

# Man and Motherhood

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LATTER-DAY SAINT WOMEN are not lacking counsel on their proper roles which are, of course, found exclusively within the Church and family. Such writings, appropriately authored by men, carefully detail how women are uniquely suited for and divinely called to the roles of wife and mother. Indeed they promise that a righteous woman will be totally fulfilled within these designated spheres where in some manner, she even shares, partakes of, or otherwise participates in the priesthood.

Despite the scrupulous scholarship that has gone into these writings, however, a quintessential issue has unaccountably been overlooked. Women and the priesthood, though a topic deserving of the attention it has received, has regrettably distracted our attention from a much weightier matter, man and motherhood. This oversight has unfortunately perpetuated some very mistaken ideas about the correct roles for both men and women in Mormon families, established beyond any reasonable doubt in scripture. Our lack of understanding is serious and could, I believe, even subvert us in our quest for salvation.

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the appropriate role of man with respect to motherhood,<sup>1</sup> focusing on man's proper sphere within the family and the role to which that sphere most naturally directs him. As a woman, I am, of course, well qualified to expound on this subject, even without the supporting scriptural references, recent scientific evidence, and carefully validated study of my own which follow.

A first step in understanding man's role must obviously include an examination of how God describes himself. It is interesting that none of the experts on

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<sup>1</sup> Since all faithful women are promised the blessings of motherhood and are educated for it in Relief Society, we can assume that motherhood is an eternal attribute of all righteous women.

woman and the priesthood have expounded upon scriptures in which God refers to himself in language which can only be classified as motherly: "But Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." (Isa. 49: 14-15) Since this particular passage was included in 1 Nephi 21:14-16, it comes to us with doubled emphasis, as does the following which is recorded three times in scripture:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and yet would not

(Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34; 3 Ne. 10:4-6).

For those masculinists<sup>2</sup> who might insist that the Lord is speaking merely metaphorically, we might refer to parallel scriptures in the Doctrine and Covenants in which the Lord also promises to gather his people as a hen gathers her chickens (10:65; 29:2; 43:24).

The Lord has described an important attribute of godhead by defining his love for us as that of a mother for her nursing child. Certainly this is an attribute to which all men should aspire. And yet God has at this time seen fit to deny fathers the experience of nursing with its attendant feelings of love. Does it not, therefore, seem incumbent upon a man who aspires to godhood through the priesthood to seize every opportunity to develop powerful bonds with infants and children, in emulation of his very Creator and Exemplar?

Current writings would have us believe otherwise. BYU professor Rodney Turner maintains that women are to serve as both "mother and father" to young children<sup>3</sup> and quotes J. Reuben Clark, Jr., in support of that contention.

Now, brethren, at best we are somewhat clumsy at leading and directing our children. We are away from home, of necessity a great part of the time, our thoughts are along other lines, we have to battle for our existence, for the livelihood of our families. Those of us who hold Church positions are absent in the evenings, in addition to the days that we spend getting our livelihood. I repeat, we are a little bit clumsy. And so to the sisters of the Church, the mothers of the Church, they whom the Lord has designed and planned should be the immediate instrumentality of perpetuating the race and of bringing spirits to this earth, providing bodies for them, to them we must primarily look for the rearing of our children.<sup>4</sup>

It is only when children reach a "proper age" that, according to Turner, they are to be handed over to the father for education and guidance "pertaining to the world beyond the hearth."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In other words, a male chauvinist. A distinction is drawn between masculinist and patriarch. Rather than use *patriarch* for both meanings, in this paper patriarch refers to the functions and duties of a righteous, nonoppressing father.

<sup>3</sup> Rodney Turner, *Woman and the Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), p. 297.

<sup>4</sup> Conference Report, 6 Oct. 1951, p. 58, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 296.

<sup>5</sup> Turner, *ibid.*, p. 297.

Current research indicates that a man who is "clumsy" with his young children, and who leaves their care and education to their mother will find neither his children nor himself ready for heartfelt communication when they reach the age of sixteen or twelve or even eight. Instead, the years during which a deep love could have developed will be lost. Will not a closely related loss be the qualities essential to effective exercise of the priesthood also have been lost? "The rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and . . . the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. . . . No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by longsuffering, by gentleness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy and without guile." (D&C 121:37-42).

The attributes of constant love and compassion which Isaiah and Christ compared to maternity are so essential to the nature of God that, in his wisdom, he has provided compensatory experiences for those, *i.e.*, men, who cannot be natural mothers. Through the discipline of fatherhood and priesthood, such traits may gradually be developed. It may seem unfair to masculinists that motherhood power comes so much more easily to women than to men. It is unnecessary here to catalogue the sacrifices and sufferings which bring women to this pinnacle;<sup>6</sup> however, we may safely assert that the pedestal of perfection is part of the territory of motherhood.<sup>7</sup>

As J. Reuben Clark remarked, "Motherhood is near to divinity. It is the highest, holiest service to be assumed by *mankind*."<sup>8</sup> Since, however, it is all too easy for men to evade the difficulties and responsibilities which endow women with motherhood, it is imperative that they must overcome their "clumsiness" with children and take advantage of every opportunity to nurture the children whom women have brought into the world. Fortunately for men, society now approves of men's attempts to parent.<sup>9</sup> Even so worldly a magazine as *Newsweek* has noted that men are capable of nurturing their children.

In one series of studies, for example, Harvard psychologist Milton Kotelchuck showed that infant emotional needs can be satisfied equally well by either parent; when upset, the babies he studied turned for comfort to whichever parent most often tended them. "Both parents seem to care equally and seem equally adept at reading clues about the baby's needs," says University of Texas psychologist Douglas Sawin. "Indeed," adds

<sup>6</sup> Anyone who has lived with a pregnant woman is well aware of this.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, remarks of L. Tom Perry at the dedication of the Nauvoo Monument as reported in "Nauvoo Monument to Women," *Ensign* 8 (Sept. 1978): 73: "Today we cry, we plead, we earnestly petition you to remain on your pedestals in a place of striking, singular beauty, in a revered light. Continue to maintain the priorities the Lord has established for you."

<sup>8</sup> Conference Report, 3 Oct. 1942, pp. 12-13, as cited in Turner, *Women and the Priesthood*, p. 299; italics added.

<sup>9</sup> Such books as Fitzhugh Dodson's *How to Parent* and *How to Father* are salient examples.

psychologist Ross Parke, who has observed the behavior of mothers, fathers, and babies over the last ten years, "we find that the similarities much outweigh the differences."<sup>10</sup>

In the words of pediatrician Lee Salk, we find scientific confirmation of what the Lord revealed through Joseph Smith 140 years ago. "Men have always had a need to be tender and to nurture," he says. "Now society is allowing it to emerge."<sup>11</sup>

When scientists confirmed the value of the Word of Wisdom, Mormons were delighted and advertised their own foresightedness.<sup>12</sup> We seem to have not yet discovered the public relations value of promoting the parallels between the current findings of pediatrics and psychology and Doctrine and Covenants 121.

Perhaps we have been distracted by the roles to which Mormon men feel they have been assigned which prohibit their spending quantity time nurturing their young children. In Mormon society, God is understood to have made the first role assignments to Adam and Eve:

Unto the woman God said, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." And unto Adam he said, . . . "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:16-17).

This passage is generally interpreted by Mormons to mean that the wife stays home with the children while the husband not only earns the family livelihood but also does the most important church work. The husband is also seen as handling the finances and making major family decisions, with perhaps the counsel of his wife, if he desires it.<sup>13</sup> Upon reflection, however, it becomes obvious that this definition of the commandment results in outright disobedience to the original commandment.

In order to discover the level of conformity to the divine injunction to sweat, we conducted the following survey on 25 May 1982. A sample of LDS homes was surveyed according to rigorous scientific methods of telephone interviewing. The sample was drawn at random from the membership of a 600-member ward in the Southeastern U.S. The ward encompasses one-half of a metropolitan area of 500,000 and includes urban, suburban, and rural populations. The sample was narrowed to only couples married in the temple, who were parents and who hold church callings. The rationale was that these couples could be presumed to have had the most complete instruction regarding this particular commandment. Each adult who answered the telephone was asked:

<sup>10</sup> Lynn Langway with Lisa Whitman, Marsha Zabarsky, and John Carey, "A New Kind of Life with Father," *Newsweek*, 30 Nov. 1981, pp. 93-94.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*; see D&C 121:37-42.

<sup>12</sup> For example, *Reader's Digest* advertisements and *Church News* editorials.

<sup>13</sup> Turner, *Woman and the Priesthood*, p. 23, "The very attributes which characterize a woman of high spiritual endowment suggest that, for now, her essential milieu is the home rather than the world at large." See pp. 23-30 for a more complete discussion of this viewpoint. See also Ezra Taft Benson, "The Honored Place of Woman," *Ensign* 11 (Nov. 81): 104-7.

1. What are you doing right now? Is your work area air-conditioned? 2. What is your spouse doing at this time? Is he/she in an air-conditioned room? The results are summarized in Table 1.

In summary, 84.62 percent of the men were away from home earning the family living, but were definitely not sweating, facially or otherwise. Of the 15.38 percent men who were sweating, half were at home, and half were away from home. 84.62 percent of the women were at home with their children (mean, 4.77 per woman; median, 5) and were definitely in a state of sweat. (The temperature was 92°F with 88 percent humidity). Perhaps, in deference to the sensibilities of the Bible belt, we ought to refer to this as perspiration or a glow, but let us be honest and call sweat sweat. Ironically enough, the only men who were obeying the divine commandment to sweat were the 15.38 percent whose wives, in contradiction to the expected custom, were away from home working. Surely it is time to free women from their sweat-producing (by definition, unfeminine) labors and let them work at occupations which are unswaty. Accountants, chemists, doctors, businessmen, even lawyers or salesmen rarely work up the healthy glow which a woman can achieve in getting

TABLE 1

<i>Husband Occupation</i>	<i>A.C.?</i>	<i>Wife Occupation</i>	<i>A.C.?</i>	<i>No. of Children</i>
1. Banker/CPA working at desk	yes	Stripping wax from kitchen floor	no	3
2. College professor giving final exam	yes	Cleaning garage	no	5
3. Statistician working at desk	yes	Painting bedroom	no	5
4. Architect redesigning office building	yes	Washing windows	outside?	3
5. Sales representative out to lunch	yes	Cutting grass	outside?	6
6. Truck driver en route to New Orleans	yes	Washing walls	yes	4
7. Engineer designing telephone circuits	yes	Dragging 2-year-old and 4-year-old up hill	no	6
8. Hospital food director planning menus	yes	Hauling rock to put around vegetable garden	no	4
9. Truck salesman writing bids	yes	Canning	what's the point?	5
10. Doctor seeing patients	yes	Tilling garden	no	7
11. Laminator cutting wood in garage	in the garage?	Hospital administrator working at desk	yes	2
12. Machinist grinding tools	yes	Scrubbing down shower with Clorox	why?	8
13. Landscaper/gardener mowing grass	no	Mortician planning funeral	yes	4

four children washed, dressed, strapped into car seats, and transported to story hour at the library. Let us inspire men to come home from the offices, factories, and schools where they are evading the divine commandment to sweat. With women sweating at home and men coolly removed from home, we have created a marital environment exactly the opposite of the one assigned to Adam and Eve. No wonder there is so much strain as men try to be patriarchs in their families and women try not to usurp patriarchal responsibilities.<sup>14</sup>

The spiritual dangers of our present condition descend far deeper than the determination of who writes the checks or which spouse earns the family income. Let us examine some of the twentieth-century ills which could be corrected by a simple change of roles. Let us suppose that women, except for a six-week to three-month maternity leave,<sup>15</sup> work away from home at occupations appropriate to their skills and men stay at home caring for the cracked grouting, leaky faucets, and leaf-filled gutters in addition to the hard physical labor usually known as housework.

First of all, let us consider the problem of patriarchal authority. The ideal, of course, is that the children learn to relate to deity as they relate to their earthly fathers. When the father is absent for ten or twelve of the child's waking hours, it is difficult indeed for the mother to reserve all decisions and discipline for the father's hour (if that) with the children. In fact, women have been admonished not to threaten children with "wait until your father gets home," but to teach and correct immediately. How can a child identify father with patriarchal authority when it is mother who generally administers the family? If fathers were sweating at home, they could administer justice and mercy as appropriate and as needed. Had Alma been at home more with Corianton, perhaps Corianton would have understood the plan of salvation more fully and would not have fallen into such grievous sins. (See Alma 39-42).

Once freed from the enslavement of outside careers, fathers could attend parent-teacher conferences, consult with pediatricians and dentists, and make the decisions which are their prerogative as heads of families. In too many families, the father tells the mother, if he remembers, "do as you think best," before she spends the day conferring with principals, doctors, etc. Then he complains that she did not consult him before she hired a tutor or made an appointment with a specialist. Such abdications of patriarchal responsibility would end if the fathers attended the consultations.

Now that "modern inventions have allowed for the semi-automation of the home,"<sup>16</sup> the father at home could devote to his sons the hours they require if they are to develop into patriarchal men. He could teach them to swim and to play basketball and baseball, thus retrieving this important part of their training from the often unworthy hands of non-LDS coaches. Think how the ranks

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<sup>14</sup> Hence, the need for such books as Helen Andelin's *Fascinating Womanhood*.

<sup>15</sup> Few, indeed, are the housewives who are given a six-week respite from housework or church duties after childbirth.

<sup>16</sup> Turner, *Woman and the Priesthood*, p. 300.

of Eagle Scouts would swell — all because of fathers being at home to keep their sons hard at work on their merit badges. Men would also have time to manage the finances, pay the bills, and make the family purchases. Then they would truly preside over the family. We would have no more emasculated men who have lost their manhood because their wives shop, pay bills, balance the checkbook, and supervise the children's homework.

Many leaders and members of the church have decried the practice of birth control.<sup>17</sup> Man's return to the home would remove the temptation to practice artificial birth control. For example, when a young man returns from his missionary service, he is usually twenty-one years old and has three or more years of education to complete before he will be ready to support a family. On the other hand, his female contemporaries are within a year of graduation from college. Many couples are tempted to postpone having children until the husband is prepared to support them. If they do have children immediately, many problems erupt in the family as the parents attempt to support themselves, finish school, and care for the children. If the wife continues to work, the children are often left at babysitters; if she doesn't, the husband's financial and time burdens are extremely heavy.

Man's return to the home would sweep away many of these problems. While the young man serves his mission, the young woman could finish her education. By the time an elder had been home from his mission for six months to a year, the young women of his age would have graduated from college. If a couple married at the age of twenty-two, both could continue their educations or the wife could work. When children entered the family, the young man could leave his studies for a while (or permanently) to care for the children. After all, the role of domestic engineering and parenting requires all of the education that a man can acquire and is worthy of his full attention. He could satisfy any creative or intellectual urges within his home and his church responsibilities. Think of the benefits a man with architectural training could give to his family. He could, when not busy with child-care, design a home for his family and supervise its construction, thus saving thousands of dollars. A man with scientific training could help to shape his children's minds. The family kitchen could become a true laboratory of life, as he taught his children not merely to cook and wash dishes, but helped them discover the laws of chemistry and the wonders of biology.

Some couples justify their use of artificial birth-control in the name of family spacing. However, with fathers at home, the problem of birth control would truly "solve itself."<sup>18</sup> If a man had the opportunity of providing the daily care and education of a one-year-old and a two-year-old, he would be aware of the appropriate time to add another child to the family. Not only that, but he could sublimate his masculine sexuality in the realm of service

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<sup>17</sup> Turner, for example, devotes forty-seven pages of his book (195-242) to a discussion of pronouncements against the use of birth control.

<sup>18</sup> "Birth control, under God's law, is a problem that solves itself," Orson F. Whitney, *Relief Society Magazine* 3: 367, July 1916, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 218.

and tender care of his children. Thus, the burdens of bearing and caring for children would be more equally shared by both partners in the marriage, and family spacing would be natural rather than artificial.

It is obvious that women's physical capacities are much better suited to the kinds of jobs which many men have abdicated their responsibilities in order to hold. It is a false view of society which views being a doctor, lawyer, psychologist, social worker, or accountant as being of more worth than a domestic engineer. I tremble, to suggest it, but perhaps the Soviet Union is right about one thing. In the USSR medicine is not a high-status occupation, since most of the doctors are women. Can we allow the communists to be nearer the truth than we? No career can compensate for a man's failure to sweat at home.

We should also consider the proposed arrangement from the spiritual, and not merely practical or temporal advantages, though they are so overwhelming as to be almost sufficient.

An influx of women, with their high spiritual endowments into the world would indeed be the salvation of the modern world. Since woman's nature is the repository of tenderness, compassion, sacrifice, and devotion,<sup>19</sup> surely as women took a greater role in the working world, it would begin to shape itself to the more refined natures of its new mistresses.

It is a generally held opinion that a mission prepares a man for his spiritual life. He learns to serve others, to love them, to practice kindness, persuasion, gentleness, and meekness, and to set and achieve goals. He also learns to seek spiritual knowledge and the influence of the Holy Ghost daily. What better preparation can there be for fatherhood? Why should these months of spiritual preparation be squandered in an office or laboratory? Let men stay at home where they are needed to instruct the next generation of priesthood holders.

The missionary efforts of the Church would become even more powerful. As fathers interact daily with others at grocery stores, playgrounds, and schools, the opportunities to share the gospel with potential patriarchs would proliferate. The all-too-frequent dilemma of the interested wife with an uninterested husband would vanish if men were contacted first by other family men.

The beneficial possibilities of keeping this commandment are truly mind-expanding and soul-enhancing. Let us consider just a few more of the salutary effects on Church and family if we could cast off the traditions of men and keep this commandment. First of all, the Young Men's organization would take its rightful place as the best organization in the church. Men would have plenty of time to devote to their callings, and would, we are sure, magnify them since they would no longer be distracted by the so-called demands of their careers. We might even extend the influence of men down into the Primary, even perhaps to the nursery, where the direct influence of the priesthood is scarcely discernible. How can boys learn to exercise the priesthood when their only instructors in Primary are women? It is imperative that young boys be

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<sup>19</sup> Turner, *Woman and the Priesthood*, pp. 23, 29. Also, "More than male gallantry lies behind the belief that, in this fallen state, women as a group are more refined and spiritually inclined than men," p. 17.



influenced by men right from their earliest years in the church. Freed from the bondage of wage earning, men would fulfill their priesthood duties, whether on the high council, as bishops, or as home teachers, during the week so that they would not have to neglect their wives and families on evenings and weekends.

Not only would there be fewer rebellious "bishop's sons," because of father's increased presence, but much of the work now accomplished by auxiliaries such as the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary would be done by the priesthood. This is the only way we will ever achieve the level of priesthood organization and effectiveness which will allow the auxiliaries to assume their appropriate position.<sup>20</sup>

Surely, the emancipation of women has been reserved for these last days. Now that women are finally capable of earning a livelihood, men can become what they were created to be — sweating patriarchs. How long are we going to kick against the pricks, bind ourselves to apostate custom and false macho pride, and relegate women to the sweating labors of the home? Let us bring the fathers home to earn their bread (in other words, contribute to the family) by the sweat of their brows and to gain, by their experiences, the attributes of motherhood which are so necessary to the powers of the priesthood.

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<sup>20</sup> "We expect to see the day, if we live long enough (and if some of us do not live long enough to see it, there are others who will), when every council of the Priesthood in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will understand its duty, will assume its own responsibility, will magnify its calling, and fill its place according to the intelligence and ability possessed by it. When that day shall come, there will not be so much necessity for work that is now being done by the auxiliary organizations, because it will be done by the regular quorums of the Priesthood" (Joseph F. Smith, *Conference Report*, April 1906, p. 3).