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# Family in the Church Latter-day Saint Doctrine Regarding Family and Gender

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FAMILY IN THE CHURCH  
LATTER-DAY SAINT DOCTRINE REGARDING FAMILY AND GENDER

by

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Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Criminology

Eastern Michigan University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Sociology with a concentration in Family

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Ypsilanti, Michigan

## Dedication

To Richard Bennett,

- for assuming that I would pursue graduate school

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## Abstract

To discover the compatibility of traditional Christianity and mainstream feminism, a content analysis was performed on confirmed sources of doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Through systematic reading and identifying themes of God and the Bible, gender role separation, patriarchy, or domestic violence, an analysis of pertinent feminist criticisms was performed. Latter-day Saint doctrine of family includes the following statements: (1) there is a Heavenly Mother as a divine partner to Heavenly Father, (2) the Bible contains errors regarding respect toward women, (3) women need to be active in education, home, and community, (4) men should honor wives and children, (5) all humans are children of God with no one being treated subordinately, and (6) abuse is never appropriate or justified. Although these doctrines do not perfectly align with feminist thought, they can be practically applied by social workers helping women of the Latter-day Saint faith.

## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
CHAPTER 1: Introduction .....	1
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review .....	13
God and the Bible .....	13
Gender Role Separation/Patriarchy .....	20
Feminists experience clergy/ woman violence .....	31
Conclusion .....	36
CHAPTER 3: Methods .....	39
CHAPTER 4: Results .....	49
God and the Bible .....	50
Gender Role Separation .....	56
Clergy – domestic violence.....	69
CHAPTER 5: Discussion of the Doctrine .....	76
CHAPTER 6: Conclusion.....	86
References.....	91
Appendix A: A glossary of Latter-day Saint terms .....	99
Appendix B: The Family: A Proclamation to the World.....	103

## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Durkeim and others in the sociological tradition have placed great emphasis on the role that religion has played in all societies throughout history. Eck (2001) wrote that religious diversity, not race, would be the largest challenge for America in the twenty-first century. One of the reasons is that “more than most other social institutions, religions have elaborated moral codes that are meant to guide human behavior, and many of the great religious traditions have given special attention to issues of sexuality, the roles of men and women, and the place of the family in society” (McQuillan, 2004, p. 27). All of these issues have been at the forefront of social change in recent history. Issues of sexuality, gender role separation, and the place of family in society have been impacted by feminist scholarship, the women’s rights movement, and more recently by gay activism. These are substantial topics for academics to explore, and they are also extremely sensitive for many individuals in the broader society to confront, especially those of a traditional Christian background. One of the reasons these issues are so sensitive is that they can touch on deep theological nerves regarding religious doctrine or dogma and how it defines the dignity of women and the nature of marriage. Therefore, many Christian believers feel that “our response to such matters can also undermine our sense of belonging, both to one another and to God. Indeed, the divisive feelings arising from today’s ‘gender wars’ are among the greatest threats to the fulfillment of our longing to belong” (Hafen & Hafen, 1994).

Conflicting ideologies divide many traditional religious groups and some academic scholars, including those of feminist persuasion. Such ideological conflicts involve tensions surrounding issues of faith versus science, life versus choice, and commandments versus freedom. In order to better explore these conflicts, one must define what is meant by a

traditional Christian religion and what is feminism. For the purpose of this study, a traditional Christian religion is a group who defines an ultimate source for truth, considers Jesus Christ to be the Savior of the world, follows a literal interpretation of the Bible, and holds differing roles for men and women. Although there may be other religions that are also traditional in nature, this study examines only traditional Christian religions. In addition, a feminist scholar is one who claims to view the world through feminist theory. There exists great variety in the interpretation of what is considered feminist theory. This study includes those who are self-proclaimed feminists or academic scholars supporting feminist claims. A discussion of these definitions in greater detail will follow.

Understanding what is considered a traditional Christian religion requires one to look at what a religion's worldview is. Foss and Warnke (2003) suggest that one considers members of a religious group to be equated with members of a cultural group. By categorizing a religious group in this manner, a great depth of understanding can be reached. Sue and Sue (2002) assert that just as cultural identity and upbringing are an integral part of an individual's world view, religion too has a concrete impact on an individual's decision making process, behaviors, and perception of the world.

One of the great problems in defining any religious tradition as a cultural group is understanding who defines "truth." In regard to the epistemology of truth, Manning (2002, p. 9) has stated,

In order to analyze the relationship of truth to power, it is necessary to ask some key questions. The questions center around who gets to define the truth, whose truth are they defining, and what effect this has on others who may be either included or marginalized by their definition. Is there only one version of truth, as the [Mormon] hierarchy, for example, insists, or are there many versions of truth, dependent on the vantage point of the one doing the defining and the effect this definition has on others? And is it right that a small group of people get to define truth for the rest of the human race?



Although these questions may be philosophical in nature and possibly unanswerable in some ultimate sense, the source for truth will define how each group sees the world. Those seeing truth through God and religion may define a situation differently than one who sees truth only as it is proved through science. For the purpose of this study, we will seek to understand the position of both the feminists and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by exploring current philosophies of thought and theory regarding women and family. To accomplish this, I will review the literature regarding the development of feminist and Latter-day Saint views on family in society by focusing on the Biblical interpretation of women, gender role separation, patriarchy, and the response of clergy to woman violence (any demeaning act against women regardless of whether it is emotional, verbal, or physical in nature).

When looking at the basis of academic studies in regard to family in traditional Christian homes, most studies focus on the roles of women as mothers. Few academic studies have been conducted on fathers or children in this regard (Bollinger & Palkovitz, 2003). Within all of the studies, the emphasis was on practices within traditional Christian homes. Feminist scholars show that members of traditional religions practice and appear to have beliefs that support unequal gender roles, patriarchy, and woman violence. However, studies focus on practices and consistently lack reference to the specific doctrines regarding God and the Bible, gender roles, patriarchy, or woman violence. Scholars within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints do refer to their beliefs and quote occasionally from doctrinal sources, but a content analysis of the doctrine regarding these topics has not yet been completed.

This study will be looking at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has official statements and a canon of doctrine beyond the Bible from which to answer these tough questions (see Appendix A for an overview of their beliefs). A content analysis of these doctrines may reveal that the studies' attitudes, beliefs, and practices among followers as typically reported in academic studies are inconsistent with the doctrine. If this is the case, then the insight will be invaluable, potentially having wide implications that may strand so onh from a reevaluation of feminist claims to helping clergy ensure that they are advising their congregations appropriately.

The reason for choosing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints lies in the difficulty of defining a traditional Christian religious group as a whole. However, they are generally characterized by the belief of a true gospel based on literal interpretations of the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Bible. Such groups envision a process where emotional and spiritual problems can be resolved through the counsel and direction of their canon and clergy. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints follows these general statements in its doctrine. However, critics claim that this doctrine results in a traditional ideology that favors a patriarchal and hierarchical social order (Eriksen & Gaye, 2002, Foss & Warnke, 2003, and Sue & Sue, 2002). In addition, the term "traditional religious group" describes those considered to have a particular doctrine differentiating between women and men. Although many denominations exist that would fit the qualification of traditional Christian, there are far too many to treat in one study. The literature review will lay out the findings from scholars regarding traditional Christianity, pulling from a variety of Christian churches to lay a preliminary foundation for comparison. However, the main focus of this study is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The purpose for choosing the Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-day Saints is that it can represent one expression of traditional Christianity as followers adhere to the definition given above, used by most scholars (Beck et al., 2002). However, they are of particular interest because they differ in doctrinal and historical background from many conventional Christian groups in ways that may lead to prolific dialog with feminist thought.

The differences between Latter-day Saints and other traditional Christian religions are most evident in their belief in continuing revelation and how it affects the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Continuing revelation means that each member of the congregation may receive inspiration to guide their lives. In addition, each leader in the lay church hierarchy (no one receives pay for their positions) receives revelation for their level of responsibility. These levels begin with the family, with parents as the leaders. Wards are the local congregation, with a bishop as the clergy leader. A group of wards is called a stake, with a stake president as the leader. At the macro level, the Church is led by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency, with a Prophet as the president of the Church. According to their doctrine, the Prophet receives revelation for the Church as a whole. The male members of the Latter-day Saint church are organized into groups called quorums. These quorums are organized according to the priesthood office held by a male, who can be ordained to this fraternity, class, and service unit starting at the age of twelve (Perry, 2004). The women are members of a female service organization called the Relief Society. The Relief Society has ward, stake, and general presidencies. And just like the male priesthood leaders, these female leaders may also receive revelation for those under their direction (see Appendix B for a glossary of Latter-day Saint terms).

Another significant difference is the importance of family in one's salvation. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the preferred marriage ceremony takes place in a temple rather than a church. When a couple is married in the temple, the couple is considered "sealed" or joined together for both time and eternity rather than "until death do us part." Each child born to a couple married in the temple is also considered sealed to them. In this way, they will live in heaven together as a family. If a couple is not married in the temple, they can go to the temple later and both be sealed to each other and their children. The doctrine outlines that being sealed is required by God to achieve the highest level of heaven.

When looking at feminism, it is crucial to remember that there is a variety of feminist thought found among numerous academic disciplines. Labels associated with feminism include "liberal," "radical," "Marxist-socialist," "psychoanalytic," "existentialist," "postmodern," "multicultural and global," and "ecological." Liberal feminism is rooted in eighteenth and nineteenth century women's liberation movements. Currently, they are associated with a push to make men and women the same, particularly in the political arena. Liberal feminists "do agree the single most important goal of women's liberation is sexual equality, or as it is sometimes termed, gender justice" (Tong, 1998, p. 32). Radical feminism is historically aligned with the civil rights movement, new left political movement, and the peace movement of the early 1960s. In differentiating between liberal and radical feminism, Tong (1998, p. 46) explains, "To be sure, in order to qualify as a radical feminist, a feminist must insist the sex/gender system is the fundamental cause of women's oppression." The Marxist and socialist feminism sees capitalism at the forefront of the suppression of women. In the capitalist society women are treated as a class, and only by eliminating classes

can women truly be free. “Marxist feminist, more than any other group of feminists, have made women’s economic well-being and independence their primary concern and have focused on the intersection between women’s experience as workers and their position in the family” (Tong, 1998, p. 114).

In contrast to the above-mentioned feminist theories that all see a way to solve the oppression of women, psychoanalytical feminism sees the problem as existing in the psyche of men and women. “They claim that gender inequity is rooted in a series of early childhood experiences that result not only in men’s viewing themselves as masculine and women’s viewing themselves as feminine but also in patriarchal society’s regarding masculinity as somehow better than femininity” (Tong, 1998, p. 131). Psychoanalytic feminism is also referred to as gender feminism.

Some feminist groups are closely related with philosophical bodies of thought. Existential feminism explains women’s oppression as a result of their “otherness.” They are considered “other” because they are not male. It asks women to “cast off the weights impeding their progress toward authentic selfhood.... Some of these weights are too heavy for any individual woman to cast off, but they can be disposed of through small and large acts of collective empowerment” (Tong, 1998, p. 192). Postmodern feminists sees the “otherness” of women as being free, not as suppression. “Thus, otherness, for all of its associations with oppression and inferiority, is much more than an oppressed, inferior condition. It is also a way of being, thinking, and speaking allowing for openness, plurality, diversity, and difference” (p. 195).

For multicultural feminism, the experience of being oppressed is a unique situation depending on factors such as race, class, age, and religion. “Multicultural feminism is based

on the insight that even in one nation – the United States of America, for instance – all women are not created or constructed equal” (Tong, 1998, p. 212). Global feminism adds an additional insight to multicultural feminism, focusing on “whether a woman is a citizen of a First World or Third World nation, an advanced industrial or a developing nation, a nation that is colonialist or colonized, she will experience oppression differently” (p. 212).

Like multicultural and global feminism, ecofeminism also links itself with all forms of human oppression. However, it also links women with nature and nature with women in a dualistic nature. “If man is the lord of nature, if he has been given dominion over it, then he has control not only over nature but also over nature’s human analog, woman. What ever he may do to nature, he may also do to women” (Tong, 1998, p. 247).

As indicated above, some feminists simply wish to reaffirm that everyone, irrespective of gender, should be treated with fairness and equity. Others strive to delegitimize current institutions and traditions (Ecklund, 2003, and Hafen & Hafen, 1994). “This radical stance proceeds from the belief some people hold that American culture is constructed to a hopeless degree on the basis of male assumptions designed to perpetuate men's domination over women (Hafen & Hafen, 1994). Ecklund (2003, p. 519) explains that most traditional religious women understand feminism as “putting women’s rights above the rights of others” or “making women superior.” This confirms “the tension that some religious women have had between feminism’s emphasis on women’s individual goals and the collective goals of family and community.” However, even some who claimed to be feminist are critical of liberal feminists’ inability to account for individual and collective rights. “Liberal feminism works best to defend women’s rights to be like man...but what of our rights to be *women*? The liberal argument, the fairness argument, the equal rights

argument, these all begin to break down when we look at women who are or are becoming mothers” (Rothman, 1989, p. 248). In addition, many women have been ordained in Christian churches and many study theology. Some of these women are feminists, and they bring additional insights regarding God and the Bible. “Christian feminism is the affirmation that God embraces, dignifies, and elevates the personhood of woman as much as that of man; woman is equal as *imago dei* (image of God) and not beneath or subordinate” (Padilla & Winrich, 1991). This study will seek to represent views from the spectrum of feminism and focus on those feminists with special interests in religious studies.

Despite the fact that many may feel that feminism and traditional Christian religion reflect diametrically opposing points of view, others feel that much common ground remains to be explored. As one feminist scholar put it,

The feminist conscious that I most admire is both fierce with a love of life fanned through millennia of bringing forth children and willing to stand by the cross of Christ and receive his body for its final anointing. Even though most of the men had fled, the women stayed faithful to the end, letting their spirits be pierced with each blow of the hammer. And when it had been consummated, the women trudged forth to do more women’s work—preparing the body for burial. What a rich and painful symbolism: in most traditional cultures the sex that brings forth life prepares the body for burial. In the worst of cases, like that of Mary the Mother of Jesus, the body to be prepared is the woman’s own child. My sense is that if we put at the conference tables that decided matters of war and peace some women who had held in their arms their own dead children, war would become a minor problem. (Carmody, 1991, p. 20)

The literature review shows differing viewpoints among feminist scholars, as well as differences among theologians and Latter-day Saint scholars. Regarding God and the Bible, some feminists see the Bible as the basis for the subjection of women through their roles in the Bible as seducers and whoremongers, contrasted with expectations of them to live perfectly, rejoicing in motherhood and remaining innocent (Padilla & Winrich, 1991). Other feminist scholars believe the teachings of Jesus Christ encourage equal treatment of women,

yet they see that these teachings are not emphasized in current congregations (Padilla & Winrich, 1991; Chilton, 1999; Manning, 2002). Many Latter-day Saint scholars focus their studies on the equality of men and women in the teachings of Jesus Christ and see womanhood as being important to God (Hafen & Hafen, 1994). In addition, nearly all scholars, both feminist and Latter-day Saint, seek to find the feminine side of deity (Brown, 1999; Carmody, 1991; Heeren, Lindsey, & Mason, 1984; Heyward, 1998; Laffey, 2000; Manning, 2002; McCance, 1990; Pierce, 1992). Feminist theologians offer many suggestions for discovering femininity in God (Carmody, 1991; Heyward, 1998; McCance, 1990). The Latter-day Saints see the belief in the spouse of God-the Father, the Heavenly Mother, as a compassionate consolation to this desire (Heeren, Lindsey, & Mason, 1984; Pierce, 1992; Wilcox, 1992).

The literature review also explores the nature of gender roles with attention to feminist and Latter-day Saint perspectives on leadership positions in church hierarchy, experiences as lay members, and through the relationships in the home. Analyses from both feminist and Latter-day Saint perspectives generally focus on three differing themes: (1) women are treated as substandard by men, and women's roles mirror that status (Cornwall, 1994; Dworkin, 2000; Laffey, 2000; Padilla & Winrich 1991); (2) that no role should be prescribed to women (Chilton, 1999; Heyer-Gray, 2000; Manning; 2002); [or] (3) role differences are important and should exist, but they need to be in harmony with full equality (Black, 1990; Hafen & Hafen 1994; Holman and Harding, 1996; Newell, 1992). In addition, these studies show that patriarchal structures exist in church leadership and in the homes of traditional Christian families (Beaman, 2001; Carmody, 1991; Dworkin, 2000; Foster, 1991; Laffey, 2000; Manning, 2000; Padilla & Winrich, 1991; Riesebrodt & Chong, 1999).



However, feminist and Latter-day Saint scholarship differ as to whether there is equality within these structures.

The third section of the literature review, and possibly the most compelling reason to study family doctrine, explores abuse of women and the response that clergy have to such abuse. The practical implications of this section on counseling bridge the theoretical and theological debates of women abuse and clergy response. The feminist approaches tend to focus on advocating for women's rights, encouraging women in danger to separate from their partners, and criminalizing the batterer (Merry, 2001; Pence & Paymar, 1993). Within this framework, little emphasis is placed on religious beliefs. An implication of this is that those women seeking a religious framework turn to their clergy for counseling (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Foss & Warnke, 2003; Kantor & Jasinski, 1998). This is seen as a problem by most scholars since a majority of clergy lack knowledge and training for dealing with abuse and often send women back into their homes (Dworkin, 2000; Adams, 1993; Foss & Warnke 2003; Beck et al., 2002; Merry, 2001; Thompson, 2001). However, some Latter-day Scholars have found that using a dualistic approach, integrating professional help with clergy support, helps the women from both sides (Beck et al., 2002; Gardiner, 1993; Horton, 1993; Thompson, 1993).

When considering the implications of the literature review in connection with looking at religion as a cultural group, one can see that Hakim's (2003) approach toward women as a multifaceted group of people is very appropriate in these studies. Many women feel they benefit from their religious beliefs (Beaman, 2001; Black, 1990; Bollinger & Palkovitz, 2003; Chilton, 1999; D'Antonio, 1999; Foster, 1991; Hafen & Hafen, 1994; McQuillan, 2004; Watling, 2001). Yet the hazards associated with a traditional interpretation of the

Bible, gender role separation, patriarchy, and domestic violence leave many to wonder if the pros associated with traditional religious communities outweigh the cons.

Beck et al. (2002, p. 7) state, “social workers [need to] learn about the ... belief system of a given faith community as a means of understanding and assisting victims.” Foster (1991, p. 238) adds, “There is, I am convinced, continuing value in the pursuit of an impossible ideal.” As these references suggest, the focus of this thesis will be on Latter-day Saint doctrine regarding gender and family. The working hypothesis is that the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches that God values women equal to men, that gender roles are present yet support a form of equality, and that clergy should not support abuse in any form. Confirmation of this working hypothesis would show compatible views between feminism and Mormonism with practical application of feminist goals directed towards advancing equal concern and respect for women, even as their implications for broader ideological feminist goals may be somewhat limited.

This research project will involve a content analysis covering the standard works of the Latter-day Saint faith, which include the King James Version of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. In addition, teachings of the Latter-day prophets as given at the semiannual General Conference and the Church Handbook of Instructions will be analyzed to show the current doctrinal stances on the topics of God and the Bible, gender roles and patriarchy, and domestic violence and clergy response.

## CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

The study of family in general and the role of women within families, in particular, has remained a thriving area of social scientific investigation, and feminist scholars have played an important role in exploring this whole area of investigation. Research conducted by feminist scholars generally indicates that traditional Christian religions, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, support unequal gender role separation, patriarchy, and inappropriate response to woman violence by clergy. However, the literature on these topics varies in its understanding of traditional Christian religions. The following literature review explores traditional Christian and feminist views in regard to God and the Bible, gender role separation and patriarchy, and clergy response to woman violence.

### God and the Bible

Man enjoys the great advantage of having a god endorse the code he writes; and since man exercises a sovereign authority over women, it is especially fortunate that this authority has been vested in him by the Supreme Being. For the Jews, Mohammedans, and Christians, among others, man is master of divine right; the fear of God, therefore, will repress any impulse towards revolt in the downtrodden female.

--Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*. (as quoted in Padilla & Winrich, 1991, p. 68)

When looking at Christian religions, God and the Bible are two of the most common denominators. Since the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the women's movement has inspired and provoked women to seek greater understanding of their rightful place in society. One point of interest to feminists, feminist theologians, and Christians alike, is the idea that God is male only. For many feminists, regardless of denominational standing, having a female participant in the divinity is central to their beliefs.

According to a sociological study of the Mormon doctrine of a Heavenly Mother done in 1984, Heeren, Lindsey, and Mason confirm that Latter-day Saints believe in both a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother. Historical reference to this concept dates as far back as 1845. This belief has significant implications for Latter-day Saints who support the feminist movement. “A divine female has become a rallying symbol for some Mormon feminists” (Heeren, Lindsey, & Mason, 1984, p. 408; see also Pierce, 1992). In 1992, an additional study was published showing that “although [Church leaders] did not speak much about a mother in heaven, [they] seemed to accept the idea as commonsensical, that for God to be a father implied the existence of a mother as well” (Wilcox, 1992).

In 1990, McCance, a feminist religious scholar, explored the imagery of a “Goddess” in western religion and culture, but no reference was made in this study to the Latter-day Saint belief in a Heavenly Mother. Although most religious symbols of the western world have been and remain male, many religious feminists seek to find the female God in their lives and in their religions. In order to reach this goal, different methods are applied.

First, some writers argue that God is either bisexual or androgynous by referencing the passages about Israel as a child in the womb, or the reference to God gathering his children as a hen gathers her chickens. These female-based symbols of God help this group of religious feminists to believe that God is bisexual and androgynous (McCance, 1990). In search of this “feminine God,” Carmody (1991, p. 41) also speaks of the feminine symbols of God: “Most famous, perhaps, is Isaiah’s figure of a nursing mother. If a nursing mother could not abandon her child, no matter what the child’s outrageous behavior, certainly the Lord would never abandon Israel. Equally important is the figure of Jeremiah that has God moved to the divine womb by compassion for Israel.” Heyward (1998, p. 13) suggests that

one way to accomplish this is to change “the Trinity into a Quartet, by opening the all-male God-head to women.” Since the Trinity indicates that the three are one, the Quartet would be a four in one concept. This adds in the feminine attributes of God through the “mother of the fathers, Blessed Mary, mother of God.”

Another type of religious feminist is the “post-biblical feminist.” These writers claim that the Bible is so sexist as to make it necessary to abolish both Christ and the Bible from their religious beliefs and practices. These women advocate the search for a Goddess figure with many seeking to revive the practices of wicca, or witchcraft (McCance, 1990).

There is a third approach to religious feminism that lies somewhere in the middle. These women re-interpret the Bible through the eyes of women today, just as was done when Martin Luther re-interpreted the Bible. This belief system seeks to “make women as subjects the center rather than the margin” (McCance 1990, p. 174). However, “some suggest that change will come about only by transfiguring Christian doctrine itself” (Heyward, 1998, p. 13). Likewise, “many people today pray with, and many churches have adopted, new translations of the Bible that use gender-inclusive language” (Laffey, 2000, p. 53).

Brown, a feminist scholar, (1999, p. 166) explains that one of the main issues in women’s interpretations of the Bible is the missing “Word of the Mother, a feminine-gendered Logos.” The feminist culture is still searching for a female Goddess to help give them meaning and authority in a world where women may feel that a male God and system of patriarchy demeans them. “Representing the divine through the traditional, unequal power distribution common in actual families may provide a telling critique of paternal power in religious and literary power dynamics of traditional families and churches” (Brown, 1999, p. 167). In addition, “Religions that hold to the maleness of God as a bedrock creed, on which

the superiority of the male gender and men's right to rule is constructed, feel themselves under intense pressure from the global rise to consciousness of equality-seeking women" (Manning, 2002, p. 17).

In addition to defining God, interpretations of the Bible in the context of feminist principles have also been conducted by feminists, feminist theologians, and Latter-day Saint scholars. It is crucial to remember that there are as many interpretations and almost as many editions of the Bible as people to study them. Some feminists believe that the Bible is "inspired revelation," meaning that it may teach "the divinely communicated word of God, but that it is not itself the revealed, infallible word of God" (Padilla & Winrich, 1991, p. 104). They also point out that one of the problems with many religious groups today is that "Scripture is viewed not as a historical document that one studies critically but as perfect revelation from God. The Bible, in this understanding, 'not only communicates the Word of God but is the Word of God....[It] is not simply a record of revelation but revelation itself'" (Padilla & Winrich, 1991, p. 74).

Lerner (1986) studied the growth of patriarchy throughout early history. She points out that the Bible itself, Genesis in particular, was not written at the time the events occurred or even by Moses, but it was originally given by oral traditions. "Scholars agree that we are dealing not with an individual but with a school of priestly redactors in Jerusalem who may have worked for hundreds of years and completed the work sometime in the seventh century B.C." (Lerner, 1986). She uses this information to point out the fallibility of the Bible and the prejudice that the men would express on their own behalf in writing down the scriptures.

In the 1990s, studies surrounding women and the Bible continued to focus on the principles of female subordination. Some studies used the Bible to support women's

subordination, while others used it to show the great respect Jesus Christ gave to women. These studies state that the Old Testament teaches that women became the property of men in the beginning when Eve partook of the fruit before Adam. They were both punished by God, but Eve was commanded to be subject to her husband, Adam, because she partook of the forbidden fruit and caused the fall of all humans. Eve is often seen as “guilty for the introduction of sin into the world, deserving of pain and suffering, seductive, wily, and sexualized” (Padilla & Winrich, 1991, p. 73). In addition, Eve’s place in the story of the creation in general shows the following: “she is born out of man, is a helper of man, subsumed by man, and named by man” (p. 81). This interpretation shows that the concept of women as subordinates existed from the very beginning.

This concept of subordination does not lie only in the Old Testament. The most popular woman in the New Testament, the Virgin Mary, also exemplifies this concept of women. It shows that the best woman finds her exaltation in childbearing; however, she is not required to have sexual intercourse to do so. This paradox causes problems in application, especially for the Catholic church, which “binds its female followers in particular on a double wheel, to be pulled one way and then the other....By setting up an impossible ideal, the cult of the Virgin does drive the adherent into a position of acknowledged and hopeless yearning and inferiority...” (Padilla & Winrich, 1991, p. 86). Mary was informed by an angel (a male) that she would conceive a son by a means other than a husband. Mary agreed, stating, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38). Thus, the Virgin Mary shows the example of a perfect woman by following exactly the commands of men regardless of community disgrace or other implications.

The feminist theologians seek to show how women were included in Christ's day. Jesus, himself, frequently went against social taboos to include women in worship. According to Padilla & Winrich (1991, p. 108), "Women are among those who recognized him as a prophet (Luke 1:36-38) and among those whom he calls to follow him as disciples (Luke 8:1-3, Mark 15:41). They are his friends and companions (Luke 10:38-42), and they often hold meetings of his early 'church' in their homes (Acts 15:14, 15 and 40, Colossians 4:15, 1 Corinthians 1:11). He heals them (Luke 13:10-13; Matthew 8:1, 4-15, 9:23-25; Matthew 15:21-28) and teaches them (John 4:21-24, 11:25-26)." Chilton (1999, p. 30) describes the historical nature of women in Christianity. "Jesus' radical challenge of the place of loyalty to family explains another, famous aspect of his message. He insisted upon including women among his followers and authorizing their participation in the process of learning."

In addition to the way Jesus treated women, Jesus taught that moral standards were equal for men and women. Men did not have the right to sexualize women. In his Sermon on the Mount, he warns them that any man who even "looks at a woman to lust after her has committed adultery already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28). This passage is both an example of Jesus' "focus on internal attitudes as opposed to external laws," and his "condemnation of the sexual objectification of women" (Padilla & Winrich 1991, p. 109).

In 1994, Hafen & Hafen, Latter-day Saint scholars, responded to these teachings with their interpretation of women in the Bible. "We believe the scriptures and the prophets have long taught: women are unquestionably the spiritual and intellectual equal of men." They support the findings that Christ supported women. "This view of women emulates the Savior's own attitudes. During his earthly ministry, even at a time when Jewish traditions



precluded the active participation of women in discussing religious doctrine with him, Mary and Martha were among Jesus' closest friends and followers” (Hafen & Hafen, 1994, p. 233).

However, they disagree with the argument that Eve is an example of subordination. When Mother Eve partook of the forbidden fruit, it was not because she was reckless, and God did not love her less than man because of this act. Instead, what she did was an act of “sacrifice and courage.” She chose a path that would allow the growth of mankind. She did what was necessary and recognized this necessity before Adam. Thus, she “showed the heroic maternal faith that is willing to walk down into the valley of the dark shadows, not only to bring forth a child but also to bring forth understanding and joy” (Hafen & Hafen, 1994, p. 232). This view of Eve is considerably different from other traditional religions.

Recently, some feminist scholars have attacked Christians with their findings, claiming that the Christian world today does not live after the manner of Christ in His own day. In fact, some feel that Christianity is fighting the feminists as they seek to include the women. “Fundamental Protestant and conservative Catholics have joined in opposition to their new common enemy: feminism” (Manning, 2002, p. 19). Manning argues that women’s control over their sexuality is one of the most important rights that women have. Homosexuality, abortion, contraceptives, and so on. should all be available and allowed by church and state. She sees any variance from this as not being in accordance with Christ’s teachings. “The religious right’s ideal of a patriarchal, heterosexual nuclear family, rejoicing in careful stewardship of its privately owned property, self-satisfied and intolerant of the values and lifestyles of those who are different, is a very far cry from the heterogeneous family of Jesus” (p. 21).

To this point, the developments of God and the Bible vary among feminist scholars, theologians, and Latter-day Saint scholars. The Bible has been used to set standards for law concerning male authority, ownership, exchange, and sexual access of women as well as the lack of these rights for women. In addition, women are left with a mixed view of reality. Some feminist interpretations claim that the Bible teaches that they are the root of sin and evil in the world. They are seen as seducers and whoremongers. On the other side, they are set up on a pedestal and expected to rejoice in virginity or “innocence” and that motherhood is the greatest honor. However, others argue that many of Christ’s teachings and his attitudes show that he had a desire for women to be equal with men. Likewise, some disagree that the Bible is to be interpreted as subordinating women. There is an overall trend to seek for femininity in God. Although feminist theologians have a variety of suggestions, Latter-day Saints point toward their belief in Heavenly Mother to console them.

#### Gender Role Separation/Patriarchy

Understanding feminist interpretation of the Bible raises the issues of gender role separation. Religion plays a role in “being shaped by and in sacralizing the social patterns of sexism. Religion makes sexism appear the normative nature of human relations, the order of creation, and the relation of God to humanity and history” (Padilla & Winrich, 1991, p. 70). Likewise, gender role separation and socialization are very important in understanding feminist theory. According to Foss & Warnke (2003, p. 16) “gender roles and culture are inextricably linked.” These two concepts influence each other in a cyclical fashion (see also Padilla & Winrich, 1991). Thus, religion should be included in the definition of culture.

This cyclical pattern of religion and gender roles is demonstrated in how feminist scholarship sees traditional Christians as viewing the world through ascribed gender roles in

both the private sector of the home and the public sector, including political and legal realms (Padilla & Winrich, 1991). When this role separation is looked at with regard to religion, there are three main areas of concern: leadership positions in church hierarchy, experiences as lay members, and relationships in the home.

Laffey (2000) looked historically into the nature of women in Christianity with particular interest in their opportunity for ordination and entrance into theology schools. Although a few women were ordained and studied religion at the university level, it was not until the 1970s that most Christian churches allowed it. Within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, participation in the priesthood is given to any upstanding male who is at least twelve years old. This calling allows men to prepare and bless the sacrament, baptize and bless individuals, and hold offices of respect such as elder, bishop, or stake president (Beaman, 2001). However, Newell (1992) reminds us that the gifts of the spirit “differences of administration, the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith to be healed, faith to heal, the working of miracles, prophecy, the discerning of spirits, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues...came ungendered. They were gifts of the household of faith, given to the children of God, male and female.”

Heyer-Gray (2000) studied the gender role separation in religious settings. She notes that both men and women participate in and benefit from religious experiences and worship, yet she wonders how the administrations of these services are gendered. She argues that although some work has been done on women leaders or clergy, very little research has been done on the lay women in church. She studied a Catholic church, an independent Christian church, and a Southern Baptist church.

Examining the tasks done by the women of these three churches – and noticing what men do and do not do – not only illuminates the kinds of work being done by women,

but also begins to give us a sense of how religious work is gendered. Women are, overall, more likely to perform supporting rather than leading roles in the production of the Sunday morning worship service. They are also more likely to undertake the less public roles associated with the worship service (e.g., preparing the altar for the service, ironing the altar linens, and so on.). At the same time they perform a whole array of tasks outside of the Sunday morning worship service – task that are key to sustaining the church and to giving church life its particular flavor. (Heyer-Gray, 2000, p. 61)

Although gender role separation as a culturally constructed phenomena is widely taught and accepted in the academic world, not all scholars agree with these claims. In his conclusion Chilton asserts, “Feminist confidence that gender is contextual, and to be assessed contextually in regard to its repression and liberation, is not based on an objective standard of truth, but on conviction” (Chilton, 1999, p. 48). Some scholars assert a biological basis to differences in behavior between the sexes. Latter-day Saint studies agree that men and women have different roles, but they do not believe that it justifies repression by men or liberation of women.

Here we fall into a definitional problem. Many feminist scholars argue that proof of gender role separation equates to inequality. However, Latter-day Saints believe they are equal partners despite the differences in gender roles. This is founded in the fact that Latter-day Saints believe that they will be judged individually, but they will be saved in heaven together as couples and families. Thus, the two make one whole, and gender separation exists to help each other not to compete with each other (Beaman, 2001; Cornwall, 1994; Hafen & Hafen, 1994; Heaton, 1994; Holman & Harding, 1996; Mauss, 1994). These views may be irreconcilable in the broad sense, but are worthy of dialog and exploration in the narrower practical sense.

In 1990, Black conducted a doctrinal overview of the role of women from the Doctrine and Covenants – part of the Latter-day Saint cannon. Her study was founded on the

fact that “attempts to develop a universally accepted definition of a woman's ideal role have left scholars frustrated” (p. 1). By looking at the Doctrine and Covenants, she concluded that women have divine roles as wife and mother. “The pivotal covenant that enables a woman to reach her fullest potential is eternal marriage (D&C 132:18-19) ... the righteous wife is told to comfort her husband (D&C 25:5)... as parents, the husband and wife will teach the children ‘to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old.’ (D&C 68:25)” (Black, 1990, p. 6). Black also found that the Lord expects that men should treat women with respect and any attempt to control or suppress them is not tolerated (D&C 121:36-45).

As stated, one reason for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ firm hold on role separation is the value placed on the role of parents. According to Hafen & Hafen (1994), God Himself considers parenthood as His most important role (see Moses 1:39). This role of parent is not always looked at favorably. “This circumstance creates a compelling need for Latter-day Saints to reaffirm in all their relationships and conversations the gospel model of gender, which teaches both men and women to take their domestic roles more seriously than they take any other role” (Hafen & Hafen, 1994, p. 236). These scholars argue that focusing on women’s individual needs urges women to leave their role as mother and focus on career and other goals. Likewise, the role of father is also diminished. As women have entered the work force, employers have discontinued looking at income as a “family wage” and look at it as an “individual wage” as dual-income homes continue to increase in number (Hafen & Hafen).

Feminist scholars also affirm that gender in the Latter-day Saint faith is very important. “One is gendered not only in one’s earthly life, but in the afterlife as well.... LDS women are enjoined by church leaders to give their domestic roles top priority in order to promote the stability of the family” (Mauss, 1994). The eternal nature of a woman’s role as a mother has been compared to that of the male priesthood. Cornwall (1994) disagrees with this concept. “Although some attempt has been made to equate the role of mother which is based in “nature,” with the priesthood, which is derived from the “order of law,” there is little convincing evidence that the roles are held in equal esteem by church hierarchy” (as quoted in Beaman, 2001, p. 69).

As far as role separation in family life, Beaman (2001, p. 69) explains that “family is central to LDS theology and religious practice....For Latter-day Saints, marriage and family are more than a matter of social convention or individual need fulfillment; they are fundamental to personal salvation.” Beaman also cites Heaton (1994, p. 70) and his “four areas of difference between Mormons and mainstream society, including more conservative sexual behavior before marriage, a promarriage attitude, larger family size and the fact that ‘Mormons believe in male authority and in a more traditional division of labor between husbands and wives.’”

Many feminists feel that this role separation thwarts the life of a woman. Dworkin (2000, p. 73) equates the family to the state; “all power and authority traditionally reside in the head of the family, male; and religion, law culture, art, and money delineate and reinforce his sovereignty over women and children.” Women often turn to family seeking love and meaning. Once she obtains her family, she discovers that “she has work, necessary though unpaid; she raises children who may or may not acknowledge her,” and she discovers that “it

is her special duty to socialize the girls, her own daughters, to accept subordination, humiliation, and often physical pain (from Chinese foot binding to female genital mutilation to wife-beating and marital rape)” (Dworkin, 2000, p. 73).

However, many women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints embrace the role separation taught in their religion. In examining the lives of Latter-day Saint women, Beaman (2001) found that using a life history methodology would best evaluate the gender roles these women experience.

For example, if we considered one participant’s present position as a stay-at-home mother in isolation, we might conclude that the institutionalized patriarchy of the church has successfully socialized her to forego her “potential.” Yet, when we examine her life as a whole, she has exercised agency in realizing her potential through sport, mission, and now motherhood. Another participant commented that our discussion would have been very different had she been interviewed 10 years earlier in her life. (Beaman, 2001, p. 68)

An earlier study shows that Latter-day Saint women can be found at either end of the spectrum. Hafen & Hafen (1994, p. 216) states, “At one extreme are a few Church members who have publicly challenged the First Presidency's positions on such topics as abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, or praying to Mother in Heaven. At the other extreme are a few Church members who are so distressed about modern threats to the traditional role of women that they have leaned over backward in overreaction.”

This promotion of “family values” that Latter-day Saints share with other traditional Christian churches is often viewed negatively by those using the feminist theory. Manning (2002, p. 85) states that “family values means deference to male headship, enforced heterosexuality, control of women’s sexuality and reproductive options, and the physical disciplining of children. Women fulfill their God-given destiny in the family by being child

bearers and homemakers, while men rule the private and public domains inside and outside the home.”

When looking at the feminist and Latter-day Saint perspective of gender roles and religion through leadership positions in church hierarchy, experiences as lay members, and relationships in the home, we see themes develop. Feminists responded generally to traditional Christian role separation in three ways: (1) women are treated as if they are “inferior to men and should play roles reflecting that status”; (2) no role should be prescribed to women; [or] (3) “there are and should be role differences that are consistent with full equality” (Hafen & Hafen, 1994, p. 224). This expansion allows for gender roles to be “affected by religious beliefs and religious community. The relationship between gender and religious culture is mediated by religious and gender beliefs within family systems” (Foss & Warnke, 2003, p. 16).

Many traditional religions define a man’s role as head of the woman. This concept of male domination over women is referred to in feminist literature as patriarchy. Historically, patriarchy refers to a society that is governed by fathers or elders of the church. Today, it refers to the acts of men having authority over women in society, religion, and/or the home (Carmody, 1991; Laffey, 2000; Padilla & Winrich, 1991; Riesebrodt & Chong, 1999). There are two main sources of patriarchy found in feminists’ discussion of religion. One is that of male members of the church hierarchy’s authority over lay members. The other is the authority husbands are given over their families. The two lead to an implied social reality that men should also be above women in society in general.

One of the main concerns feminists express regarding organized religion is its ties to patriarchy. “Authoritarian churches try to shield their adult members from venturing out into



the streets and contending with the ambiguities of life. Only a strict adherence to the rules of the church, they allege, will help them to avoid making any mistakes” (Manning, 2000, p. 22). Strict obedience to the head of the church ensures that patriarchy will remain in its place as the members feel it is their religious duty and obligation to follow their leaders. Latter-day Saints claim to have a man called of God, the Prophet, to lead their Church as God would have him lead.

Some feminist theological scholars see that the God who speaks in the New Testament is not the same God who seems to be apparent to the male authority of Christianity. “The intimacy of husband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend runs through page after page of the Bible, suggesting the closeness that God wants to have with us. God is more intimate to us than we are to ourselves. God would espouse us with cords of love, tying us to the covenant the way a good man ties a willing woman or a good woman ties a willing man” (Carmody, 1991, p. 39). Speaking of patriarchy precisely, “Throughout history, men have tended to be in charge—of the states, the armies, the churches, the schools, the businesses, the extended families. Sometimes this leadership and control has been benevolent. Often it has been self-serving, justifying the bad odor now attaching to the word ‘patriarchy’” (p. 39).

Latter-day Saints have historically perceived themselves as being misunderstood regarding male domination.

During the last half of the nineteenth century, when polygamy became an integral part of Mormon life in the Intermountain West, women of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were viewed by the outer world as a benighted and oppressed class, the victims of a system of institutionalized lust perpetrated by a wicked and unscrupulous male Mormon priesthood. In fact, however, despite this negative public image, Mormon women in frontier Utah enjoyed a remarkable degree of real power, influence, and independence. Utah Mormons were leaders in coeducation, woman’s suffrage, women in medicine and teaching, and women’s publications. Nineteenth

century women's rights and suffrage advocates such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton spoke to large and enthusiastic Mormon audiences whose participation in such meetings was accepted if not actively encouraged by [male] church authorities. (Foster, 1991, p. 202)

In addition, Hafen and Hafen (1994) found that Utah's women were the first in the nation to exercise the right to vote. Utah produced the nation's first woman state senator, the first woman mayor, and the first editors of a women's magazine in the western United States. More recently, the Church "hierarchy" has also counseled priesthood leaders to be "seeking the vital input of the sisters in your council meetings," not just regarding women's auxiliary programs but also on missionary service, "temple attendance and a host of other matters" (Hafen & Hafen, 1994, p. 230).

Many feminist clergy and theologians analyze patriarchy and try to disassemble it in today's Christianity. They assert that patriarchy defines a woman's role as second to her husband. "In patriarchal cultures refusal to obey one's husband might well be judged an offense, and a woman immersed in that culture who deviated from its dictates might well feel guilt, and expect and receive punishment" (Laffey, 2000, p. 57). The Biblical stories of Esther and Balaam are used as examples of how women were treated as second in the hierarchal patriarchal world during the Old Testament times.

One of the tenets of patriarchy shows that as a woman is second to a man, she becomes dependent on him.

Women are raised to be physically dependent on men...Women's worth and status are determined by men...Without a man it is virtually impossible for a woman to stand inside the privileged circle of women with men. Without a man, a woman has less money...So when one hears from politicians that the family is the building block of society or that the family must be intact and headed by a male for the nation to survive, understand that the family has in it a woman; and that it is the family that makes a woman act against her own self-interest, talent, ambition, calling, capacities, potential, and also in opposition to her own *civil* and political equality. (Dworkin, 2000, p. 76)

Many organizations may actually promote patriarchy when others may not notice. They often hide patriarchy behind the title of “family values.” Manning views the family as a dangerous place for religious women. “This has coincided with a promulgation of a ‘family values’ agenda among evangelical Protestants, which as been fueled by a desire to return to traditional patriarchal control over the family and over women” (Manning, 2002, p. 18).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also has some practices that seem to support the feminist theory of patriarchy in religion. Beaman (2001) describes some struggles Latter-day Saint women claim to have. First, they must decide whether they can or should work outside the home. These women feel that the doctrine states that women should stay at home and get an education just in case it is “needed.” Some Latter-day Saint women enjoy being at home, some feel stifled by it and others take a more long-term view of it.

The second struggle Beaman (2001) describes is that women must decide how they feel about the male as the head of the family. Many Latter-day Saint women disagree on what this means. To most it includes being equal in the home despite any role separations. Some feel that the man makes all final decisions after counseling with his wife; others feel whoever is the expert on the topic should make the final decision. The males are the only ones who may hold the priesthood in the Latter-day Saint faith; however, Beaman’s subjects do not claim to have any problems with this.

LDS women report that the priesthood ensures that men take family life seriously. Rather than imposing a hierarchy that places men above women, the priesthood (at least to some Mormon women) ‘keeps men in line.’ To those of us on the outside, the priesthood seems to be a blatant institutionalization of patriarchy. From the perspective of some LDS women, it offers help rather than oppression. (Beaman, 2001, p. 80)

In contrast, some feminist scholars seek to show that religious influence encourages patriarchy within the church hierarchies and in the home. These practices lead to a societal

implication of men being above women in the community at large. “The subordination of female to male is required both in the partnership of husband and wife in the home and in the relationship between men and women in the larger community” (Padilla & Winrich, 1991, p. 75).

However, other studies conducted by Latter-day Saints show a different reaction to the role of men in the family. Hafen & Hafen (1994, p. 232) assert that “we believe the scriptures and the prophets have long taught: that women are unquestionably the spiritual and intellectual equal of men, having talents and opportunities that extend well beyond the home; yet, there are some God-given, doctrinally based differences between the sexes that we should recognize, appreciate and rely on.” In addition, “Women can aspire to no greater role in life than that of wife and mother; and men can aspire to no greater role than that of husband and father. Some modern critics underestimate the value of parenthood for either gender, because they overemphasize the materialistic and self-centered assumptions of careerism and competitive getting ahead—for both genders” (Hafen & Hafen, 1994, p. 235).

Feminists construe that “religion certainly has an enormous impact on the cultural forms patriarchal family and gender relations” (Riesebrodt & Chong, 1999). Feminist scholars conclude that patriarchal structures are present in the hierarchal leadership in traditional religions such as the Latter-day Saints. This same domination is also enforced and taught in the homes with the husbands at the head of the family. However, some studies done within the Latter-day Saint culture show that many women accept the purpose of gender role separation and do not feel that they are second to their husbands in any way.

Feminists experience clergy/ woman violence

One of the negative implications of patriarchy and unequal gender role separation is the right some men feel to abuse their spouses. Woman violence is abuse of a woman by her partner, whether verbal, emotional, or physical. One goal of feminism is advancing rights for women. This model “focuses on the linkage between patriarchy and violence. Violence is seen as a manner of control that takes a gendered form because men are ‘socialized to be dominant and women to be subordinate’” (Pence & Paymar, 1993 as quoted in Merry, 2001, p. 55). Thus, a woman’s presence in a home that supports the patriarchal culture of dominance can lead to a ruined life when fraught with abuse and little help from clergy.

While the biblical construction of men gives them power and rights, women are given few rights as individuals. Male violence against women is rooted in and may be the logical consequence of these basic patriarchal assumptions of women's status. Both the law and the Bible--based as they are on the same view of woman as subordinate, guilty, and seductive--conspire in the perpetuation of women's inferior status, especially as this status is maintained by the fear of male violence both in the home and in the world at large. (Padilla & Winrich, 1991, p. 73)

In addition, Adams (1993) makes a point about the religious nature of marriage, showing that many traditional Christian women feel that they need to stay in bad marriages because they made covenants to do so. Feminist scholars point out that the prison of these women is found in their own home. “Freedom has never been a value for women in home(s). Freedom is not a constituent part of the beating, the rape, the murder, not for her; violence separates women from freedom, the male, man, husband, father, even brother, in the home being the usual agent of violence” (Dworkin, 2000, p. 10). Although many traditional Christian women feel as if it is their fault, if an abused woman seeks divorce, Adams (1993, p. 68) points out “It is the abuser who has broken the covenant.”

Despite this truth, most traditional Christian women choose to stay in their abusive relationships. There are many reasons for this. Paxman (1993, p. 6) shows that some Latter-day Saint women stay in abusive homes because of the “perfection syndrome” or because they do not understand how the patriarchal order works in Latter-day Saint doctrine. Thompson (1993) agrees with these reasons for staying and adds that Latter-day Saint women may also stay because they were married in the temple, they feel it is not physical abuse just emotional abuse, their husband may hold a responsible calling in the ward, or their husband provides adequately for the family. The current research connects a “firm commitment to patriarchal ideology with a woman's willingness to remain in an abusive relationship. Even if she chooses to leave, an abused [traditional Christian] woman may have limited financial resources because of her focus on caring for her husband and children” (Foss & Warnke, 2003, p. 24).

According to feminist scholars, the churches that these women attend often add to the problem “by failing to provide a prophetic word against interpretations that, on one hand, justify domination and, on the other, reinforce subordination, the church becomes complicit in perpetuating these images and ideas so ripe for misapplication. The church becomes a party to dominant-subordinate relationships” (Adams, 1993, p. 70). The Christian history of dealing with woman violence supports Adams findings. “There is relatively little interest in gender violence in conservative Christian churches. These churches deny that the problem is important, argue that the family is a private domain, and blame the woman for provoking the violence (Merry, 2001, p. 63). In addition, religious leaders “may justify, discount, or deny that domestic violence occurs in their parishes or congregations, further alienating women who are victims of violence in the home” (Foss & Warnke 2003, p. 14). This is supported by

a study of Latter-day Saint women in Utah. Beck et al. (2002) found that the minimizing of abuse is often found in two forms: either from the clergy's ignorance of how abusive homes look or work, or from an unwillingness to embarrass the man, especially if he holds a leadership position in the congregation.

Latter-day Saint scholars Hafen & Hafen (1994) agree that women are mistreated, but they affirm that the actions of abuse and violence are not appropriate nor are they supported by Church doctrine. "It is not difficult to imagine that too many men over too many years have exploited and abused the very women who most deserved their trust. Any such abuse is too much. In a similar way, too many women have been 'subordinate rather than privileged participants in the institutions and ideologies of male supremacy'" (p. 231). Hafen & Hafen (1994, p. 233) go on to show the condemnation the Lord has for men who abuse their roles as husbands, "any priesthood holder [who] exercises 'control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness...Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man (D&C 121:37)'."

One main concern of feminist scholars with Christian programs for helping abused women is that clergy are ill-qualified or ignorant on the subject of helping women suffering from domestic violence (Adams, 1993; Merry, 2001; Thompson, 2001). These pastors based their counseling on books written by Christian psychotherapists and psychologists (Merry, 2001). Many pastoral counseling books have no section on domestic violence or even a category that pertains to it. They often describe abuse as a relationship problem instead of an addictive problem of the batterer. For example, Adams (1993) states that most domestic violence programs do not encourage couples to meet together as this "may contribute to increasing, rather than decreasing, the violence." However, many clergymen will "encourage

couples counseling without noting when it is inadvisable. When untrained to identify and act on the evidence of sexual and domestic violence, ministers will put women at risk if they follow traditional counseling techniques” (Adams, 1993, p. 67). Likewise, some Latter-day Saint women have found that, “I finally got the courage to talk to the bishop about my husband’s abusive behavior. My bishop was kind and told me I needed to be a better wife and not do things that upset my husband. He told me to keep the commandments and pray and the abuse would stop. I really tried, but the abuse didn’t stop. I must be a really bad person” (Thompson, 1993, p. 133).

Latter-day Saint scholars advise, “Get outside help....In their ecclesiastical role, bishops can support you and your family, but you should not assume that they have all the training or time needed to deal with all aspects of these problems” (Horton, 1993, p. 16; see also Gerdes et al., 2002; Thompson, 1993). Gardiner (1993, p. 178) also states, “Bishops, Relief Society presidents, friends – can do much to help victims...love, kindness, and patient instruction are essential,” yet professional help will still be needed to heal from abuse, even spiritual abuse.

Feminist scholars have also found that clergy-based counseling tends to value traditional family roles. These clergy teach that “The ideal family is under the authority of the husband, who is in turn under the authority of God. The Christian model teaches women to submit to their husbands, to turn away wrath with gentle words, and to pray to dislodge demons that hide in strongholds created by resentment, grudges, and hostility” (Merry, 2001, p. 47). The clergy also see divorce as an evil that weakens society. They struggle to fit woman violence into their societal paradigms. Their biggest problem is how does a woman submit to her husband when he is taking advantage of his “headship”?



Latter-day Saint research shows that abuse is “no respecter of persons. Anyone, regardless of race, sex, economic level, or religion can be abusive” (Thompson, 1993, p. 129 see also Horton, 1993). In addition Thompson (1993) quotes from a former prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Ezra Taft Benson, who said, “I have asked myself, ‘How can any member of the Church – any man who holds the priesthood of God – be guilty of cruelty to his own wife and children?’ Such actions, if practiced by a priesthood holder, are almost inconceivable. They are totally out of character with the teachings of the Church and the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Benson, 1983, p. 40).

Many of these women who turn to their clergy for help are often sent back home. Carol Adams studies the stance and action that churches, especially clergy, take when a woman comes to them about experiencing domestic violence. “We know that women who turned to their clergy for guidance stayed longer with the men who hurt them. We know that battered women’s shelters often shy away from working with clergy because of their poor track record” (Adams, 1993, p. 60). Kelly (2004, p. 30) supports these findings with “repeated reports ... of church authorities who recommended nothing more than prayer and tolerance in even cases of extreme violence.” Gerdes et al. (2002, p. 7) recognizes these problems and suggests that “social workers learn about the power structure and belief system of a given faith community as a means of understanding and assisting victims.”

The feminist approach of helping women who experience violence in their homes begins with “a concept of rights, foregrounds women’s safety and advocates an egalitarian gender order. Women who are in danger are encouraged to separate from their partners. Husbands and wives are taught to negotiate decisions with the promise of increased trust, love, and sexual pleasure for men who refrain from violence. This approach criminalizes the

batterer and encourages the victim to think of herself as having rights not to be beaten regardless of what she does” (Merry, 2001, p. 40). Thus, the counselors who work with domestic violence victims often feel that it is irrelevant to use specific religious beliefs in treatment (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Foss & Warnke, 2003; Kantor & Jasinski, 1998). This leads to many women turning or returning to their clergy as they seek a religious answer to their problem. However, Latter-day Saint scholars have suggested a dual practice of using outside counseling and clergy support as an appropriate way to handle abusive situations (Gardiner, 1993; Horton, 1993; Thompson, 1993).

### Conclusion

“Does this mean that the Mormons are of little interest for those seeking to revitalize and improve relations between sexes today? Perhaps we expect too much of these groups when we ask them to provide solutions to complex problems that we ourselves have not fully resolved.... There is, I am convinced, continuing value in the pursuit of an impossible ideal” (Foster, 1991, p. 238). Although it may seem as if women are always marginalized in Christianity, some feminists recognize that great strength that religious faith can bring to society.

One reason that many traditional religions continue their traditional practices is their concern that feminism places a high priority on career over family. Traditional Christians feel that the public and private spheres have been negatively affected by social, political, economic, and cultural changes. “Many people despair of influencing change for situations they dislike in the public sphere, but believe they must revive the family (a relatively recent construct, at least in its nuclear and ideologically domesticated form) if the world is to be preserved from ruin” (Keddie, 1999, p. 19).

Hakim (2003) views women as a multifaceted group of people. Often it is assumed that all women want the same thing. His study shows that many women are happy at home with children. It also shows that many women want to be in the work force. Nearly all the women in this study felt that staying at home should be more valued in society whether or not they wanted to do it. Orania Papazoglou studies discovered what she believes other women discovered—that after years of “feminist gains in the workplace, the legislature, and the culture,” by the early 1990s, the “self-respect of American women is at an all-time low.” She feels that the women's movement of the '60s and '70s turned out to be “a revolt not against men, but against mothers, with devastating consequences” (Hafen & Hafen, 1994, p. 222).

According to these views, it is possible for women to benefit from religious beliefs. Literature from the Latter-day Saint scholars regarding the Bible and God, gender roles, patriarchy, and domestic violence indicates that many women do feel comfortable with and enjoy their religion. (Beaman, 2001; Black, 1990; Bollinger & Palkovitz, 2003; Chilton, 1999; D'Antonio, 1999; Foster, 1991; Hafen & Hafen, 1994; McQuillan, 2004; Watling, 2001).

Most of the studies done by feminist scholars on gender roles have tried to discover the implications of gender roles on women and mothers. Discussion of the roles of children were lacking in the literature. In addition, few studies have been done to see if traditional Christian fathers are more involved in the nurturing of their children than non-Christian. Bollinger & Polkovitz (2003) found that overall there “was not much difference in father involvement. Those active in their faith did spend more time doing child care rather than just

play.” When studying fathers and husbands, the major implication is patriarchy. All of these studies focus on the practices found within families.

As reviewed above, feminist scholars show that traditional religions encourage, practice, and appear to have doctrine that support unequal gender roles, patriarchy, and domestic violence. The one place that these scholars lack empirical research is on doctrine beyond the Bible. Latter-day Saints have official statements and doctrinal cannon in addition to the Bible. A content analysis of these doctrines may reveal that current studies that focused on practices are inconsistent with the doctrine. It will enable an exploration of whether Latter-day Saint doctrine is more compatible with feminist aims than the critics and practitioners of traditional Christian religions assume.

## CHAPTER 3: Methods

In this study, I am going to review the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and pull out the pertinent doctrine regarding the family. First, I will identify which literature and writings are appropriate. The doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is found in the King James Version of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. In addition, teachings of the Latter-day prophets as given at the semiannual General Conference give the current doctrinal stances. Latter-day prophets are those who are ordained as apostles, prophets, seers, and revelators and sustained by a unanimous vote by the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This includes the current Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In order to be considered doctrine for this study, the statements must be made while the person was serving in this position and stated at General Conference. The current Church Handbook of Instructions will also be considered doctrine for the purpose of this study.

A look into the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is necessary to determine what is considered doctrine. In the early 1820s there was a great revival period in upstate New York. Joseph Smith described it as “a scene of great confusion and bad feeling —priest contending against priest, and convert against convert; so that all their good feelings one for another, if they ever had any, were entirely lost in a strife of words and a contest about opinions” (Joseph Smith – History, 1:6). Since Joseph Smith wanted to join the “right” church he explains that he went out in the woods and prayed. “So, in accordance with this, my determination to ask of God, I retired to the woods to make the attempt” (Joseph Smith – History, 1:14). As an answer to his prayer, Joseph Smith explains, “I saw

two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other – *This is My Beloved Son, Hear Him*” (Joseph Smith – History 1:17). At this point, Joseph Smith was instructed not to join any church. Joseph Smith – History explains that Joseph Smith had other visions and visitations by angelic messengers. He was instructed to restore the Church that Christ had originally organized. According to Joseph Smith, the Church that Christ organized had fallen into apostasy and there was no church with authority from God. According to the official history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Peter, James, and John, the apostles who held the keys of authority after Christ’s death, returned as resurrected beings to bestow the priesthood authority on Joseph Smith. After many years of instruction through angelic messengers and with authority now in place, God called Joseph Smith to be the Prophet. According to Latter-day Saint beliefs, Joseph Smith did not organize a new church; instead, he restored the original doctrine that had been lost through years of apostasy and lack of authority. Thus their church is called The Church of Jesus Christ. The second portion of the title, “of Latter-day Saints” is added to distinguish them from the Saints at the time of Christ. In accordance with the laws of the United States, the Church of Jesus Christ was organized on April 6, 1830, in Fayette, New York.

After Joseph Smith’s prayer in the woods and before he organized the Church, he found and translated The Book of Mormon. It is an account of some of the ancient inhabitants of the Americas originally written in reformed Egyptian on brass and gold plates. The account begins in approximately 600 B.C., contemporary with Jeremiah from the Old Testament, when a family escapes from Jerusalem just before the Babylonian conquest. The Book of Mormon describes the journey of this family to the Americas, “the promised land,”

and records the history and teachings of their descendants. After their relocation to the “promised land,” two of the sons, Nephi and Laman, organized into separate communities. Since they are unable to maintain contact with Jeremiah, the prophet in the old world, the Book of Mormon states that prophets were called to lead them in the “promised land.” These prophets recorded their teachings in books starting with the Book of Nephi, similar to the organization of the Bible. The prophet at the time of Christ, also called Nephi, records an account of Jesus Christ visiting the Nephites after His resurrection. Nephi records Christ’s teachings, which are very similar to the teachings in the New Testament. The last prophet, Moroni, abridged the accounts from all the prophets and named it the Book of Mormon after his father, Mormon. Moroni witnessed nearly the entire destruction of his people, the Nephites, by the Lamanites. He hid the records to preserve the teachings and history. The Book of Mormon also includes the Book of Ether, which is an account of a people, Jaredites, who fled at the tower of Babel. The account of the Jaredites was found by the Nephites and translated by the prophet Mosiah. At the time the records were found, the Jaredites had been completely destroyed.

During his life, Joseph Smith received revelations that were recorded in The Doctrine & Covenants. These revelations describe how the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is organized, gives the responsibilities of the members, and includes teachings to help the members understand the doctrine more clearly. The Doctrine & Covenants is divided into 137 sections, similar to chapters, and also includes official declarations. The first 133 sections and section 137 were written by Joseph Smith, Jr. Many of these “sections” address a person or group of people indicating the direction the Lord wanted them to go. For example, some sections inform a number of men to serve missions; another section directs a

woman to organize a song book. Many sections simply outline how the members should live their lives or are answers to questions Joseph Smith, Jr. and others had about the doctrine.

During this early period in the Church of Jesus Christ, a great deal of persecution existed. The Saints, as they call themselves, were driven from New York to Ohio, from Ohio to Missouri, from Missouri to Illinois, and finally from Illinois to Utah (which was technically a part of Mexico when they arrived). Each move occurred due to mob attacks and political unrest. In Missouri, Governor Boggs issued an extermination order making it legal to kill any Latter-day Saint who did not leave. The persecution against the Saints was so bad that Joseph Smith turned himself over to the authorities in Carthage, Illinois. Although he and his fellow prisoners had been promised protection until a trial could be held, the jail was stormed by a large mob – shooting Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum. The two other prisoners, Willard Richards and John Taylor, were released unharmed. After the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, the Latter-day Saints, led by Brigham Young – the Senior apostle at the time – decided to leave the United States and joined the pioneer exodus west. The Latter-day Saints founded many cities in the West, including Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. They continued to suffer political persecution, but the threat of mobs decreased after they moved west.

There were also some additions to the Doctrine & Covenants written by Joseph Smith's successors. Section 134 is a declaration regarding their beliefs of governments and law. Section 135 outlines the martyrdom of Joseph Smith and was written by Elder John Taylor, who witnessed the killing of Joseph Smith, Jr. Section 136 was written by the second Prophet, Brigham Young, and describes how the members organized themselves for their journey west. Section 138 was written by the Prophet Joseph F. Smith in 1918, recounting a



vision he had of Jesus Christ after His ascension into heaven. There are also two official declarations: the Manifesto, which prohibits the practice of polygamy among the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and a letter, which indicates that all males, regardless of race, ethnicity, or nationality, may hold the priesthood.

The Pearl of Great Price was also written by Joseph Smith, Jr., and was canonized on October 10, 1880. It contains the Book of Moses, which is a large selection from Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Genesis; the Book of Abraham, which he translated from Egyptian papyri that came into the hands of Joseph Smith in 1835; and Joseph Smith – Matthew, another large selection from Joseph Smith's translation of the New Testament. The Pearl of Great Price also contains Joseph Smith – History, which gives the account of his calling to be a prophet and The Articles of Faith, which were first written by Joseph Smith in a letter to Mr. Wentworth as a short summary of Latter-day Saint beliefs.

Today new books of scripture are not canonized; however, members receive the Ensign magazine. The Ensign is a monthly magazine distributed to the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in English. (An international version called the Liahona is available in 50 different languages.) Twice a year, in the May and November issues, it contains the proceedings of the Semi-Annual General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Speakers at General Conference are selected from the General Authorities of the Church. These include the General Presidencies of each organization, Relief Society, Young Women, Primary, Young Men, and Sunday School as well as members of the Quorum of the Seventy – senior leaders residing in different nations worldwide directing the expansion and progress of the Church, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles – special witnesses of Jesus Christ ensuring that the Church's processes maintain an

orderly manner, and the Council of First Presidency – the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also referred to as the Prophet, and his two counselors who also assume the title of President. Although all the addresses at General Conference are sanctioned by church leaders and members, only the words of those called as prophets, seers, and revelators are considered official church doctrine.

Those sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators are the twelve members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the three members of the First Presidency. The service of an apostle is a life term. When the president of the Church dies, the senior apostle becomes president of the Church. The senior apostle is the one who has served the longest, not the eldest in age. When a vacancy occurs in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the remaining members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Council of the First Presidency appoint a new apostle. The new apostle is presented before the general assembly of the Church at the next General Conference for a sustaining vote by all the members of the Church throughout the world. Representatives are present throughout the congregations to report if there is anyone opposed to the newly appointed apostle. So, in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, anyone can tell by the length of time an apostle has served who would be the next president of the Church; however, no one knows who would be the next apostle if someone dies.

Besides speaking at General Conference, these leaders organized a Church Handbook of Instructions that outlines how each organization should operate. These instructions are updated periodically to meet the needs of the Church. The Church's geographic organizational structure consists of wards (local congregations), stakes (composed of several wards) and areas (composed of several stakes). Each level of organization is run by unpaid

leaders, often called Church officers. At the local level, Bishops preside and maintain frequent interaction with the rank-and-file members of the Church. A bishop generally serves for five years and a stake president for ten years. At the end of their term of service, they are asked to serve in another capacity often unrelated to leadership or administration.

All Church officers volunteer their time to serve and train those within each level of organization. Each leader receives the Church Handbook of Instructions to aid them in understanding and managing their particular organization. The Church Handbook of Instructions is divided into books and sections. The first book is distributed to Bishops and Stake Presidents, and describes the callings at this level. It also advises them on how to deal with counseling and disciplinary situations that may arise. Book 2 is distributed to the presidents of each auxiliary organization – Relief Society, Priesthood, Young Women’s, Young Men’s, Primary, and Sunday School. Each of these organizations has its own section. These individual sections are also distributed in booklet form for others serving in each organization. Therefore, every member should have a copy of the sections from the Church Handbook of Instructions that pertains to the assignment, referred to as a calling, that they perform.

These assignments, including areas of administration, teaching, and service, are offered to members of each congregation by the Bishop. Likewise the Bishop and positions or callings at the Stake level of organization are appointed by the Stake President. A majority of the work required to operate the stakes and wards effectively is done by the local members. Each willing member is given opportunities to share his or her talents and gain new skills and experience. Positions of leadership, administration, and teaching rotate throughout the congregation. So it is not uncommon to see a former bishop or stake

president teaching the five-year-old class or acting as chorister for the congregation. Each member of the Church has the right to vote and uphold all officers and callings that are assigned by local or general presiding authorities.

Operations managed by the Church include a system of welfare, a system of education, and a missionary program. The Church also directs local auxiliary organizations, namely Relief Society, Sunday School, Young Men, Young Women, and Primary. The Relief Society is recognized worldwide as one of world's oldest and largest women's organizations. In 1842, the Relief Society was established as a service organization to aide the afflicted, the poor, or anyone else in need. Currently the Relief Society has activated a global literacy program. In addition to helping others, the organization also meets weekly for the purpose of educating the women on a variety of topics, such as compassionate service, home and family life, and theology. The Sunday School program is available to all members and visitors starting at 12 years old. This organization holds weekly classes divided into age groups on the principles and doctrines of the Latter-day Saint faith. For youth ages 12 through 17, there are also Young Men and Young Women organizations. These organizations provide programs to teach the youth social relations and religious study. Children ages 3 through 11 have weekly Primary meetings with large group singing and class religious instruction. On Sundays, Latter-day Saints meet together for a three-hour period. The first hour is their worship service, the second hour is Sunday School, and the third hour is Priesthood, Relief Society, Young Men, and Young Women respectively. Primary meets for the last two hours together.

Another program organized to help the individual members of each ward is home and visiting teaching. Home teachers and visiting teachers are asked to represent the bishop by

visiting everyone in the ward. Home teaching is done monthly by pairs of male priesthood holders. During their visit they are to ascertain any spiritual, physical, financial, or emotional needs of the family, share an inspirational message, and give needed service. Likewise, visiting teachers are adult females who seek to show love to the women they are assigned to visit. They do this by calling, writing letters, visiting, and serving both temporally and spiritually. Every member of the Church enjoys the privilege of receiving revelation for his or her own life and for those they are accountable for through their callings. However, only those ordained as prophets, seers, and revelators can receive revelation for the Church as a whole.

From the above discussion, the literature and writings deemed as appropriate are the standard works: the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine & Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. Also considered appropriate for this study are the writings and teachings of Latter-day prophets given at the Semi-annual General Conferences and in the Church Handbook of Instructions. Secondly, a systematic reading of the doctrine was performed. From 1897 until present, the addresses at General Conference have been recorded and are available to review. As this is a sociological study of the current doctrine, an emphasis will be placed on the last ten years of General Conference.

Third, I will identify any writings that touch on themes of God and the Bible, gender roles separation, patriarchy, or domestic violence and clergy response. Each address by a Latter-day prophet will be read for content pertaining to the topics of interest in this study. In addition, the standard works consisting of the King James Version of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price will also be reviewed for content pertaining to the relevant topics of the study. A subject search will be conducted for

all General Conferences since 1971 as they are available online. This information will be used to supplement any deficiencies in current conference addresses, so that the most recent statements are always used.

Fourth, I will analyze the doctrine in relation to one another to see how narrowly or broadly they addressed the various themes and summarize these accounts with quotes in my analysis. The results from this review will be analyzed, and their compatibility with the feminist claims set forth in the literature review will be discussed. This will seek to answer the working hypothesis that the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints shows that God values all women, that it supports a form of equality between men and women while maintaining gender roles, and that abuse is unacceptable and should not be supported by clergy.

(See Appendix B for a glossary of terms pertaining to the Latter-day Saint faith.)

## CHAPTER 4: Results

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a comprehensive doctrinal grounding for their beliefs. There are two main directives as to what constitutes official doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Most important is “the gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in the scriptures and the teachings of the latter-day prophets (D&C 19:31-32; 52:9) (Handbook, 1998, p. 301). The scriptures include the Old and New Testaments, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine & Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. The teachings of latter-day prophets are given at the General Conferences held semi-annually and are recorded in the Ensign magazine and in the General Conference Report. In addition, “Official Church statements are made by the First Presidency or by others whom the First Presidency designates, including members of the Quorum of the Twelve and the managing director of the Public Affairs Department” (Handbook, 1998, p. 298). These statements are made at General Conference, in letters, or published in the Church Handbook of Instructions. Members of the First Presidency are given the title “President” and members of the Quorum of the Twelve are called apostles and given the title “Elder.” These titles will be used to identify the position of the speaker being quoted in these results.

As outlined in the literature review, the purpose of this study is to examine the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on family in society by focusing on Biblical interpretations of women, role separation, and domestic violence. Through this analysis, one will see that the doctrine teaches that God values women equal to men, that gender roles are present yet support equality, and that clergy should not condone abuse in any form. A discussion will follow these results, exploring the extent to which these claims support or reject feminist claims and how they can be understood in a narrow or broad sense.

In the conclusion, practical implications will be addressed with suggestions for future research.

## God and the Bible

In March of 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a request from Mr. John Wentworth, editor and proprietor of the *Chicago Democrat*, to explain some of the history and doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Smith, 2002). One section of this letter has been canonized in the Latter-day Saint scriptures as the Articles of Faith found in the Pearl of Great Price. The first and eighth Article of Faith state, “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost....We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly...” God and the Bible are important to Latter-day Saint doctrine and have implications regarding women.

According to the first Article of Faith, the Godhead is composed of three separate beings not one being. Although they are three separate beings, they are one in purpose. They have the same goal and seek to fulfill the same purpose “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

Since they are one in purpose, the word “God” could be used to describe any one of them. Latter-day Saint doctrine explains that Jesus Christ often speaks for His Father when speaking to Prophets in the Old Testament or teaching Apostles in the New Testament. “Jesus is the Christ, His immortal Son, who under His Father’s direction was the Creator of the earth. He was the great Jehovah of the Old Testament, who condescended to come into the world as the Messiah, who gave His life on Calvary’s cross in His wondrous Atonement because He loved us” (Hinckley, 1998a, p. 71). In this manner, we see how Jesus Christ can



speak as God, whether it is as Jehovah in the Old Testament or as the Savior in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, there are examples of Christ showing respect and care for women. Martha and Mary were some of Jesus' dearest friends and they discussed religion together (Luke 10:39, 42). He cared for them so much that he raised their brother, Lazarus, from the dead (John 11:1-44). In addition, he healed women just as he did men (Luke 13:11-17). He also cast out devils (Mark 16:9), cleansed an "issue of blood" (Luke 8:43), raised a widow's son (Luke 7:11-16), and did not condemn the accused (John 8:3-11). Likewise, he respected women from other ethnic backgrounds. He taught the woman of Samaria and forgave her (John 4:1-42); he healed the daughter of a gentile (Matthew 15:21-28). At the end of his earthly ministry, he showed himself first to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, which made her the first mortal to see a resurrected being.

The Old Testament also shows God's love for women. Through prophets, God wrought miracles to bless the lives of women. Elisha multiplied a widow's oil, that she and her son would not starve (2 Kings 4:1-7), and he blessed a barren woman that she might have a child (2 Kings 4:8-17).

Although many religious scholars see the story of Adam and Eve as degrading to women, Latter-day Saint doctrine holds that it shows the courage that Eve had to do what needed to be done. "It was Eve who first transgressed the limits of Eden in order to initiate the conditions of mortality. Her act, whatever its nature, was formally a transgression but eternally a glorious necessity to open the doorway toward eternal life. Adam showed his wisdom by doing the same. And thus Eve and 'Adam fell that men might be' (2 Nephi 2:25)" (Oaks, 1993, p. 98). "Eve, the mother of all the human family, understood that she and

Adam *had* to fall in order that ‘men [and women] might be’ and that there would be joy” (Holland, 1997).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks (1993, p. 98) continues the explanation of Eve’s great role.

Some Christians condemn Eve for her act, concluding that she and her daughters are somehow flawed by it. Not the Latter-day Saints! Informed by revelation, we celebrate Eve’s act and honor her wisdom and courage in the great episode called the Fall (see McConkie, 1979). Joseph Smith taught that it was not a “sin,” because God had decreed it Brigham Young declared, “We should never blame Mother Eve, not the least” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:145). Elder Joseph Fielding Smith said: “I never speak of the part Eve took in this fall as a sin, nor do I accuse Adam of a sin. ... This was a transgression of the law, but not a sin ... for it was something that Adam and Eve had to do!” (Smith, 1954)

The Doctrine and Covenants continues to explain, “Among the great and mighty ones who were assembled in this vast congregation of the righteous were Father Adam, the Ancient of Days and father of all, and our glorious Mother Eve, with many of her faithful daughters who had lived through the ages and worshiped the true and living God” (D&C 138:38-39).

Unfortunately, there are also passages of scripture from the Bible that show disrespect toward woman. For example, according to Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, women should not speak in the church: “Let your women keep silence in the churches – for it is not permitted for them to speak” (1 Corinthians 14:34). Concerning these passages, Latter-day Saint doctrine holds that misconceptions come from the great number of translations that the Bible has undergone. Per the example above, the Latter-day Saint Prophet, Joseph Smith, corrected the scripture above, which has been used to prohibit women from joining the priesthood and governing the Church. Women speak and teach on a regular basis. The eighth article of faith states, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as it is translated correctly. We also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” (Smith, 1842). President Ezra Taft Benson (1986, p. 5) explained, “Unlike the Bible, which passed

through generations of copyists, translators, and corrupt religionists who tampered with the text, the Book of Mormon came from writer to reader in just one inspired step of translation. Therefore, its testimony of the Master is clear, undiluted, and full of power. But it does even more. Much of the Christian world today rejects the divinity of the Savior. They question His miraculous birth, His perfect life, and the reality of His glorious resurrection. The Book of Mormon teaches in plain and unmistakable terms about the truth of all of those. It also provides the most complete explanation of the doctrine of the Atonement.”

In the Book of Mormon, God also shows that he loves His daughters.

For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people in the land of Jerusalem, yea, and in all the lands of my people, because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands.

And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, which I have led out of the land of Jerusalem, shall come up unto me against the men of my people, saith the Lord of Hosts. For they shall not lead away captive the daughters of my people because of their tenderness, save I shall visit them with a sore curse, even unto destruction; for they shall not commit whoredoms, like unto them of old, saith the Lord of Hosts. (Jacob 2:31-33)

Likewise, the Godhead continues to reveal teachings to prophets today. These teachings emphasize a respect and love for women. In the words of the current prophet President Gordon B. Hinckley (2004, p. 83),

And so Eve became God’s final creation, the grand summation of all of the marvelous work that had gone before.

Notwithstanding this preeminence given the creation of woman, she has so frequently through the ages been relegated to a secondary position. She has been put down. She has been denigrated. She has been enslaved. She has been abused. And yet some few of the greatest characters of scripture have been women of integrity, accomplishment, and faith.

We have Esther, Naomi, and Ruth of the Old Testament. We have Sariah of the Book of Mormon. We have Mary, the very mother of the Redeemer of the world. We have her as the chosen of God, described by Nephi as “a virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins.” (1 Nephi 11:15)

She it was who carried the child Jesus into Egypt to save His life from the wrath of Herod. She it was who nurtured Him in His boyhood and young manhood. She stood before Him when His pain-wracked body hung upon the cross on Calvary's hill. In His suffering He said to her, "Woman, behold thy son!" And to His disciple in a plea that he care for her, He said, "Behold thy mother!" (John 19:26–27).

Crossing through His life we have Mary and Martha, and Mary of Magdala. She it was who came to the tomb that first Easter morning. And to her, a woman, He first appeared as the resurrected Lord. Why is it that even though Jesus placed woman in a position of preeminence, so many men who profess His name fail to do so?

Thus it is clear that Latter-day Saint doctrine, as obtained from the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and teachings of the Latter-day prophets, upholds women as important and essential to God's kingdom despite the misconceptions that some may have.

Along with other confusions in the Bible, some women scholars are searching for a female god. Latter-day Saint doctrine is clear on this matter. God, the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost are male. Yet, this is not all. Eliza R. Snow, a former Relief Society president, wrote the hymn, "O My Father" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 292.)

I had learned to call thee Father,  
Thru thy Spirit from on high,  
But, until the key of knowledge  
Was restored, I knew not why.  
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?  
Then, at length, when I've completed  
All you sent me forth to do,  
With your mutual approbation  
Let me come and dwell with you.

"The hymns teach the truths of the restored gospel" (Handbook, 1998, p. 291). President Spencer W. Kimball added, "When we sing that doctrinal hymn and anthem of affection, 'O

My Father,' we get a sense of the ultimate in maternal modesty, of the restrained, queenly elegance of our Heavenly Mother.” He goes on to state that we are “Born with a noble birthright, God is your father. He loves you. He and your mother in heaven value you beyond any measure. They gave your eternal intelligence spirit form, just as your earthly mother and father have given you a mortal body. You are unique. One of a kind, made of the eternal intelligence which gives you claim upon eternal life” (Kimball, 1978b, p. 105).

Elder Howard W. Hunter (1987), by quoting from a former prophet President Spencer W. Kimball (1972, p. 98), explained that both our Father and Mother in Heaven love us and empathize with our pain and suffering. “No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude, and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable, more worthy to be called the children of God ... and it is through sorrow and suffering, toil and tribulation, that we gain the education that we come here to acquire and which will make us more like our Father and Mother in heaven.”

More recently, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1991c, p. 99) has affirmed the doctrine of Heavenly Mother, but also explained that why we do not pray to her:

I speak of those who advocate the offering of prayers to our Mother in Heaven. I quote from that earlier address: ‘This [practice] began in private prayer and is beginning to spread to prayers offered in some of our meetings. It was Eliza R. Snow who wrote the words: ‘Truth is reason; truth eternal / Tells me I’ve a mother there.’ (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 292.) It has been said that the Prophet Joseph Smith made no correction to what Sister Snow had written. Therefore, we have a Mother in Heaven. Therefore, [some assume] that we may appropriately pray to her.

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. However, in light of the instruction we have received from the Lord Himself, I regard it as inappropriate for

anyone in the Church to pray to our Mother in Heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ set the pattern for our prayers. In the Sermon on the Mount, He declared:

‘After this manner therefore pray ye: Our *Father* which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.’ (Matt. 6:9; italics added here and in following references.)

When the resurrected Lord appeared to the Nephites and taught them, He said: ‘After this manner therefore pray ye: Our *Father* who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.’ (3 Nephi 13:9.)

While He was among them, He further taught them by example and precept concerning this practice. The record states that ‘He himself also knelt upon the earth; and behold he prayed unto the *Father*, and the things which he prayed cannot be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him.’ (3 Nephi 17:15.)

‘Furthermore, He said: ‘Pray in your families unto the *Father*, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed.’ (3 Nephi 18:21.)

On another occasion, ‘Jesus departed out of the midst of them, and went a little way off from them and bowed himself to the earth, and he said:

‘*Father*, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; and it is because of their belief in me that I have chosen them out of the world.

‘*Father*, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words.’ (3 Nephi 19:19–21.)

And so I might continue with other specific instances from the scripture. Search as I have, I find nowhere in the standard works an account where Jesus prayed other than to His Father in Heaven or where He instructed the people to pray other than to His Father in Heaven.

I suppose those ... who use this expression and who try to further its use are well-meaning, but they are misguided. The fact that we do not pray to our Mother in Heaven in no way belittles or denigrates her.

## Gender Role Separation

Although Latter-day Saint doctrine on God and the Bible shows a respect for women, Church doctrine delineates separate roles for men and women. President Gordon B. Hinckley (2004, p. 84) has recently stated, “In His grand design, when God first created man, He created a duality of the sexes.” Latter-day Saint doctrine designates that men and women

have differing roles or responsibilities within the family while still maintaining equality before God.

One of the most important documents outlining Latter-day Saint doctrine on role separation is “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.” It was given by President Gordon B. Hinckley in 1995 and outlines the importance of gender and family. “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” (Hinckley, 1995, p. 102) In order to better understand role separation, it is important to understand that Latter-day Saint doctrine holds that our gender is a part of our identity and existed before we came to this earth. In addition, The Handbook of Instructions (1998, p. 156) outlines, “Homosexual behavior violates the commandments of God, is contrary to the purposes of human sexuality, distorts loving relationships, and deprives people of the blessings that can be found in family life and in the saving ordinances of the gospel.” Thus, we are saved as a family and the roles or responsibilities that men and women hold are to help the salvation of the family.

Speaking of family salvation, President Joseph F. Smith (1918, p. 272) once declared “that no man can be saved and exalted in the kingdom of God without the woman, and no woman can reach perfection and exaltation in the kingdom of God, alone.... God instituted marriage in the beginning. He made man in His own image and likeness, male and female, and in their creation it was designed that they should be united together in sacred bonds of marriage, and one is not perfect without the other” (see also Hales, 1996; Oaks, 2005).

In addition, President Gordon B. Hinckley (2004, p. 86) has recently stated,

The ennobling expression of that duality [of the sexes] is found in marriage. One individual is complementary to the other. As Paul stated, “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). There is no other arrangement that meets the divine purposes of the Almighty. Man and woman are His creations. Their duality is His design. Their complementary relationships and functions are fundamental to His purposes. One is incomplete without the other.

In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” it states, “We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children... The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally” (Hinckley, 1995, p. 102). This means that understanding the gender role separation found in Latter-day Saint doctrine is based on the responsibilities of husband and wife – mother and father within marriage.

Latter-day Saints describe their concept of marriage as “motivated by revealed truth, not by worldly sociology” (Oaks, 1993, p. 100). This belief is rooted in the New Testament: “neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11). Latter-day prophets sustain this scripture: “Without proper and successful marriage, one will never be exalted” (Kimball, 1976, p. 24). Thus, the Church Handbook of Instructions (1998, p. 108) encourages, “Our Heavenly Father established the family as the basic unit of His kingdom on earth and in eternity. Temple marriage – the sealing of husband and wife for time and eternity by the authority of the priesthood – is a sacred privilege and obligation that every able member of the Church should have as a goal. The Church strongly counsels members, especially men, not to put off or avoid marriage.”



Families are seen as responsible for home life. “God has established families to bring happiness to His children, to help them learn correct principles in a loving atmosphere, and to prepare for eternal life...The most important place for gospel teaching and leadership is in the family and the home” (see Mosiah 4:14-15; D&C 68:25-28) (Handbook, 1998, p. 299).

Most of the teachings from Latter-day prophets regarding family responsibilities focus on the role of parents united together and not of the separate responsibilities of mother and father. “I hope that as fathers and mothers we will strive more fully to rear our children ‘in the nurture and admonition of the Lord’ (Eph. 6:4), treating them with respect and love, giving encouragement at every opportunity and subduing our critical remarks” (Hinckley, 2000, p. 87).

The scriptures teach that the home is the primary location to teach. The Book of Mormon admonishes parents, “Teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another, and to serve one another” (Mosiah 4:15). The Doctrine and Covenants adds, “Parents have a sacred responsibility to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ” (88:77-78). In describing how parents teach, the scriptures explain that parents “should study the Savior’s life and teachings and strive to teach as he taught (see 3 Nephi 27:27). They should pray (3 Nephi 20:1)...be a good example (1 Peter 2:21, 2 Nephi 31:5-10)...be humble (John 5:30, 8:50, 13:14-15; Moses 4:2; Ether 12:39; Proverbs 3:5-6; Ether 12:27; D&C 112:10)...be dedicated ... love (John 15:12, 13:34-35; Moroni 7:48)...prepare to teach (D&C 11:21; John 5:39; D&C 1:37) ... teach the saving doctrines and ordinances of the gospel (3 Nephi 27:16-20; D&C 19:31-32; 52:9)” Handbook, 1998, p. 301-302).

To the parents, the Church Handbook of Instructions (1998, p. 178) states that they “have the primary responsibility for the welfare of their children (D&C 68:25-28). The

bishop and other ward leaders support but do not replace them in this responsibility.”

Likewise leaders are counseled to “support the parent-child relationship rather than compete with it or substitute for it. They encourage each young woman [or young man] to support her family activities and seek her parents’ help and counsels” (Handbook, 1998, p. 211)

In their responsibilities, parents are taught that “happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities” (Hinckley, 1995, p. 102). In addition, parents are told to “gather their families regularly to read and discuss the scriptures..., hold weekly family home evening to teach and strengthen their families..., call family members together in family council meetings... to set goals, resolve problems, discuss finances, make plans, and give support and strength” (Handbook, 1998, p. 299).

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” adds, “Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children.... Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations” (Hinckley, 1995, p. 102). Thus, we learn that the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints holds that the most important role that parents play is collective and that they will be held responsible together for how well they did at teaching and preparing their children. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1991a, p. 74) explains how parents can achieve this:

“Wives, look upon your husbands as your precious companions and live worthy of that association. Husbands, see in your wives your most valued asset in time or eternity, each a daughter of God, a partner with whom you can walk hand in hand, through sunshine and storm, through all the perils and triumphs of life.”

Although most of the instruction and responsibility of saving the family is collective, Latter-day Saint doctrine holds that mothers and fathers – husbands and wives – also possess individual responsibilities. President James E. Faust (1996, p. 6) has stated, “Every father is to his family a patriarch and every mother a matriarch as coequals in their distinctive parental roles.” “The Family: A Proclamation to the World (1995, p. 102)” states that “By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.”

These teachings lead to many questions, such as what does it mean for mothers to “nurture” or for fathers to “provide,” “preside,” and “protect”? The direction given to fathers is found in much greater detail; however, the paper will first explain the findings regarding a woman’s role to “nurture.”

A woman’s role to nurture children is a part of the total person they are encouraged to become. Elder Russell M. Nelson (1989, p. 22) stated, “The Good Shepherd said, ‘Feed my lambs.’ (John 21:15.) So a woman feeds her loved ones, providing succor and sustenance just as the Savior would do. Her divine gift is to nurture, to help the young, to care for the poor,

to lift the brokenhearted.” Being a nurturer means “the love, the blessing, the encouragement, and the closeness of a mother” (Hinckley, 1998b, p. 99). Part of this responsibility also includes giving birth to her children. President Hinckley continued by commenting on the sanctity of life to mothers, “What an enormous and sacred responsibility that is. You are the mothers of the sons and daughters of God, whose lives are sacred. Safeguarding them is a divinely given responsibility which cannot be lightly brushed aside.”

However, nurturing children is not the only characteristic woman need to develop. During the last ten years of General Conferences, three themes have been continually emphasized when the Latter-day prophets speak to women in all circumstances of life: gain knowledge, develop love, and give service. Gaining knowledge refers to the necessity for formal education, personal development, and spiritual nourishment (Faust, 1999; Faust, 2002; Hinckley, 2003; Monson; 1997; Monson, 2001; Monson, 2004; Nelson, 1992; Perry, 1995;). It is crucial that each woman seek education. “Each of you, single or married, regardless of age, has the opportunity to learn and to grow. Expand your knowledge, both intellectual and spiritual, to the full stature of your divine potential” (Monson, 1997, p. 95). In 2001, President Thomas S. Monson (p. 98) added, “I urge you to pursue your education and learn marketable skills.” Becoming marketable, developing talents, and learning to be a scripture scholar are all important directives for women.

In developing love, the counsel from the Latter-day prophets refers to home and family (Faust, 2002; Hinckley 2003; Monson 2001; Monson, 2004). “Sisters, you are the epitome of love. You brighten your homes, you lead with kindness your children; and while your husbands may be head of the home, you surely are the heart of the home. Together, through respect for each other and sharing of responsibilities, you make an unbeatable team”

(Monson, 2001, p. 98). Being the heart of the home is important, and women are cautioned not to forget the great contribution they can have in a home. “Too frequently, women underestimate their influence for good. Well could you follow the formula given by the Lord: ‘Establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God’” (Monson, 1997, p. 95-96). As Faust (2002, p. 110) sums it up, “In a very substantial way, you sisters make our homes a refuge of peace and happiness in a troubled world.”

The third role development directed toward women is giving service in church and in the community. “No matter what circumstances you sisters experience, your influence can be marvelously far-reaching. I believe some of you have a tendency to underestimate your profound capacity for blessing the lives of others. More often than not, it is not on the stage with some public pronouncement but in your example of righteousness and the countless gentle acts of love and kindness done so willingly, so often on a one-to-one basis” (Faust, 2002, p. 110). Volunteering in the community and in church is very important role that women have in shaping society. It provides a way for them to utilize their skills and share their talents with others.

Thus, the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints affirms that women’s roles include receiving an education, caring in the home, and serving in the community. While caring in the home, the primary concern for mothers is nurturing their children. However, women are not alone in their responsibility for their children. Fathers also have a responsibility to care for and raise their children. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” explains that men are accountable for providing, presiding, and protecting in their home.

There is a great deal of counsel given to men on how to “provide,” “preside,” and “protect.” These teachings seek to show husbands that they are equal to their spouses and that it is inappropriate to dominate or control a family. “Heavenly Father wants each of His sons to marry in the temple and establish an eternal family. The roles of husband and father are the most important roles a man will ever have. Quorum instruction and activities should help young men learn to respect women and prepare for the roles of husband and father” (Handbook, 1998, p. 178).

The responsibility to “provide” covers physical needs and spiritual needs. “You, fathers, are responsible, unless disabled, to provide temporal support for your wife and children. You are to devote, even sacrifice yourself to the bringing up of your children in light and truth” (Packer, 1994). He goes on to explain how a husband is to accomplish this task, “That requires perfect moral fidelity to your wife, with no reason ever for her to doubt your faithfulness. Never should there be a domineering or unworthy behavior in the tender, intimate relationship between husband and wife. Your wife is your partner in the leadership of the family and should have full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating to your home” (Packer, 1994). President Hinckley (1991b) adds, “Wrote Paul: ‘But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel’ (1 Tim. 5:8.). In that same epistle, he said to Timothy: ‘Keep thyself pure’” (1 Tim. 5:22.). From this it is evident that providing implies that a man is responsible for seeing that his family is provided for physically and spiritually. In addition, it also implies that a man keep himself pure in mind and body.

The second responsibility described in the proclamation is “presiding.” The teaching of presiding is likely to be misunderstood by both those looking in on the doctrine of the

Latter-day Saints and by Latter-day Saints themselves. Some may see this as perpetuating patriarchy and supporting the subordination of women or at least giving more power to men than women. According the Latter-day Saint doctrine, the teachings of the scriptures and the Latter-day prophets do not describe presiding in the home as domination or control.

In understanding what it means by “preside,” the Handbook of Instructions (1998, p. 162) states,

By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in righteousness. Melchizedek Priesthood holders should be the spiritual leaders in their homes. They express and cultivate love. They also lead their families in regular prayer, scripture study, and family home evening. They prepare their children to receive the ordinances of salvation (see D&C 68:25-28). When necessary, they bestow priesthood blessings for direction, healing, and comfort. Every man who honors his priesthood will be a better husband, a better father, and a better man.

Control and domination are not supported in Latter-day Saint doctrine. “To rule children by force is the technique of Satan, not of the Savior. No, we don’t own our children. Our parental privilege is to love them, lead them, and to let them go” (Nelson, 1991, p. 22).

The scripture passage that best explains how the priesthood power works in regard to patriarchy is Doctrine & Covenants 121:34-43;

Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—that *the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness*. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, *or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves*; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God. *We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion*. Hence many are called, but few are chosen. *No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and*

*meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—Reproving betimes with sharpness [clarity], when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved. [Italics added.]*

The full text of this passage is necessary to understand its context. When quoted in part, its view may be distorted. This passage outlines the requirements for men to use their priesthood. First, the priesthood works only when acting righteously and it cannot be used for personal gain or to dominate others. In addition, the priesthood is based on long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love, kindness, and so on. Presiding in a home is to be done in this manner. Any deviance from this such as control, harshness, selfishness, and so on is not appropriate and is not in accordance with the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Contemporary prophets emphasize that the priesthood comes from God and is not a part of every man who has been ordained. “Some of our abbreviated expressions, like ‘the women and the priesthood,’ convey an erroneous idea. Men are not ‘the priesthood’” (Oaks, 2005, p. 26). In addition, President Gordon B. Hinckley (1991b) stated,

A husband who domineers his wife, who demeans and humiliates her, and who makes officious demands upon her not only injures her, but he also belittles himself. And in many cases, he plants a pattern of future similar behavior in his sons.

My brethren, you who have had conferred upon you the priesthood of God, you know, as I know, that there is no enduring happiness, that there is no lasting peace in the heart, no tranquility in the home without the companionship of a good woman. Our wives are not our inferiors.

Some men who are evidently unable to gain respect by the goodness of their lives, use as justification for their actions the statement that Eve was told that Adam should rule over her. How much sadness, how much tragedy, how much heartbreak has been caused through centuries of time by weak men who have used that as a scriptural warrant for atrocious behavior! They do not recognize that the same account indicates that Eve was given as a helpmeet to Adam. The facts are that they stood, side by side, in the garden. They were expelled from the garden together, and they worked together side by side in gaining their bread by the sweat of their brows.



In order to better understand this doctrine, definitions of patriarchal, patriarchy, and hierarchy are necessary. Hierarchy is a system of ranking where those at the top of the hierarchy have responsibilities over those under them. Patriarchy is a system where males hold the leadership roles and women hold secondary roles. As defined by Latter-day Saint doctrine, “patriarchal” is a system of leadership with husbands and wives becoming one and leading together. In this system, the husbands do have the priesthood.

This partnership between husband and wife, where both are “obligated to help one another as equal partners” is seen as an intentional interdependence and equality in the responsibilities given to mothers and fathers. As equally yoked partners, united in a common goal of rearing righteous children, they become a patriarchal family. Elder Oaks (2005, p. 27) stated, “When priesthood authority is exercised ... through long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, kindness, and pure knowledge... in the patriarchal family, we achieve the ‘full partnership.’” The patriarchal family – a family with a partnership between husband, wife, and God is seen as the highest order of God. It is not hierarchical in nature.

In fact there is a great difference between the priesthood within the patriarchal order of the family and the priesthood in the hierarchical organization of the Church. “While this authority presides in both the family and the Church, the priesthood functions in a different way in each of them... The government of the family is patriarchal, whereas the government of the Church is hierarchical” (Oaks, 2005, p. 26). This system is still not complete patriarchy, as defined above, but it does contain elements of it. Within the Church government, males do lead and direct through the priesthood, which still emphasizes “long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, kindness, and pure knowledge.” However, the priesthood functions under positions of authority; there are geographical boundaries to

which these priesthood holders may lead. Their association in the hierarchy is temporary. As a priesthood leader, a man has authority to “call and release persons serving under his direction. He can even cause that they lose their membership and have their names ‘blotted out.’” Last, the partnership concept is not intact. There are correlations and councils composed of both men and women to meet with and counsel within the hierarchal organization, but it is not equal to that partnership found in the patriarchal order of family. This is not to mean that the average member of the Church has no rights or options. Each officer in the hierarchy is put before a sustaining vote of the congregation: “If a member in good standing gives a dissenting vote when someone is presented to be sustained, the presiding officer or another assigned priesthood officer confers with the dissenting member in a private after the meeting. The officer determines whether the dissenting vote was based on knowledge that the person who was presented is guilty of conduct that should disqualify him or her from serving in the position” (Handbook, 1998, p. 37). These sustaining votes occur throughout the year to ensure that the members have the choice to continue to sustain an officer in the auxiliaries of the Church.

Throughout the history of Christ’s Church, different organizational patterns have been used. According to church doctrine, the true order is that of the patriarchal order, where families lead together and govern together. However, the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the societies in which they live struggle to support such an altruistic government. Thus, the organization outside of the family follows a hierarchal composition. As Oaks (2005, p. 27) concludes, “The gospel plan is implemented through earthly families, and our highest aspiration is to perpetuate those family relationships throughout eternity.”

## Clergy – domestic violence

Domestic violence and abuse is a very sensitive topic within all circles, including religion. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has doctrine that answers many questions regarding their views of such behavior. These doctrines can be divided into three categories: doctrine regarding abuse in general, statements to men who abuse, council to clergy seeking to help a victim of abuse.

Abuse is a very serious matter, which is not taken lightly by the Latter-day prophets of the Church. Regarding abuse, the Church Handbook of Instructions (1998, p. 157) states,

The Church's position is that abuse cannot be tolerated in any form. Those who abuse or are cruel to their spouses, children, other family members, or anyone else violate the laws of God and man. Such members are subject to Church discipline. They should not be given Church callings and may not have a temple recommend. Even if a person who abused a child sexually or physically receives Church discipline and is later restored to full fellowship or readmitted by baptism, leaders should not call the person to any position working with children or youth unless the First Presidency authorizes removal of the annotation on the person's membership record.

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet, Jacob, reveals God's disgust toward abuse.

Wherefore, it burdeneth my soul that I should be constrained, because of the strict commandment which I have received from God, to admonish you according to your crimes, ... and tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations, in the presence of the pure in heart, and the broken heart, and under the glance of the piercing eye of the Almighty God.

For behold, I, the Lord, have seen the sorrow, and heard the mourning of the daughters of my people, ... because of the wickedness and abominations of their husbands. And I will not suffer, saith the Lord of Hosts, that the cries of the fair daughters of this people, ... shall come up unto me against the men of my people, saith the Lord of Hosts....Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives, and lost the confidence of your children, because of your bad examples before them; and the sobbings of their hearts ascend up to God against you. (Jacob 2:10,11,31, 35.)

These problems evidently existed in ancient times, but they continue in Latter-day Saint homes today. Latter-day prophets have warned, "We hear disturbing reports of parents

or guardians who are so far removed from the Spirit of Christ that they abuse. Whether this abuse is physical, verbal, or the less evident but equally severe emotional abuse, it is an abomination and a serious offense to God” (Ballard, 1991, p. 80). President Hinckley (1991b) quoted from a letter he received from a wife, “President Hinckley, ... please remind the brethren that the physical and verbal abuse of women is **INEXCUSABLE, NEVER ACCEPTABLE, AND A COWARDLY WAY OF DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES,** especially and particularly despicable if the abuser is a priesthood holder” [caps used in original].

To men who may think that physical, emotional, or sexual authority lies within their right as a priesthood holder, church doctrine is clear. The Book of Mormon states, “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another” (3 Nephi 11:29). In addition, “The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (James 1:20). So the motivation to exercise authority over women is described as from the devil and not as a part of the priesthood power of God. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” adds, “We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God” (Hinckley, 1995, p. 105).

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a disdain for divorce. President Hinckley (1991a) states, ““What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Matthew 19:6.) The remedy for most marriage stress is not in divorce. It is in repentance. It is not in separation. It is in simple integrity that leads a man to square up his shoulders and meet his obligations.” The reason the Church does not support divorce is the belief that

selfishness is the root of most marital problems. “There is much of stress and struggle, of fear and worry.... Selfishness so often is the basis of money problems, which are a very serious and real factor affecting the stability of family life. Selfishness is at the root of adultery, the breaking of solemn and sacred covenants to satisfy selfish lust. Selfishness is the antithesis of love. It is a cankering expression of greed. It destroys self-discipline. It obliterates loyalty. It tears up sacred covenants. It afflicts both men and women” (Hinckley, 1991a, p. 73).

Selfishness is a serious offense in President Hinckley’s mind, yet he is determined that most men and women can confront this weakness and make their marriages work.

The church does not hold that divorce is never appropriate, “There may be now and again a legitimate cause for divorce. I am not one to say that it is never justified” (Hinckley, 1991a, p. 74). There are definitely situations that women and family are not expected to endure.

Who can calculate the wounds inflicted, their depth and pain, by harsh and mean words spoken in anger? How pitiful a sight is a man who is strong in many ways but who loses all control of himself when some little thing, usually of no significant consequence, disturbs his equanimity. In every marriage there are, of course, occasional differences. But I find no justification for tempers that explode on the slightest provocation. (Hinckley, 1991b)

However, it is important to understand that doctrinally, members and leaders are not to advise each other on whom or whether to marry or whether they should divorce. “Those decisions must originate and remain with the individual” (Handbook, 1998, p. 22).

Thus, although abuse is condemned and divorce is understood in such instances, it will not be advised. This concept may lead to a misunderstanding by both members and social workers that divorce is never appropriate. However, the doctrine is simply that the decision to divorce must be made by the individual and not

come as a directive from others because the results of a divorce affect the individual, whether positively or negatively.

Abuse is a real occurrence in some Latter-day Saint homes, and so the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has given direct counsel to those who hold leadership positions as how to help victims of abuse, something which is particularly important with an “untrained” clergy. Some of this help comes through printed material and other sources come through General Conferences. A review of this material can be divided into three categories: counsel to the abused persons, counsel to the abusers, and counsel to the clergy.

The counsel given below is both to help victims understand the role a Bishop can play as well as to help the bishops to see their own roles in healing a victim of abuse.

Your abuse results from another’s unrighteous attack on your freedom. Since all of Father in Heaven’s children enjoy agency, there can be some who choose willfully to violate the commandments and harm you. Such acts temporarily restrict your freedom. In justice, and to compensate, the Lord has provided a way for you to overcome the destructive results of others’ acts against your will. That relief comes by applying eternal truths with priesthood assistance.

You may feel threatened by one who is in a position of power or control over you. You may feel trapped and see no escape. Please believe that *your Heavenly Father does not want you to be held captive by unrighteous influence, by threats of reprisal, or by fear of repercussion to the family member who abuses you.* Trust that the Lord will lead you to a solution. Ask in faith, nothing doubting. (See James 1:6; Enos 1:15; Moroni 7:26; D&C 8:10; D&C 18:18.)

*I solemnly testify that when another’s acts of violence, perversion, or incest hurt you terribly, against your will, you are not responsible and you must not feel guilty.* You may be left scarred by abuse, but those scars need not be permanent. In the eternal plan, in the Lord’s timetable, those injuries can be made right as you do your part. Here is what you can do now.

If you are now or have in the past been abused, seek help now....Your bishop can help you identify trustworthy friends to support you. He will help you regain self-confidence and self-esteem to begin the process of renewal. When abuse is extreme, he can help you identify appropriate protection and professional treatment consistent with the teachings of the Savior.

As a victim, do not waste effort in revenge or retribution against your aggressor. Focus on your responsibility to do what is in your power to correct. Leave the handling of the offender to civil and Church authorities. Whatever they do, eventually the guilty will face the Perfect Judge. Ultimately the unrepentant abuser will be punished by a just God. The purveyors of filth and harmful substances who knowingly incite others to acts of violence and depravation and those who promote a climate of permissiveness and corruption will be sentenced. Predators who victimize the innocent and justify their own corrupted life by enticing others to adopt their depraved ways will be held accountable.

I caution you not to participate in two improper therapeutic practices that may cause you more harm than good. They are: Excessive probing into every minute detail of your past experiences, particularly when this involves penetrating dialogue in group discussion; and blaming the abuser for every difficulty in your life.

While some discovery is vital to the healing process, the almost morbid probing into details of past acts, long buried and mercifully forgotten, can be shattering. There is no need to pick at healing wounds to open them and cause them to fester. The Lord and his teachings can help you without destroying self-respect.

Please, don't suffer more. Ask now for the Lord to help you. (See Mormon 9:27; Moroni 7:26, 33.) Decide now to talk to your bishop. Don't view all that you experience in life through lenses darkened by the scars of abuse. There is so much in life that is beautiful. Open the windows of your heart and let the love of the Savior in. And should ugly thoughts of past abuse come back, remember his love and his healing power. Your depression will be converted to peace and assurance. You will close an ugly chapter and open volumes of happiness. (Scott, 1992, p. 31-33; see also Handbook, 1998)

This current counsel helps a Bishop to understand that a victim needs a support group, love, understanding, and professional help. It outlines that it is not the victim's fault and that she should not be blamed for the unrighteous behavior. A Bishop should give hope and help to an abused woman while holding the man accountable for his actions.

When counseling a victim of abuse, "the stake president or bishop should counsel members privately in his office. When meeting with a woman, he should ask a priesthood holder to be in an adjoining room, foyer, or hall. He should avoid circumstances that might be misunderstood" (Handbook, 1998, p. 22). In addition, the handbook teaches that "Presiding officers need not wait for members to seek such help, but may call them in for

counseling.” If an ecclesiastical leader has any idea that abuse may be present in the home, he should seek out a way to confront the abuse.

When working with an abuser, the ecclesiastical leader needs to be informed of laws of God and man. “If confidential information indicates that a member’s abusive activities have violated applicable law, the bishop or stake president should urge the member to report these activities to the appropriate government authorities. Where reporting is required by law, the leader should encourage the member to secure qualified legal advice.” However, “to avoid implicating the Church in legal matters to which it is not a party, leaders should avoid testifying in civil or criminal cases or other proceedings involving abuse” (Handbook, 1998, p. 158). In addition, they should refer to *Responding to Abuse: Helps for Ecclesiastical Leaders* and the pamphlets *Preventing and Responding to Spouse Abuse* and *Preventing and Responding to Child Abuse*.

One of the responsibilities outlined for the presiding leaders is to conduct church discipline (which may include disfellowship or excommunication) in addition to any legal action that is required. This is a very serious matter, as the results have eternal consequences. “After a husband and wife have been sealed in a temple, if one of them is excommunicated, his or her temple blessings are revoked. However, the sealing blessings of the innocent spouse or children are not affected” (Handbook, 1998, p. 74).

For working with either the abused or the abuser, a Bishop is encouraged to seek spiritual preparation before counseling them and find professional counseling that “will work in harmony with gospel teachings and principles” (Handbook, 1998, p. 22). They are directed to use LDS Family Services if it is available in their area and are required to inform the Stake President of the abuse. In addition, the Church has a toll-free Help Line available in



the United States and Canada “to provide guidance to bishops and stake presidents in cases of abuse.” With this service, “He will be able to consult with social services, legal, and other specialists who can help answer questions and formulate steps that should be taken” (Handbook, 1998, p. 158). When abuse is located outside of the United States or Canada, the local Area Presidency is available for guidance.

Overall, it is important to understand that the doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not support abuse. As ecclesiastical leaders are not professionally trained as counselors, it is important that they use the Help Line provided and seek to understand the Church’s position that it is not the victim’s fault and that professional counseling is also advisable. In addition, victims can understand that it is a process to heal, but it is possible to become a survivor of abuse with the support of ecclesiastical, professional, and personal help.

## CHAPTER 5: Discussion of the Doctrine

As we review the doctrine from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and compare it with the findings from the literature review, one can see that many important points are found. As reviewed above, feminist scholars show that traditional religions practice and appear to have doctrine that support unequal gender roles, patriarchy, and domestic violence. The Latter-day Saint doctrine reveals some inconsistencies between the current studies and the doctrine. This enables an exploration of whether Latter-day Saint doctrine is more compatible with feminist aims than the critics and practitioners of traditional Christian religions assume. This section will compare and contrast the Latter-day Saint doctrine with the claims set forth in the literature review regarding God and the Bible, gender role separation, and the clergy's reaction to woman violence.

The Latter-day Saint doctrine of God and the Bible can be understood through a sociological-feminist view. In some ways the Latter-day Saint doctrine supports claims made by feminist scholars, and in other respects it rejects these claims. One feminist claim is that traditional Christian religions view the Bible as infallible and perfect without flaw since it is revelation from God, instead of a historical record with possible errors (Padilla & Winrich, 1991; Lerner, 1986). Regarding this issue, Latter-day Saint doctrine is that the Bible has errors due to the many translations and that it is not a perfect document nor does it include all the details of how things happened (Benson, 1986; Smith, 1842). So in this sense, Latter-day Saints agree with the feminist claim. However, Latter-day Saints do have additional canon: the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, the Pearl of Great Price and continuing scripture from Latter-day prophets, which are considered revelation from God and without doctrinal flaws explaining with greater clarity those teachings lost doctrinally

from the Bible. As a prophet in the Book of Mormon wrote concerning the Book of Mormon, “And if there be faults, they be the faults of man. But behold, we know no faults; nevertheless God knoweth all things; therefore he that condemneth, let him be aware” (Mormon 8:17). Basically, the Latter-day Saints believe in a pure and correct doctrine; however, they believe that all people are imperfect and capable of error, which accounts for Biblical error.

The fact that Latter-day Saints view the Bible as scripture with some flaws and have additional scripture to establish clarity helps to understand how woman from the Bible are viewed as examples for men and women to emulate today. The additional scripture clarifies the Bible in regard to Eve. It is important to note that Latter-day Saint beliefs regarding Eve differ from most traditional Christian denominations. Clarification from additional scripture explains that Eve was not an example of unequal subordination as put forth in feminist claims (Padilla & Winrich, 1991), but an example of wisdom and courage to do what needed to be done (Hinckley, 2004; Holland, 1997; Oaks, 1993).

Both feminist claims and Latter-day Saint doctrine show that Jesus valued women. It is not often the teachings of Jesus that feminists take issues with, but the application or lack of application of the teachings. For example, why do some Christians work so hard to fight abortion, but downplay Christ’s teachings of helping the poor? Latter-day Saint Apostles and Prophets do seek to teach the members to follow all of Christ’s teachings; however, the accuracy of application by the members varies.

Another feminist claim in opposition to traditional Christianity is the lack of femininity in the deity, thus showing the importance of male over female. It is true that Latter-day Saint doctrine holds that God, the Father, His Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy

Ghost are male. So in this sense there is validity to the feminist claim; however, the Latter-day Saint doctrine also includes a Heavenly Mother, the spouse to God, the Father. She is not included in the Godhead as a separate member. However, she is valued and honored. The reason she is not more present in literature is not because men are more important. Many Latter-day Saints do not mention her more as a sign of respect. One can see the derogatory statements and icons made regard God, the Father and Jesus Christ.

Feminist critics may see that the Heavenly Mother comes closer to satisfying feminist desire for a divine female being than the exclusively male triumvirate, yet they may still be left wondering: How exactly does one value and honor and respect something by making it invisible or according it less attention (e.g. the Heavenly Mother is not mentioned as often and is not prayed to)? The notion of protecting her from harsh words and criticism is very similar to the concept of (to give an extreme example) requiring women to be covered head-to-toe under the guise of protecting their virtue and modesty. Feminist critique asks what one does to show respect to something while simultaneously giving it less attention. In addition feminists find it interesting that the justification for praying to the Father (and not the Mother) is the quotation of lots of Bible verses using the word “Father” but not “Mother,” in spite of the admission elsewhere that Mormon doctrine accepts that there may have been errors in translation. Was this a convenient exception?

According the Latter-day Saint doctrine, Jesus Christ is the God of the Old Testament. In fact, nearly all references to God in scripture referr to Jesus Christ. In Latter-day Saint scripture, there are only a few references to God, the Father, and in these references He is only introducing or testifying of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is significant because it shows that Heavenly Mother is not excluded because she is female, because Latter-day Saints

know very little about Heavenly Father too. A Latter-day Saint perspective explains that Heavenly Mother's purpose is not the same as Heavenly Father's. The gender role difference between Heavenly Mother and Heavenly Father are reflected in the differences between the roles for men and women here on this earth. Heavenly Father does have authority or priesthood power by which all things are organized and operate. His responsibility is to preside, provide, and protect His children – everyone who has ever lived or will ever live on earth. He does this by teaching the correct principles and then allowing them agency to choose how they will apply these principles in their life. His goal is to see all of His children return to live with him again someday. In this effort, Heavenly Mother seeks to nurture the children. Her ability to comfort, nurture, and aid her children is just as important as Heavenly Father's, and she sustains all His efforts. As an eternal married couple, they are considered one. Thus, Latter-day Saint doctrine does not differentiate between the two in scripture. This “oneness” of Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother helps Latter-day Saints understand that in their marriages they too should be one with their spouse. Latter-day Saints believe in a pre-earth life and life after death. During these periods the roles of Heavenly Mother and Heavenly Father are more visible. In other words, Heavenly Mother and Father prepared and nurtured everyone for this time when they are separated from Them and look forward to the time when Their children will return to live with Them again.

Latter-day Saint doctrine is very heterosexually and nuclear family based. Gender was established in pre-earth life and is given in creation – there is an ultimate masculine and feminine essence. In contrast, the duties of mothers and fathers are designed generically for the couple, not in segregated male and female roles. The responsibilities of fathers to “provide, preside, and protect” are given nearly the same meaning and explanation as the

mothers' responsibility to "nurture." The responsibility for both is to see that their children are reared in "love and righteousness." In fact it is very difficult to distinguish practical applications of these responsibilities. There are no statements that indicate that mothers are to do cooking and cleaning while husbands work in the yard and repair the car. Nor are there any statements suggesting that women are better at caring for children and men are better at earning money. The way in which these responsibilities play out in individual families is unique. The proclamation itself indicates need for "individual adaptation." However, feminists point out that there is a socially accepted culture of prescribed roles within Latter-day Saint practices.

The Latter-day Saint doctrine describes the "patriarchal" order of leadership. This term both affirms and opposes the feminist belief of patriarchy in Latter-day Saint doctrine. This concept is often difficult to understand with the academic definition of "patriarchy" which is "A social system in which the father is the head of the family, and men have authority over women and children" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000). In this sense, a family within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints should not conform to the concept of patriarchy. Feminist claims view patriarchy as a negative term and believe that all patriarchy is detrimental to women. In this regard, the word "patriarchal" in Latter-day Saint doctrine is quite different and would be best equated with an altruistic society. In a true patriarchal order, a woman must be held equally to men – there may not be submission or inappropriate behaviors. In other words, there is a difference without hierarchy, distinctiveness without inequality. One way to understand this is to recognize the child-bearing mechanism that women hold. Men do not bear children. This is a biological difference between men and women. Latter-day Saint doctrine explains that this difference is

innate and intended. According to Latter-day Saint beliefs, a person has both a spirit body and a physical body. The spirit body was created by Heavenly Mother and Father – so each person is their son or daughter. The physical body is created by earthly parents. The capacity women have to bear the spiritual sons and daughters of Heavenly Parents gives women a joint role with Them. Because men can never bear children, they are given another means by which they can become more like God. They are given the responsibility to serve through the priesthood, which is the power to act in the name of Christ. Women do not exercise the priesthood in the manner that men do. It is considered a biological difference; neither the capacity to bear children nor holding the priesthood is viewed as more important in God’s plan. Both are equally necessary and equally used. From the feminist perspective, it may seem as if men get the easy, good, or better side of things while women must suffer and be restrained by children. For women who are single or childless, the opportunity for marriage and children is promised in the afterlife.

So, one of the main differences between Latter-day Saints and feminism is in the connotation of the word “equal.” Latter-day Saints consider equality different than sameness. They do not consider men and women as the same – they have different attributes and are given different responsibilities. However, the responsibilities are considered to be equal even though they are not the same. Feminists view equality as men and women having the same opportunities and privileges, and being the same in the social, political, and economic realms. The main sticking point between the Latter-day Saint religion and feminist thought is that Latter-day Saint doctrine assigns very specific roles based on gender, which necessarily precludes women from participating in certain things (i.e. priesthood, blessings, etc). Feminism is about leveling the playing field so that women can do the same things as

men, with the same potential rewards and obligations, if they so desire. Whenever you have an alternative, it conflicts with feminist sensibility. Latter-day Saint argument points out that men cannot bear children and therefore men cannot do the same things as women. Potential rewards and obligations are available to both.

This may sound a lot like the separate but equal concept that feminists take issue with. Separate but equal only works if the options are truly equal and not just stated to be equal. So are the female positions and male positions in the Church of Jesus Christ truly equal? Males cannot be presidents over Young Women, Primary, or Relief Society organizations; females cannot be presidents of priesthood quorums, Young Men, or Sunday School. Whether the groups are equal is difficult to say, but more importantly is whether the intended outcome or possibility for achievement remains equal. According to Latter-day Saint doctrine, males can become eternal priests and females eternal priestesses. The difference between a priest and priestess is not discussed in detail. But the Latter-day Saints do believe that one must be married and that a man cannot become an eternal priest without a wife as an eternal priestess, and vice versa. The two are required to become one – in purpose – in order to reach this highest achievement. Achieving this status is a matter of moral worthiness, which is available equally to all. There are no educational requirements – all members of a Latter-day Saint congregation are encouraged to study theology, and religious scholarship is not limited to the priesthood. The priesthood does not give men any more rights or privileges than women have without the priesthood.

Feminists consider the Church's organization of male priesthood to fall under the concept of patriarchy, and they see patriarchy to be a negative situation. Patriarchy is defined as exclusive male power that refuses to let females have an opportunity to be in



power as well. Most feminists are not looking for a woman-controlled society; they are looking for a society where women are represented in roughly the same numbers as men. For Latter-day Saints, the issue is not the number of women compared with the number of men serving as leaders, but the way in which they serve. As outlined in the doctrine portion of this paper, Latter-day Saint doctrine condemns any inappropriate use of priesthood and, in fact, if a man seeks to use priesthood for his own personal gain, then he is seeking to use the power of the devil and not the power of God. So Latter-day Saint doctrine opposes patriarchy and does not sustain any negative male authority over women. The doctrine does support the concept of men having responsibilities in the home of presiding, providing, and protecting as long as it is done in righteousness and with love, humility, patience, kindness, and so on. This is much like the concept in the business world called “servant leader.” A servant leader is one who leads his or her organization by serving those he or she leads. This is the same as the Latter-day Saint concept of presiding. A husband presides by serving his family and treating his wife respectfully and as a full partner with men. This focus aligns with feminists’ world view of equality in the home.

Since any negative male authority over women is not sustained by Latter-day Saint doctrine, any abuse or violence against woman is not supported by the doctrine either. In this regard, Latter-day Saint doctrine and feminist claims agree. Unfortunately, the feminist studies of homes and clergy response, including that of Latter-day Saint bishops, do show that not all Latter-day Saints live in accordance with their doctrine. There are husbands who try to claim authority over their wives through priesthood authority even to the extent to abuse at times. In addition, there are clergy members who may not understand the seriousness of an abusive situation and view it as basic marital problems that can be solved

through clergy counseling. This problem is profound as all clergy serve voluntarily, without pay or compensation for their time or counseling. They volunteer on average between five and ten years. They are given the doctrine, manuals, and phone numbers to call for questions, especially regarding abuse. However, if a clergy member improperly diagnoses a situation in the home, he may return a woman to an abusive situation.

In this situation, social workers and counselors can be a great aid to Latter-day Saint bishops and stake presidents. Those who understand the nature of the situations can use the doctrine practically to show that women are not considered less than men and that the actions of their husbands are inappropriate. They can also use this information to work with the clergy, bishops, and stake presidents to help them diagnose abuse quickly and accurately. Studies show that woman often turn to clergy first, so if those holding feminist claims, such as social workers, sociologists, or counselors, seek to understand the equality that the Latter-day Saint doctrine holds for women, they could better help and serve the Latter-day Saint women in their communities. Instead of arguing with women against their beliefs, they can use their doctrine to embrace a greater understanding. Bishops and stake presidents are always seeking counselors, social workers, or others in the community who can help their congregation professionally without seeking to destroy the faith of the people.

The sum of this analysis is to see that some of the doctrinal underpinnings are compatible with feminist goals of equality and respect for women. According to Latter-day Saint doctrine:

- Heavenly Mother exists as a divine partner to Heavenly Father.
- The Bible contains errors regarding respect toward women.
- Women need to be active in education, home, and community.

- Men should honor wives and children.
- All humans are children of God and no one should be treated subordinately by others.
- Abuse is never appropriate or justified.

## CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

The implications of the study are extensive and cover both insights to bridge gaps in Latter-day Saint and feminist thoughts. Perhaps the most significant finding in regard to Latter-day Saints themselves is found in the section on role separation and patriarchy. This section outlines the importance of equality in marriage and how role separation works. It is not the male's job as priesthood holder to make all the decisions, nor is it the female's job to do all of the household work and child rearing. A priesthood holder is to work with his spouse equally and to develop characteristics of love, meekness, gentleness, and so on. In addition, his position as provider is more directly connected with his sexual and personal purity than with the money he brings into the home. He is to provide a pure soul and body for his family. As with presiding, the emphasis is to respect one's spouse and not treat her as an object. Likewise, the counsel to protect one's home is not a masculine call to strength but refers more to the spiritual environment, creating a safe haven from the degrading influences of society.

Those looking at the Latter-day Saint faith from the outside may see the male hierarchy and recognize it as a form of patriarchy. Another significant finding is that the Latter-day Saints have two terms, righteous leadership and unrighteous dominion. The scripture quoted in the doctrine section of this paper, Doctrine and Covenants 121:34-43, outlines this principle directly. It states that the authority men have is called priesthood and can only be used in righteousness. It outlines the characteristics that should be associated with true priesthood holders, and they are not the traditional socially-constructed masculine traits. "No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned;

by kindness, and pure knowledge.” If a man claims to use the authority by any other means, it is not right and it is not considered the priesthood by Latter-day Saint doctrine. If a Latter-day Saint male claims to be acting under the authority of the priesthood, according to doctrine he also needs to act according to the premises outlined in the scripture. This scripture also recognizes that when men receive this priesthood, they incorrectly assume to have power and authority to control or exercise power over others. “We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.” This “unrighteous dominion” is associated with the feminist term “patriarchy.” Looking at it from this perspective, a bridge can be formed between these two terms. Although the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does have a male priesthood, according to its doctrine, it is only to be used to help and serve others. Any control over or suppression of others is not appropriate. It is considered “unrighteous dominion” by Latter-day Saints and “patriarchy” to the feminists.

The doctrine regarding gender role separation could practically be applied in counseling or social work situations. Latter-day Saint women suffering from depression may be related to their feelings of inadequacy or the feeling that they need to be in the home with their children at all times. From the doctrine, a counselor or social worker may point out the multiple responsibilities a woman has that include being involved in the community and being educated. A woman may be encouraged in these directions even when she feels that she should not obtain a paid working position. In this regard, the doctrine does not state that a woman should be physically present inside of her house at all times, but that she should be well balanced and be available for her children. By avoiding a paid working position, she

maintains flexibility and if she chooses to work, she should avoid becoming dependent on the money, which may prohibit her from being with her children when they need her. Also, most feminists and Latter-day Saints alike would like to see more meaningful support (beyond lip service) for mothers as they try to raise children, whether it is better daycare or a safety net to assure that being a stay-at-home mother will not land a woman in the poorhouse or trapped with no options should her husband turn out to be a jerk or experience extended unemployment.

The most significant findings for social workers and academia may be located in the section on abuse. Previous findings indicate that sending a woman to clergy for help after abuse tends to be less effective in stopping the abuse. Thus, many social workers avoid and discourage abused women to work with their clergy. Although this may be true for many religions, one significant finding with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that they have specific doctrine and specific counsel including a Help Line for clergy to use to ensure that victims can find a way out of the abuse. This information can be used by social workers to inform women of the Latter-day Saint faith what their church believes, as it is possible that an abused woman misunderstands the doctrine regarding men and women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Within these applied areas, there are practical obstacles faced by women and their counselors in dealing with abuse: those obstacles being that men typically hold positions of authority in the church, and so the culture and practices that pertain to defining and responding to abuse tend to be controlled by men. This concern is valid, considering that bishops are male and as volunteers are not trained counselors; therefore, they may not recognize or respond appropriately to abuse. Fortunately, a support network exists for these

women. As outlined in the methodology section, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a women's organization called Relief Society. The president is female and has the responsibility over all of the women. She meets with the Bishop and other male leaders to help them understand the needs of women. The women serving in this position are generally those who have fortitude and determination in working with men. This organization also has female visiting teachers assigned to each woman in the congregation. Under the direction of the Relief Society President, each woman is contacted on a monthly basis by another woman to show love and lend support. They report any concerns they may have including abuse. Although this program does not account for all of the possible errors in having men be the main ecclesiastical leaders, the process for recognizing, reporting, and working with an abused woman can start with other women in an effort to balance the responsibility.

There are limitations of this study and additional topics that need research. Feminist Christians point out Jesus' interactions with women, and that he accorded them the same respect and held them up to the same standards as men. Also, Jesus and feminism both have a lot to say about poverty and care giving (since these are issues that deeply affect women). A great place to find common ground between Latter-day Saint doctrine and feminism lies in the value they hold for people. Many are frustrated with the apparent obsession by religious (and, by overlap, political) leaders as of late with gay marriage and abortion but the almost complete silence on the issues of poverty and concentration of wealth, where Jesus had a lot to say. How is it, feminists ask, that Paul's admonition against homosexuality was to be taken literally, but when Jesus stated that it would be easier to for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven, he was just talking to one guy in particular and that didn't apply to the rest of us? What about that business of giving

everything you have to the poor – that is, we have social obligations to care for the least of us? Latter-day Saints have a welfare program and tithing system to aid the poor of their congregations as well as a great humanitarian aid program that is active throughout the world in providing relief to poor and needy. These topics of economics and welfare are beyond the scope of this study but do merit future research to determine the compatibility of feminist and Latter-day Saint claims.

Overall, this study did not conclude a clean feminism vs. traditional Christianity line as one might think where feminist thought and traditional Christianity exist in complete opposition to each other. Nor did it find a complete compatibility of feminism and traditional Christianity. This study was looking to discover whether traditional Christianity and feminism are compatible by analyzing the Latter-day Saint doctrine as an example of traditional Christianity. However, the Latter-day Saint doctrine may not be able to represent all traditional Christianity due to its differences in doctrine. Further studies of Latter-day Saint doctrine compared to other traditional Christian religions need to be done to determine whether the Latter-day Saints can be used as an adequate sample. Nonetheless, the findings are still significant in regard to the Latter-day Saint doctrine and its compatibility with feminism. There are many points of doctrine that satisfy feminist complaint regarding traditional Christianity such as the Heavenly Mother, equality between husbands and wives, and disdain for abuse. There are other points of doctrine that feminists continue to take issue with such as an all male priesthood, encouraging mothers to be at home, and the fact that the Heavenly Mother is not a part of the Godhead.



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## Appendix A: A glossary of Latter-day Saint terms

**Aaronic Priesthood\*** The lesser priesthood which includes the offices of deacon, teacher, priest and bishop; conferred on faithful male members beginning at age 12.

Responsibilities of Aaronic priesthood include preparing and offering the sacrament (communion) to Church members during Sunday worship services, visiting and teaching members in their homes, collecting contributions for the poor, and baptizing.

**Apostle\*** Highest office of the Melchizedek Priesthood. One ordained to this office is called to be a special witness of the name of Jesus Christ in all the world, serving in this capacity for life.

**Area\*** The largest geographical ecclesiastical subdivision of the Church, consisting of several regions and presided over by a president, who is usually a General Authority.

**Authority\*** Duly conferred priesthood power; responsibility associated with position or function.

**Bishop\*** Clergyman of a local congregation (called a ward) whose duties are similar to that of a pastor, priest or rabbi. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the position is unpaid.

**Book of Mormon\*** An account of ancient inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere, recorded on gold plates and translated by Joseph Smith. The record contains both a history of the people and the fullness of the everlasting gospel as revealed by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants.

**Branch\*** A smaller congregation in an area where the Church is in a developing stage.

**Brethren\*** All male members of the Church; "the Brethren," a designation of the General Authorities of the Church.

**Callings\*** Invitations to accept an office or assignment in the Church; offices or assignments themselves.

**Chapel\*** The room or hall in a Church meetinghouse used for worship services. Church members gather for Sunday services in chapels, not temples.

**Confirmation\*** Religious rite which takes place after baptism, bestowing official membership in the Church and conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost upon the new member.

**Covenant\*** A sacred agreement between God and man. As men and women obey the terms of the agreement, God promises blessings.

**Doctrine and Covenants\*** A volume of scripture containing selected revelations given to Joseph Smith and his successors in the presidency of the Church.

**Ensign** magazine distributed monthly by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Includes reports from the semiannual General Conferences.

**Elder\*** An office in the Melchizedek Priesthood; a title designating a holder of this priesthood, a General Authority or a male missionary.

**Family home evening\*** A program in which family members gather (usually on Monday evening) for family-centered spiritual instruction and social activities.

**First Presidency\*** The President of the Church and his counselors; the highest ranking quorum in the Church.

**General Authority\*** Church leaders who serve in a general or Church-wide capacity, including members of the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Quorums of the Seventy, and Presiding Bishopric.

**General Conference** General assemblies of Church members in Salt Lake City, regularly convened every April and October and transmitted worldwide by radio, television and the Internet. The Prophet, apostles, and general authorities or general presidents give counsel and direction. Statements made by the Prophet or apostles at general conference are considered official church doctrine.

**General President** a president of an organization for the entire church. For example, a Relief Society General President oversees all the Relief Societies in the entire world.

**Handbook of Instructions** a collection of printed material distributed to leaders over their organizations to provide training since all positions are unpaid and positions change on a regular basis.

**Latter days\*** The last period of time upon the earth before the Lord's second coming, when the gospel is restored and God's true church reestablished. Also sometimes referred to in scripture as the "last days" (see Isaiah 2:2).

**Latter-day Saints\*** Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**Melchizedek Priesthood\*** The higher of the two priesthoods; includes offices of elder, high priest, patriarch, seventy and apostle; conferred upon faithful males age 18 and older.

Members of this priesthood serve in Church administrative assignments, hold the power of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, may anoint and heal the sick, and so on.

**Mission\*** Period of volunteer service, ranging from six to 24 months, when Church members devote themselves full time to proselytizing, humanitarian service, or strengthening members in the gospel. Also, a geographical area where missionary work is organized.

**Mormon\*** A fourth-century prophet in the Americas who abridged the historical and religious records of his people on gold plates. His record was translated by Joseph Smith and first published in the United States during the early 1800s as the Book of Mormon.

**Mormons\*** Unofficial term for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; members prefer to be referred to as Latter-day Saints.

**Mutual\*** A weekly youth activities evening, held on a ward (congregation) basis for teenage Church member and their friends.

**Ordinance\*** A prescribed ceremony related to the reception of a blessing, covenant or ordination - for example, baptism, confirmation, and marriage are all ordinances. An ordinance must be performed by one who has been ordained to the priesthood and authorized to perform the ordinance.

**Pearl of Great Price\*** Book of scripture translated and written by the Prophet Joseph Smith, including additional records of Abraham and Moses.

**Priesthood\*** The power of God; the authority given to men to act in God's name; the men of the Church in general.

**Priesthood keys** the leadership authority given to a priesthood holder for a particular assignment.

**Priesthood quorum\*** An organized body of male members who hold the same priesthood office.

**Primary\*** Religious education and activities organization for children ages 3 through 11.

**Prophet\*** The President of the Church; any authorized spokesman of God; "the Prophet," usually a reference to Joseph Smith.

**Quorum\*** A group of men who hold the same priesthood office (such as a deacons quorum, an elders quorum, or the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles).

**Quorum of the Twelve Apostles\*** The 12 men who, under the direction of the First

Presidency, constitute the second-highest presiding quorum of the Church. They testify of Jesus Christ and build up the Church throughout the world.

**Quorums of the Seventy\*** Bodies of up to 70 men who, under the direction of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, direct missionary and other activities of the Church throughout the world. There are currently five Quorums of the Seventy.

**Region\*** Administrative geographical unit consisting of several stakes.

**Relief Society\*** The adult women's organization in the Church.

**Restoration\*** The re-establishment of the ancient gospel of Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith in the latter days.

**Sacrament\*** The ordinance of administering bread and water, representing the body and blood of Jesus Christ, to Church members, usually done in Sunday worship meetings.

**Sacrament meeting\*** Worship service, usually held in Latter-day Saint meetinghouses on Sundays, in which the sacrament (communion) is offered to members of the Church.

**Saints\*** Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**Smith, Joseph\*** First president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (born 1805; died 1844). Regarded as a prophet of God by members of the Church.

**Stake\*** A geographical ecclesiastical subdivision of the Church, composed of several wards and sometimes branches. Similar to a diocese in the Roman Catholic Church.

**Stake president\*** The presiding leader of a stake.

**Temple\*** A sacred building, the "house of the Lord," in which Latter-day Saints perform sacred ordinances of the gospel such as marriages and vicarious baptisms.

**Ward\*** The basic geographic ecclesiastical unit in the Church, consisting of several hundred members presided over by a bishop.

\*Definition used with permission from [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org), the official site for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**Appendix B: The Family: A Proclamation to the World**

We, the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

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.

In the premortal realm, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshiped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize his or her divine destiny as an heir of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

We declare the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

Husband and wife have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalms 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness, to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, to teach them to love and serve one another, to observe the commandments of God and to be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

The family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

*This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.*

