not one single life form on earth without a mother—hence "there is no life in the realms that are above and beyond us, unless there also is a mother." Perhaps unaware of other strains of Christian thought—not to mention other cultures and religions which worshiped female deities—Ballard called the Mother in Heaven concept a "startling doctrine" which was "so far as I know, never taught before in the history of the world." He also emphasized the noble, goddess-like aspects of the Heavenly Mother. She stands side by side with the Heavenly Father "in all her glory, a glory like unto his . . . a companion, the Mother of his children." She is "a glorified, exalted, ennobled Mother."²⁸

German Ellsworth, who served as mission president of the Northern States, also stressed the theme of "Eternal Motherhood" and noted that finally, after eighty years, the world was coming to accept the doctrine that if we had a heavenly father we must have had a heavenly mother as well. Ellsworth linked this doctrine specifically to the "true mission of women" on the earth, which was to be mothers. In particular, "the women of Zion can rejoice and take heart in the great calling given to them, in being privileged to be the earthly mothers of the elect sons of our Heavenly Father." The Mother in Heaven concept seems important to Ellsworth mainly as a role model for women, who were to help achieve the (by then dying) Progressive ideal by wanting to become mothers and seeking "to build up a better race—to successfully do their part in peopling the earth with a noble and intelligent class of citizens."²⁹ These examples share an attempt to raise the status of the mothering role, or of women specifically as mothers, by pointing out that the Mother in Heaven role is as important and eternal as that of God.

In more recent times we can see some widening out, with a greater variety of images presented by General Authorities who speak about a Mother in Heaven. Joseph Fielding Smith, much like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, quotes Genesis 1:26—"Let us make man in our image after our likeness" (italics his)—and suggests, "Is it not feasible to believe that female spirits were created in the image of a 'Mother in Heaven'?"³⁰ His emphasis implies that a female goddess was involved in the planning and decision making, was part of whatever group of exalted beings decided to create earthly men and women.

H. Burke Peterson in 1974 emphasized the Heavenly Mother's role as producer of spirit offspring. In asking Church members to count the cost of a mother working outside the home, he warned about the danger of be-

The Mother in Heaven was a fitting expression of a larger movement which aimed at raising the status of women.



coming "a mother whose energy is so sapped that she is sometimes neglecting her call from the Lord, a call that will one day prepare her to become an eternal mother—a cocreator of spiritual offspring."³¹ One supposes that by "her call" Brother Peterson means the care of her children and is suggesting that the complex responsibility of nurturing and guiding one's children is the most valuable preparation for eventually becoming an exalted goddess-mother.

Two years ago President Spencer W. Kimball expressed a view of the Mother in Heaven as "the ultimate in maternal modesty" and "restrained, queenly elegance." He also emphasized her great influence on us: "Knowing how profoundly our mortal mothers have shaped us here," he said, "do we suppose her influence on us as individuals to be less if we live so as to return there?"³² Here we have maternal nurturing attributes and also a recognition of an exalted goddess quality in the Mother in Heaven.

At the same conference Neal A. Maxwell presented this version of the role and activities of our Heavenly Mother:

When we return to our real home, it will be with the "mutual approbation" of those who reign in the "royal courts on high." There we will find beauty such as mortal "eye hath not seen;" we will hear sounds of surpassing music which mortal "ear hath not heard." Could such a regal homecoming be possible without the anticipatory arrangements of a Heavenly Mother?³³

One of a Heavenly Mother's duties, it seems, might be to provide an aesthetically pleasing environment with sights and sounds of unimaginable glory to welcome her children home.

"We honor woman when we acknowledge Godhood in her eternal Prototype," says an article in the *Millennial Star*.³⁴ This brief survey of some of the images which have been expressed about a less-than-well-defined entity suggest that one's concept of a Mother in Heaven may reflect one's views about real women and their roles. Those who see women as basically baby factories might tend to emphasize the feminine deity's role as producer of spirit children. Those who consider women to be more

refined and spiritual than men (on a pedestal, so to speak) may emphasize the Heavenly Mother's nobility and queenly attributes—and so forth.

Grass-Roots Attention

What seems to be happening currently as far as development of the Mother in Heaven concept is concerned is that there is an increasing awareness of and attention to the idea at the grass-roots level in the Church—particularly among women, and in informal ways. A sampling of the poems submitted to the last Eliza R. Snow Poetry Contest sponsored by the Relief Society illustrates one strain of such thought.

In the memory of one of the judges, this year was the first in which there were several poems submitted dealing with the subject of a Heavenly Mother. Collectively, these poems picture a Mother in Heaven who is the quintessence of femininity and nurturing motherhood. She has a "radiant face," a "soft firm voice." She smiles a lot, although often her "gentle eyes fill with tears." Her spirit children learn wisdom at her knee. She gives tender goodbye kisses to her daughters as they leave for their earth missions. She passes out advice to set goals, overcome discouragement, take time to appreciate beauty—and in times of despair to call upon one's Heavenly Father and Elder Brother for help and comfort.

She is "the Father's cherished half" who "surely must merit His eternal love." She is described as a "Goddess, a Priestess, and a loving companion" and enough of a noble presence in the celestial realms that perhaps "the heavenly flowers bend with adoration" and "the animals await your caress."

There is speculation in these poems about the Mother in Heaven's role in sending spirit children to earth. One poem has her announcing and justifying the departure times for various spirits. Another, in contrast, has a daughter running to tell the Mother the news of her impending departure. There is also speculation about what the Mother in Heaven's previous earth-life experience was like—and the supposition that it was very much like our own.

Also evident in these poems is a vague sense of not really knowing enough to feel as close as one would like to the Heavenly Mother—wondering about her name and how we might react to it were we to know it, transferring the Father's attributes to her, yet realizing that she can only be apprehended "darkly"—and a resultant feeling of unease and incompleteness.

Although the content and style of these poems is what might be considered traditional or conventional as regards the Mother in Heaven role, the poems themselves are indicative of a wider interest in the concept of a Heavenly Mother among mainstream Church members than has perhaps been usual in the course of Mormon church history.³⁵

A recent cartoon shows a wife asking her husband, "What do you think Heavenly Mother's attitudes are about polygamy, Frank?" to which the husband responds, "Which Heavenly Mother?" A question to which there is as yet no definitive answer—but much speculation—is whether there is more than one Mother in Heaven. The Mormon church's doctrinal commitment to plural marriage as well as the exigencies of producing at least billions of spirit children suggest the probability—some believe necessity—of more than one Mother in Heaven. A Department of Seminaries and Institutes student manual hints at the possibility of multiple heavenly mothers. In a diagram entitled "Becoming a Spirit Child of Heavenly Parents," the individual person (male) is depicted with upward lines to his heavenly parents, the one parent labeled "Heavenly Father" (caps), the other labeled "A heavenly mother" (lower case).³⁶

Lately there has also been increased discussion and speculation about how we can or do relate to our Heavenly Mother (or possibly mothers?). Orson Pratt taught that we are not to worship the mother of our spirits although we worship the father, "for the Father of our spirit is the head of His household, and His wives and children are required to yield the most perfect obedience to their great Head. It is lawful for the children to worship the King of heaven, but not the 'Queen of heaven.'" Pratt went on to point out that "Jesus prayed to His Father, and taught His disciples to do likewise; but we are nowhere taught that Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Mother."³⁷ Rudger Clawson, however, pointed out that men as well as women and children crave a Mother in Heaven to worship and "yearn to adore her." He said, "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."³⁸ Currently there is no encouragement on the part of Mormon church leaders to pray to a Heavenly Mother, and in fact even active discouragement. Whether one can worship or adore her without the mechanism of prayer and/or meditation is an open question.

Still, there has been recently a more evident desire to reach out to Mother in Heaven in some way. A letter to the editor of *Dialogue* about five years ago told of a Mormon woman spending preparatory time in meditation, kneeling privately to pray, and then calling out for the first time, "Mother in Heaven. I believe you may exist. Are you there? We know the Father and the Son, but why have you not revealed yourself?"

"And a wondrous voice clearly answered, 'Good daughter. Until this time, no one asked. The men have not thought to ask.'"³⁹

More women are now wondering and asking. Recently in *Exponent II* Lisa Bolin Hawkins expressed in a poem a prayerful reaching out to ask Heavenly Mother to reveal herself and provide women with an adequate role model of goddesshood:

Another Prayer

Why are you silent, Mother? How can I
Become a goddess when the patterns here
Are those of gods? I struggle, and I try
To mold my womanself to something near
Their goodness. I need you, who gave me birth
In your own image, to reveal your ways:
A rich example of Thy daughters' worth;
Pillar of Womanhood to guide our days;
Fire of power and grace to guide my night
When I am lost.
My brothers question me,
And wonder why I seek this added light.
No one can answer all my pain but Thee.
Ordain me to my womanhood, and share
The light that Queens and Priestesses must bear.⁴⁰

This poem expresses the need which a Heavenly Mother can fill that a male deity cannot and suggests attributes of both nurturance and spiritual power, as in the concept of "ordaining" her daughters and sharing special spiritual light with them.

Other current expressions extend the image of a Heavenly Mother even further. Linda Sillitoe's recent poem is a good example:

Song of Creation

Who made the world, my child?
Father made the rain
silver and forever.
Mother's hand
drew riverbeds and hollowed seas,
drew riverbeds and hollowed seas
to bring the rain home.
Father bridled winds, my child,
to keep the world new.
Mother clashed
fire free from stones
and breathed it strong and dancing,
and breathed it strong and dancing
the color of her hair.
He armed the thunderclouds
rolled out of heaven;
Her fingers flickered
hummingbirds
weaving the delicate white snow,
weaving the delicate white snow;
a waterfall of flowers.
And if you live long, my child,
you'll see snow burst
from thunderclouds
and lightning in the snow;
listen to Mother and Father laughing,
listen to Mother and Father laughing
behind the locked door.⁴¹

Here is a Heavenly Mother who is a full partner and co-creator with the Father (of something other than babies), making riverbeds and seas for the rain he makes, creating

THE MORMON CONCEPT OF A
MOTHER
 IN HEAVEN

Also evident is a vague sense of not really knowing enough to feel as close as one would like to the Heavenly Mother.

fire and other elements on an equal basis with him—a competent, productive female figure who is also a sexual being, even outside of the context of bearing spirit children. Images such as this of a Heavenly Mother, reflecting strength, competence, sexuality, and mutuality, are still rare.

So—what can be said about Mormon theology concerning a Heavenly Mother? At present the nineteenth-century generalized image of a female counterpart to a literal male Father God is receiving increased attention and expansion and is becoming more personalized and individualized. The widening “theology” which is developing is more of a “folk” or at least speculative theology rather than systematic development by theologians or definitive pronouncements coming from ecclesiastical leaders of the Church. For the moment, Mother in Heaven can be almost whatever an individual Mormon envisions her to be. Perhaps ironically, we thus set her up, despite herself, to fill the most basic maternal role of all—that of meeting the deepest needs of her children, whatever they might be.

Notes

1. There are a few instances of feminine imagery of God in Christian scripture, such as Isaiah 66:12-13—“Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.” and Matthew 23:37—“... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” See also Numbers 11:10-15 and Psalms 91:4. These were pointed out to me by Melodie Moench Charles.
2. See Elaine H. Pagels, “What Became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity,” *Signs* (Winter 1976), pp. 293-303.
3. See “Dame Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe: Divine Motherhood and Human Sisterhood,” in Elizabeth Clark and Herbert Richardson, *Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 102-112.
4. Clark and Richardson, p. 164.
5. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, pt. 1, 1895-98; reprinted by Arno Press, New York, 1972, in Clark and Richardson, p. 218.
6. Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, “The Eliza Enigma: The Life and Legend of Eliza R. Snow,” *Charles Redd Monographs on Western History* 6, (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), p. 34; *Times and Seasons* 6 (Nov. 15, 1845), p. 1039.
7. Wilford Woodruff, “Discourse,” *Millennial Star* 56 (April 1894), p. 229 - delivered Oct. 8, 1893.
8. Joseph F. Smith, “Discourse,” *Deseret Evening News*, Feb. 9, 1895. I am indebted to Maureen Ursenbach Beecher for much information regarding Eliza R. Snow and the Mother in Heaven doctrine.
9. Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1911), pp. 15-16.
10. The debate has continued, however. B.H. Roberts spoke of “that splendid hymn of ours on heavenly motherhood, the great throbbing hunger of woman's soul, and which was given to this world through the inspired mind of Eliza R. Snow.” (Perhaps, however, he was referring only to the poem, not the doctrine?) [“Answer to Ministerial Association Review,” delivered at two meetings of M.I.A. Conference, June 9, 1907 (Salt Lake City, 1907), p. 18.] Melvin J. Ballard, however, considered the Mother in Heaven concept a revelation given by Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith. [Mother's Day address in Tabernacle, May 8, 1921, *Journal History*, same date, pp. 1-3.]

Milton R. Hunter in 1945 claimed that the doctrine of a Mother in Heaven originated with Joseph Smith, ascribing to him revelations by which “a more complete understanding of man—especially regarding his personal relationship to Deity—was received than could be found in all of the holy scriptures combined.” Among such new understandings was the “stupendous truth of the existence of a Heavenly Mother” and the “complete realization that we are the offspring of Heavenly Parents.” Hunter said that these ideas became “established facts in Mormon theology” and an “integral part of Mormon philosophy.” [Milton R. Hunter, *The Gospel Through the Ages* (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, Inc., 1945), pp. 98-99.]

11. Abraham H. Cannon Journal, Aug. 25, 1980, LDS Church Archives.
12. *Journal of Discourses* 11:122, June 18, 1865.
13. *Journal of Discourses* 9:286, Feb. 23, 1862.
14. *Journal of Discourses* 26:214, May 31, 1885.
15. *Journal of Discourses* 19:269-270, March 3, 1878.
16. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), p. 516.
17. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1960), p. 142.
18. Melvin R. Brooks, *LDS Reference Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), pp. 309-310.
19. James E. Talmage, speech in Tabernacle, Sunday, April 27, 1902, in *Deseret News*, April 28, 1902.
20. “The Divine Feminine,” *Deseret News*, Feb. 4, 1905.
21. George Barlow, “On the Dual Nature of Deity,” *Contemporary Review* 87 (January 1905), p. 83, excerpted in “The Divine Feminine,” *Deseret News*, Feb. 4, 1905.
22. “Our Mother in Heaven,” *Millennial Star* 72 (September 29, 1910), p. 619.
23. “Ministerial Association's Review of Mormon Address to the World,” from text in the *Salt Lake Herald*, June 4, 1907 (Salt Lake City, 1907), p. 8.
24. B.H. Roberts, “Answer to Ministerial Association Review,” delivered at two meetings of M.I.A. Conference, June 9, 1907 (Salt Lake City, 1907), pp. 18-19.
25. First Presidency (Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, Anthon H. Lund). “The Origin of Man,” *Improvement Era* 13 (November 1909), p. 80.
26. Joseph Fielding Smith, “Mothers in Israel,” address delivered at general session of Relief Society Annual Conference, Sept. 30, 1970, *Relief Society Magazine* 57 (December 1970), p. 884.
27. John A. Widtsoe, “Everlasting Motherhood,” *Millennial Star* 90 (May 10, 1928), p. 298.
28. Melvin J. Ballard, address in Tabernacle, May 8, 1921, *Journal History*, same date, pp. 1-3.
29. German E. Ellsworth, “Eternal Motherhood,” *Deseret News*, May 7, 1932, *Journal History*, same date p. 5.
30. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1960), p. 144.
31. H. Burke Peterson, General Conference address, April 5, 1974, *Ensign* (May 1974), p. 32.
32. Spencer W. Kimball, General Conference address, April 1, 1978, *Ensign* (May 1978), p. 11.
33. Neal A. Maxwell, General Conference address, April 1, 1978, *Ensign* (May 1978), p. 11.
34. “Our Mother in Heaven,” *Millennial Star* 72 (September 29, 1910), p. 620.
35. Direct quotes are from the following poems, Sydney Lee Harmer, “My Heavenly Mother;” Nancy Anderson, “Heavenly Mother;” Janet E. Nichols, “The Farewell.” General comments are based on the above poems plus two others—Lynda Jacobs Gardner, “My Heavenly Mother,” and Patricia Michell Sylvestre, “My Mother in Heaven.”
36. LDS Church Department of Seminaries and Institutes, *Book of Mormon Student Manual* (college level), vol. 1, p. 218.
37. Orson Pratt, *The Seer* 1 (October 1853), p. 159.
38. Rudger Clawson was the editor and publisher at the time and so was probably responsible for the unsigned article, “Our Mother in Heaven,” *Millennial Star* 72 (September 29, 1910), pp. 619-620.
39. *Dialogue* 7 (Autumn 1974), p. 7.
40. *Exponent II* 6 (Winter 1980), p. 16.
41. *Dialogue* 12 (Winter 1979), p. 95.

LINDA WILCOX received an MA in history from Stanford