"The Greatest Glory of True Womanhood": Eve and the Construction of Mormon Gender Identity

Boyd J Petersen
relatively open, competitive religious economies—along with reactionary resistance to accommodation from the conservative core—combine to virtually guarantee complex and uneven historical trajectories, especially in the short run. In the long run, the benefit of hindsight allows scholars to discern larger patterns from the historical record and to assess more confidently the causes and consequences of bygone issues in bygone eras that, in turn, give rise to contemporary conflicts and the ultimate uncertainty of their future resolution.34

The theoretical models we have summarized for analyzing the impact of women’s issues in the LDS Church predict incremental change in the short run, punctuated by convoluted starts and stops, breakthroughs and regressions, and seemingly contradictory developments. How long must the long run be to clearly discern the big picture of institutional change? Decades? Centuries? Given women’s rapid twenty-first century secular advances in higher education, professional occupations, and leadership/management positions in both industry and government toward greater parity with men, how probable is it that the LDS Church will indefinitely resist gender parity in priesthood leadership and decision-making roles in its governing councils? And from the standpoint of this book, an important corollary question must also be asked: Given continued official resistance to its efforts, how probable is it that Ordain Women will continue to function as a cohesive, radical flank organization within LDS culture? Will OW activists sustain forward momentum in the years to come or will their moment quickly pass and be forgotten? How will historians 100 years hence view current OW activists and their supporters? As deluded heretics? As feminist heroines? Or as something in between? Our children’s children will know the answer.

34. Concerning the long run, a religious leader and man of faith, the Reverend Martin Luther King, memorably declared, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” See Martin Luther King Jr., “Out of the Long Night,” The Gospel Messenger: Official Organ of the Church of the Brethren 107, no. 6 (1958): 14. Ten years after his inspiring affirmation of the future of race relations in the United States, Dr. King was shot to death in Memphis, Tennessee, while lending his moral support to striking, African American sanitation workers.

Chapter 3

“The Greatest Glory of True Womanhood”: Eve and the Construction of Mormon Gender Identity

Boyd Jay Petersen

Introduction

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” offers Adam and Eve as the paradigmatic ideal family: “The first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife.”1 Read by President Gordon B. Hinckley at the Relief Society general meeting on September 23, 1995, the document was almost certainly created for a distinctly political purpose. Most Latter-day Saints are not aware that when the Church issued “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” the institution was already deeply enmeshed in the political debate over same-sex marriage. The issue was on Church leaders’ radar as early as 1984 when Elder Dallin Oaks drafted a memorandum outlining possible approaches the Church might take on the issue. Oaks was called as an apostle on April 7, 1984, and the memorandum is dated August 7, 1984, suggesting that it was one of his first assignments. In that memorandum, Oaks speculates that the Equal Rights Amendment may have been used to usher in gay marriage; and he also notes the potential “irony” inherent in the Church’s issuing a statement against same-sex marriage: The Supreme Court case that established that marriage is between one man and one woman is the 1878 Reynolds anti-polygamy decision that quashed the LDS Church’s practice of plural marriages.2 In 1988 the Church hired a marketing firm to promote the Church’s position in state legislatures and the U.S. Congress.3

The Proclamation on the Family was released soon after the LDS Church had been denied standing by the Hawaiian Supreme Court in *Baehr v. Miike*, the first gay marriage case in the United States. The document was then included in the amicus curiae brief that the Church filed in support of the case. The timing and subsequent use of the proclamation suggest it was designed for a distinctly political purpose: to demonstrate authoritatively that the LDS Church has a stake in the same-sex marriage debate. Indeed, a 1999 *Church News* article drew a distinction between Church-issued documents called "declarations," "statements," and "proclamations," stating that "generally, declarations and statements are directed at Church membership, whereas proclamations are meant to reach beyond the scope of Church membership." Aside from being attached to the Church's amicus brief in the Hawaii case, on November 17, 1995, Utah Congressman Jim marriage-politics/ (accessed May 12, 2015). See also Kaimipono David Wenger, "The Divine Institution of Marriage: An Overview of LDS Involvement in the Proposition 8 Campaign," *Journal of Civil Rights and Economic Development* 26, no. 3 (2012), http://ssrn.com/abstract=2254634 (accessed May 12, 2015).

4. See *Baehr v. Miike,* *Justia US Law,* Justia.com http://law.justia.com/cases/hawaii/supreme-court/1996/18905-2.html (accessed May 6, 2015). In 1990 three same-sex couples sued the state of Hawaii for refusing them marriage licenses. After the circuit court dismissed the case, the couples appealed to the Supreme Court of Hawaii, which ruled that the government must show a "compelling public interest" in denying marriage to same-sex couples, and sent the case back to the lower court for further review. On February 14, 1994, the First Presidency of the LDS Church issued a statement declaring that "marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God," signaling its opposition to "any efforts to give legal authorization to marriages between persons of the same gender," and urging members of the Church to "appeal to legislators, judges and other government officials to preserve the purposes and sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman." A week later, the LDS Church's Hawaii Public Affairs Council announced its intention to petition the court to become a co-defendant in the Hawaii lawsuit. In that petition, the Church expressed fears that if same-sex marriages became legal the Church might lose its right to issue marriage licenses and that it might be subject to discriminatory lawsuits. However, the court rejected the Church's argument, stating that, since state laws force no minister to marry anyone, therefore any lawsuit filed against the Church would be considered frivolous. The Church appealed the court's decision and in January 1996, the Hawaii Supreme Court rejected the Church's appeal for standing. Around this same time, the LDS Church joined the Roman Catholic Church to form a lobbying group called Hawaii's Future Today. The Church statement was released on February 1, 1994, and is available at https://www.ldso.org/ensign/1994/04/news-of-the-church/first-presidency-statement-opposing-same-gender-marriages (accessed May 12, 2015). It was reprinted in "Church Supports Call for Constitutional Amendment," *Ensign*, July 2006 available at http://www.ldso.org/ensign/2006/07/news-of-the-church/church-supports-call-for-constitutional-amendment/ (accessed May 12, 2015).


Hansen read the proclamation into the record of the House of Representatives. Four days later, President Hinckley and Apostle Neal A. Maxwell presented a copy to U.S. President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore as they met in the White House to discuss ways to strengthen families. In March 1997, Church representatives distributed the proclamation translated into Czech, English, French, Spanish, German, and Russian at UN World Congress of Families in Prague. Framed copies of the proclamation have been presented to heads of state, foreign dignitaries, and high-ranking U.S. officials, including General Colin Powell, Texas Governor George Bush, Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne; presidents of Mexico, Italy, and French Polynesia; the prime minister of South Korea; the king of Tonga; and political leaders in Brazil and Australia.

6. Compton, "From Aloha to Ohana.


Likewise, the proclamation has been cited in many official public statements about same-sex marriage. When the U.S. Senate considered an amendment to the Constitution to protect marriage in 2006, the Church issued a supportive statement citing the proclamation, opposing gay marriage, and urging U.S. Mormons to "express themselves ... to their elected leaders." Elder Russell M. Nelson quoted the proclamation in a speech at a press conference for the Alliance for Marriage at the U.S. Capitol building, and it was featured prominently in the controversial 2008 debate over California's Proposition 8, including in an LDS Newsroom commentary. The Proclamation on the Family certainly motivated members of the Church to participate in the Prop. 8 campaign. Protect Marriage, a political action group opposed to same-sex marriage, estimated that Mormons contributed over half of the $40 million raised to support the amendment and represented between 80 to 90 percent of the early canvassing volunteers. Even though the proclamation has not been accepted as scripture, it has nevertheless achieved authoritative status within the Church, having been fully integrated into Church curricula, periodicals, and General Authority discourses. (See Fig. 1). The document is often given to young couples after their temple marriages, and some wards have supplied every individual or couple within its boundaries with a copy. Furthermore, with its official-looking layout and design, it invites special status as a material sign of Mormon devotion: members often decorate the walls of their homes with elegantly framed copies of the document, often with pictures of their family ensconced around it.

10. See Appendix for full citations.  
13. Significantly, in the Teach My Gospel manual, the proclamation is listed in boxes labeled "Scripture Study," thus equating the proclamation with scripture in the minds of missionaries in particular and Church members in general.  
14. Prior to the early mid-twentieth century, "sex" was defined as either of the two categories (male and female) whereby humans and most other living things can be divided on the basis of their reproductive organs. Sex was a classificatory signifier, but not a signifier for copulation. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "to have sex" (meaning to engage in intercourse) originates in D. H. Lawrence's 1929 poetry collection Pansies. Since that time, the word "sex" became synonymous with "sexual activity," and some people have come to use the word "gender" as a euphemism for the category marker "sex."  
15. Although the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve have all signed the Proclamation, no one has said who actually wrote the document, and no author is credited. It was likely a committee project, like many recent statements issued by the Church. It does, however, show strong parallels, including allusions to and close paraphrases of Elder Boyd K. Packer's address, "For Time and Eternity" delivered at the October 1995 general conference. In that discourse, Elder Packer states that God's plan requires "the righteous union of male and female" and asserts that "gender" existed prior to mortality in the preexistence. While he emphasized that men and women are equal in God's sight,
meaning of sexual acts. So when the proclamation says “gender is eternal,” we might assume that the Church really means “sex is eternal.” However, it may also reflect a fundamental, perhaps unconscious, fear that gay marriage upsets the traditional gender roles of Western—particularly Mormon—culture. In a blog post on Nursing Cloo, a scholarly forum on gender and medicine, Tiffany K. Wayne wrote that, as she was listening to people at “protect marriage” rallies outside the Supreme Court in 2013, she came to the conclusion that their concern was not only their beliefs that homosexuality was sinful or that gay marriage may harm children, but that same-sex marriage presents a significant challenge to traditional gender roles. She commented:

Same-sex marriage makes a lie of the very foundation of traditional gender roles. Same-sex marriages say that a woman can run a household, or that a man can raise a child. Same-sex marriage threatens the very foundation of what it means to be a woman/wife or be a man/husband. Who is in charge? Who will manage? Who will raise the children? Who is the man and who is the woman in the relationship? These are not questions of sex or sexuality; they are questions of gender. And when it comes to gender, same-sex marriage reveals the questions themselves as flawed.

Same-sex marriage, in other words, unmasksthe arbitrary nature of gender roles, calling them into question and destabilizing our long-held customs and beliefs about the essential nature of what it means to be male or female.

With its patriarchal structure, the LDS Church has a strong interest in shoring up the boundaries of traditional gender roles, and Eve has played a prominent role in that campaign. Institutional discourse about Eve is often prescriptive, holding Eve up as an ideal Mormon womanhood. In contrast, LDS he also stressed that “both the scriptures and the patterns of nature place man as the protector, the provider,” while woman is “the primary nurter of the children.” The Proclamation on the Family not only makes similar points but uses the same rhetoric. Interestingly, although Packer in his orally delivered address at the October 2011 general conference referred to it as a “resolution,” the published version of his talk backtracked on this claim to “inspired counsel,” continuing to leave its exact status somewhat uncertain—definitely not canonized but still highly authoritative.

16. Significantly, James E. Talmage, a Victorian who would have been too prudish to use the term like “sex” to communicate sexual intercourse, published his essay “The Eternity of Sex” in 1914, just prior to the usage change. But Talmage’s essay essentially communicates the same message as the proclamation, except that he uses “sex” rather than “gender.” As Talmage put it, “the distinction between male and female is no condition peculiar to the relatively brief period of mortal life; it was an essential characteristic of our pre-existent state, even as it shall continue after death, in both the disembodied and resurrected states.” James P. Harris, ed., The Essential James E. Talmage (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), http://signaturebookslibrary.org/?p=14234. Talmage’s article was originally published in the Young Woman’s Journal 25 (October 1914): 600–604.


women’s personal, lived-religious descriptions of Eve often reflect their deepest longings, concerns, joys, and sadness. In this essay, after briefly considering the philosophical roots of Western gender roles, I explore how Eve has filled these dual prescriptive institutional and descriptive personal functions within Mormonism from the nineteenth century to the present. I believe this approach will demonstrate both the centrality of Eve in Mormon gender discourse and how the sometimes competing or even mutually incommensurate depictions of Eve have worked to construct and undermine Mormon women’s gender identity.

The Origins of Gender Roles

Gender roles are as old as Western civilization itself and are, quite often, based upon significantly outmoded ideas about human biology and religious theology. Prudence Allen has argued that Aristotle not only “provided the foundation for the systematic advancement of knowledge” in Western culture, but also “for the intellectual roots of theories that distorted women’s identity” for millennia to come. Aristotle believed men to be the ultimate realization of humanity. Women, in contrast, were defective, deficient, and deformed. He believed procreation involved an active, masculine element giving shape to a passive female element, as men provided the pattern for the fetus while women provided the matter out of which it was composed. He compared the process to creating cheese, “as rennet acts upon milk, for rennet is a kind of milk containing vital heat, which brings into one mass and fixes the similar material.” While we no longer accept the science behind Aristotle’s reasoning, our words “father” and “mother” originate in this strange conception of biology: father is a cognate of the Latin pater which comes from the same root as “pattern”; mother is a cognate of the Latin mater which comes from the same root as “matter.” Of course, the spiritual form provided by fathers was thought to be superior to the gross material substance provided by mothers.

The Greeks drew a sharp distinction between the public sphere of men (the polis), and that of women, the house (nikos). The nikos was the inferior realm of gross material infrastructure managed by women and slaves, whereas the male-controlled polis was, as J. G. A. Pocock writes, “the ideal superstructure in which one took actions which were not means to ends but ends in themselves.” (Significantly, our word “economics” comes from the Greek nikos and nomos, meaning “ordering of the household,” and we have come to associate both the


world of economics and the world of politics with the male sphere outside of the home.) The view that men inhabit the public sphere of politics, economy, commerce, and law, while women inhabit the domestic sphere of child-rearing, housekeeping, and religious education carried on down through the Victorian era.

Bad theology further contributed to these twisted roles. From the time of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria in the first century and Augustine of Hippo in the fourth, well into the Middle Ages, the common interpretation of Genesis 1:26, where God proposed “let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” was that the male was created in the “image” of God, whereas woman was created after the image of man. By being both corporal and woman, Eve was two steps removed from God, whereas Adam was only one. Ultimately, the bifurcation between the sexes resulted in the taxonomy shown in Table 1. Mormonism unavoidably adopted some of these gender roles from its surrounding culture.

The problem with the bifurcation of gender roles is that we inevitably value one side more than the other, paying lip service to one while the other gets promotions, raises, attention, and praise. Today, economists count every aspect of our economy: the GNP, GDP, and CPI; the Dow, Nasdaq, and S&P; manufacturing, government, and private sector job creation. They look at every imaginable measure of the production, distribution or trade, and consumption of goods and services. Yet none of these measurements takes into account the value of work done in the home.21

Even though our understanding of biology is vastly different today than it was once, and despite our modern rejection of sexist behavior, we continue to be influenced by antiquated ideas about gender roles. It is still common to hear men joke about how women are too emotional, or for both men and women to talk about how women are more nurturing. And while the women’s rights movement of the 1970s made it politically incorrect to say things like “a woman’s place is in the home,” the notion that women should be more “domestic”—in charge of cooking, cleaning, washing, and caring for children—still flourishes in our contemporary society. Between 1970 and 2001, the percentage of families with an exclusive breadwinner father dropped from 56 to 25 percent in the United States.22 Mormon families have been slower to follow this trend, with Mormon women twice as likely in 2008 to report they are housewives as non-Mormon women (26 percent vs. 13 percent); nevertheless, almost 50 percent of Mormon women work either full-time or part-time outside the home.23


TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Man</th>
<th>Woman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active/stronger</td>
<td>Passive/weaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide active element in procreation (form)</td>
<td>Provide passive element in procreation (matter)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruled by reason</td>
<td>Ruled by passions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good judgment</td>
<td>Deceived</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit for rule</td>
<td>Fit to obey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant in the civic sphere</td>
<td>Dominant in the domestic sphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created in the image of God</td>
<td>Created in the image of man</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the fact that women have taken on more of the financial burden of raising their families, they still perform three times more of the household labor than men.24 Many tasks, such as meal preparation, housecleaning, shopping for groceries, washing dishes, and doing laundry, are still considered “female” tasks. Combining their new responsibilities to help support the family with their traditional household tasks, many women are suffering from what researchers are calling "role overload," a stress factor that has a significant adverse effect on the mental and physical health of women.25

Realistically in a world economy, families will be forced to make further adjustments as these trends continue. Backlash often results when societal changes occur; feelings of insecurity inevitably accompany new roles and expectations. People tend to reinforce the traditional roles even as they are becoming more and more outdated and impossible to live. Yet the main problem with gender roles is that, for the most part, they are arbitrary. Take, for instance, the near-universal acceptance in the United States of baby colors: blue for boys and pink for girls. For centuries, most children, boys and girls, were dressed in practical white dresses that could be easily raised for diaper changing and easily bleach when diapers exploded. Pastel colors began to be introduced in the mid-nineteenth century; however, there was disagreement about which sex should wear which.


color. A *Ladies' Home Journal* article in June 1918 said, “The generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl.” Still others argued blondes should wear blue and brunettes should wear pink, while others argued that blue was for blue-eyed babies, pink for brown-eyed babies. In 1927, *Time* magazine provided readers with a chart documenting what the major U.S. stores felt to be the most appropriate colors for girls and boys. FILE's in Boston told parents to dress boys in pink, as did Best & Co. in New York City, Halle's in Cleveland, and Marshall Field in Chicago. It wasn't until the 1940s that industries settled on blue for boys and pink for girls—the standard of today. However, without really thinking about it, we assume it is monolithic and never-changing, something given, perhaps, by God to Adam and Eve in the Garden. It wasn't.

Once it was considered shockingly unladylike for a woman to get an education or to vote. Nineteenth-century Mormon women were at the forefront of the suffrage movement and many sought an education. Nevertheless, no one would contradict Emily Spencer, a member of the first Relief Society founded at Nauvoo, when she wrote to the *Woman's Exponent* in 1875, stating that the women's rights movement had gone too far—that “to encourage women in wearing or imitating the dress of men is ridiculous.” History proves that a specific generation's expectations about gender behavior (or colors) are not eternal, unchanging, and universal, yet we assume concreteness in something that is arbitrary, universality in something that is localized, and timelessness in something that is utterly bound in time. Some gender roles made sense historically. Male dominance in upper body strength explains why men and women divided labor the way they did over the centuries. It's simply easier for a man than a woman to heft a bale of hay. Likewise, with women giving birth to children, it is logical that they would be concerned with creating a safe and comfortable “nest” for their children.

Yet across history and cultures, the specifics of gender roles are far from universal. Women were known as healers through the Middle Ages, until European universities (which excluded women) professionalized medicine and, at the same time, clerical and civil authorities began a campaign to brand women healers as witches. Office clerical work was seen as men's work until World War II, when women picked up these tasks as men went off to war. When the men returned, however, the jobs were seen as “feminized” and clerks were renamed “secretaries” and “typists,” and both the pay and the prestige for these jobs took a significant hit.


Of course, in different cultures these gendered divisions of labor vary. In Saudi Arabia, women’s roles are severely restricted, whereas women have served as ministers in the governments of Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, and Tunisia, and as vice president in Iran. Nevertheless, in the West, gender roles in work have traditionally followed an Aristotelian principle: public work is for men and private work is for women—even if it accomplishes much the same tasks: if it is work performed by or associated with males, it has prestige and high pay; if it is performed by or associated with females, it has less of both. Thus, men were chefs, while women were cooks; men were doctors, while women were nurses; men were professors, while women were schoolteachers. On rare occasions when women had the primary role in a Western or Westernized government—Queen Elizabeth, Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir, Margaret Thatcher—they were mostly successful in so far as they led “like men”; they were not so much females-as-leaders as they were females-as-Honorary-Male-leaders. It is also significant that, despite the fact that women have been accepted in most every field in the United States, we have never had a female Commander in Chief.

Even the concept of marriage has evolved (thankfully). "For most of history it was inconceivable that people would choose their mates on the basis of something as fragile and irrational as love and then focus all their sexual, intimate and altruistic desires on the resulting marriage," writes Stephanie Coontz.29 Ancienly, marriage was a contractual exchange of woman as property, bought by the groom with a "bride price" to the father, and polygamy, concubines, and female slaves were often part of the norm. In the Middle Ages, marriage was used primarily as a way for nobles to create and maintain diplomatic ties between kingdoms. Marriages contracted by families, especially fathers, have been more common than marriages based on two people falling in love. As Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg pointed out in the recent Supreme Court hearing in Obergefell v. Hodges, "marriage today is not what it was under the common law tradition," and until 1982 when Louisiana's "Head and Master Rule" was struck down, marriage in the United States could be defined as "a relationship of a dominant male to a subordinate female."30

**Eve in the Nineteenth Century**

The realities of frontier life and agrarian communities of nineteenth-century Mormonism required more fluidity within gender roles. Amy Hoyt and Sara Patterson have argued that pioneer femininity required a woman "who could work alongside her husband and support him as he carved civilization out of..."
the wilderness." Mormon masculinity was organized around the twin pillars of priesthood and polygamy. But with their husbands frequently away on missions, many Mormon women—whether monogamous or plural wives—were often left with the responsibility for both the sphere of domesticity and the sphere of commerce, keeping a home and keeping a career.

This did not stop nineteenth-century Church leaders from prescribing specific gender roles, and quite often they would cite Eve as a role model for Mormon women. Generally Latter-day Saints saw Eve in a different light than they do today. By partaking of the fruit, Eve fulfilled God's ultimate purpose; but being deceived, she did so inadvertently. James E. Talmage captured the standard nineteenth-century Mormon priesthood leaders' position on Eve in his 1899 book The Articles of Faith: "Our first parents are entitled to our deepest gratitude for their legacy to posterity—the means of winning title to glory, exaltation, and eternal lives." However, Talmage stressed, that while Eve "fulfilled[ed] the foreordained purposes of God...she did not partake of the forbidden fruit with that object in view, but with the intent to violate the Divine command, being deceived by the sophistries of the serpent-fiend."32

Brigham Young believed that Eve was one of Adam's plural wives, whom he brought to this earth from a celestial sphere. In his sermons, he used Eve to caution women to remember their place in the home: "It is the calling of the wife and mother to...labor to make her home desirable to her husband and children, making herself an Eve in the midst of a little paradise of her own creating."33 He also reminded women that "there is a curse upon the woman that is not upon the man, namely, that her whole affections shall be towards her husband," and what is the next? "He shall rule over you."34 Young's counselor in the First Presidency, Heber C. Kimball, reminded Mormon priesthood holders that God "did not make the man for the woman but the woman for the man," but balanced this statement by admonishing, "If a man does not use a woman well and take good care of her, God will take her away from him and give her to another."35

Mormon women likewise held up Eve as a model for womanhood, but their attitudes were more varied and generally more generous. Eliza R. Snow called on a meeting of the Young Women's Retrenchment Association to abstain from "round dances," which she said "were originated by the adversary to lead to evil." To urge the sisters to take a strong stand, Snow asked, "As Eve led out in the evil, why should she not be the first in doing good?"36 Citing the biblical injunction that Eve will be a "help meet" for the man, Phoebe Young, Brigham Young's daughter, stated, "It is not, then, our province to usurp the place, or do the work of our husbands, but to assist them, by every means in our power."37 Almost twenty years later on the eve of Utah's statehood, Phoebe Young would articulate a strikingly different position: "Let no woman fear that she is overstepping the bounds prescribed by the Great Creator as the proper sphere of woman, for she was in the beginning created a helpmate for man and who will dare affirm she is out of place, because she shares his ambition and desires to assist in all great and worthy enterprises?"38

Phoebe Young was not the first, nor was she the last, to interpret Eve's role more broadly. Emmeline B. Wells, writing under one of her numerous pseudonyms as Blanche Beechwood, saw the command to be a helpmeet and "a nearer conception of woman's mission and work" being fulfilled as the movement for women's suffrage allowed women to become "more thoroughly developed and highly educated." Beechwood continued, "Why should she not stand side by side with her brother, in all questions of interest for the common weal? For my part, I glory in the moral courage which arms woman with sufficient heroism to stand forth in her own defense, against any invasion upon her inherited rights and privileges."39 Another writer to the Women's Exponent saw Eve's role of "helpmeet" as "embracing[ing] all that was to be done, every requisition devolving upon mankind."40 Eve's equality with Adam was stressed by M. E. Teasdale, who wrote, "Woman's sphere of usefulness is as great, and her influence as widely felt as man's. She was placed upon the earth with man to be his companion, his helpmate and his equal. She was not taken from his feet to be trampled upon by him, nor from his head to rule over him, but from his side to be equal with him; near his heart to be loved and cherished by him."41 Sarah Howard simply asked, "Do you think

40. E. A. Crane Watson, "Woman's Calling," Woman's Exponent 19, no. 4 (July 15, 1890): 27.
41. M. E. Teasdale, "Equality of Sex," Woman's Exponent 15, no. 24 (May 15, 1887): 185. This trope dates at least to the Middle Ages, but this particular version appears to be a paraphrase from Matthew Henry's Bible commentary, which states: "That the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to top him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved." An Explanation of the Old and New Testament (London: Joseph Ogilby Robinson, 1828), 12. A decidedly different message comes from a Rabbinic midrash, where according to Genesis Rabbah 80:5, God says: "I will not create her
he would have created an inferior being for a helpmeet or companion for man, who had been created in the image of God.[42] One woman even questioned the biblical record: “We are told in our earliest histories that man was made first, and that woman was so dependent on him, that even the first woman had to secure a start from man, and that afterwards she was placed in subjection to him, but this I doubt.” She argued that women’s subservience “never was a divine wish or expectation—was only a mundane retrogression that must first be checked before woman can attain her God-given position on [sic] strict equality with her liege lord, man.”[43] Ida Peay reminded readers that God gave dominion to both Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28: “God has always considered woman and commissioned her as he has man.” She continued by calling for women’s suffrage: “Man in his might and blindness has wrested from Eve’s daughters their God-given rights in the dominion, hence this modern war which woman-kind is waging to obtain them back again. The struggle is surely divinely instituted and will ultimately succeed, for the world’s problems to-day are sadly in need of the decisions of pure, high minded, God-fearing men and women.”[44]

Eve in a New Century

As the Church moved to abandon polygamy between 1890 and 1910, it faced an identity crisis, forcing Latter-day Saints to confront the question of how to remain uniquely Mormon while assimilating into the larger American culture. Hoyt and Patterson argue that four pillars of Mormon manhood emerged to shore up that transition: a revised notion of priesthood, where the age of ordination was lowered to bring young men into Church activity sooner; a new adherence to the Word of Wisdom, where Mormon men were expected to fully abstain from tobacco, coffee, and alcohol; an increased expectation that young men would serve missions; and a new commitment to monogamous marriage. These four pillars set Mormon men apart and against the larger American culture.[45] Victorian society almost universally accepted the doctrine of “separate spheres,” where women were guardians of home and hearth, and Mormons were no exception. As Susanna Morrill describes this concept, the “home-centered roles of mother and wife” were “seen as the glue that keeps society together.”[46] Young Mormon women were tasked with guarding the virtue of young Mormon men. It was assumed that only men would hold the priesthood, that only they would be tempted to break the Word of Wisdom, and that only they would serve missions. Therefore young women were given the “enormous social burden” of protecting men’s virtue.[47] Young Mormon women, like those of the larger Victorian culture, were taught to be righteous, talented, and desirable.[48]

Eve was frequently invoked to encourage women’s positive influence over men. “Eve, as the one who helped Adam, was the first woman to be good, and to feed man with the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.”[49] Hoyt and Patterson argue that by embracing this role, women can enhance their influence in the Church. They believe that by following Eve’s example, women can become “the mothers of the Church” and help to “build up the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”[50]

Women must acknowledge this powerful influence and “wield it openly and for good only.”[51] Another wrote that “there are thousands of Adams to-day who smoke that vile weed tobacco, because some fair Eve has told them she admires the smell of a good cigar.”[52] Many a modern Adam has taken his first glass of wine because it was proffered by the beautiful jeweled hand of a modern Eve, and many a modern Adam reforming his habits and morals because some fair and lovely Eve, who is more to him than all the world besides, has told him that he must do it, or he can never occupy the same garden of Eden with her.”[53]

Mary Anderson wrote that “if Eve had so much influence over her companion, should we not be careful how we use our influence over our companions, and associates by whom we are surrounded daily, for are we not all daughters of Eve[?].”[54] Women must “use that influence which has been given her for a higher and better purpose,” she argued. “Ever since the days of mother Eve; woman’s influence has been manifest for the advancement or regression of the people of the earth.”

43. Hoyt and Patterson, “Mormon Masculinity,” 83.
44. Ibid., 86.
45. Wilhelmina Christafferson, Letter to editor, *Woman’s Exponent* 5, no. 3 (July 1, 1876): 19.
47. Mary Anderson, “An Answer to the Article Entitled ‘Woman’s Calling,’” *Woman’s Exponent* 19, no. 6 (August 15, 1890): 42.

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43. D. P. Felr, “A Man’s Advice about Woman Suffrage,” *Woman’s Exponent* 20, no. 10 (November 15, 1891): 73.
44. Ida S. Peay, “Taking a Stand for the Right,” *Woman’s Exponent* 41, no. 8 (June 1, 1913): 61; emphasis hers.
wrote Susie Armstrong; and “from that time until the present, woman by her influence has been more or less responsible, for the conditions of society.”  

If Eve was culpable of leading Adam into sin, several writers argued, it is typically not the case for the woman to lead the man. “The old history of the Garden of Eden is repeating itself frequently. But in all recent repetitions of it, especially in political affairs, the Adam is the worst sinner. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he puts himself in the way of temptation, and in most of these he is saved from a fatal fall by his Eve.” Still another author saw men as the tempters. If women are called the “weaker sex,” one author conceded, it is because of her “deep and pure love which gives her the lasting faith (of which men so frequently take the advantage) she being pure thinketh no evil, until her eyes are opened to see that she like another Eve has been deceived by Satan appearing in the form of man instead of a serpent.”  

For Adelia B. Cox Sidwell, it was unfair to lay the blame for the fall on Eve. Condemned to wander in the garden for “untold centuries” with no female companionship, Eve must have longed for conversation, wrote Sidwell. “If I am allowed to judge Adam by most men of my acquaintance, he was probably very indifferent company, as men’s conversational brilliancy is seldom exerted to any considerable extent for the benefit or entertainment of a wife.” Suffering such isolation and being deprived of motherhood, woman’s “crowning glory, comfort, joy,” Sidwell continued, “who I ask can blame [Eve] for being discontent, and desiring a change in her monotonous existence? even though that change included Death!”  

Likewise, a woman writing under the name “Frances” stated that “the probability is if Adam had tasted [the fruit] first he would have kept the knowledge to himself and have not offered to share it with his companion.” For Frances, Eve’s inquisitive nature is only matched by her compassion. “She wished to share that which was good with her fellow-creature which is a credit to her, and certainly showed her to be actuated solely by motives of a purely unselfish and generous character.”  

Ruth May Fox contended that since Eve was blamed for the fall of humanity, “there has been a woman at the bottom of everything that savored of ill repute, but in the future there will be a woman at the bottom of everything that good [sic], not excluding good government.”  

Lucy M. Hewlings wrote, “If woman was foremost in the fall, she is first and foremost in every enterprise that has for its object the uplifting of humanity and the glory of God.” An unsigned editorial, likely written by Emmeline Wells, stressed Eve’s role as the instigator of human progress. “Adam would probably have been content to remain in ignorance, but Eve, with woman’s quick, keen perception, saw that the fruit of the tree of knowledge was pleasant to the sight and to be desired, and Adam was encouraged to eat of that which otherwise he might never have touched, because Eve offered it to him.”  

Within the sphere of domestic life, Eve was seen as the role model for everything from raising a family to choosing appropriate clothing styles. As one woman wrote, the scriptures’ teachings about Eve serve as “excellent instruction to the daughters of Zion,” helping them “understand their true position and purpose, to keep the first great commandment given in the Garden of Eden, viz. to multiply and replenish the earth.” Another woman, admonishing young women to learn how to cook, took a more comical tone: Eve “set us a worthy example” by “looking after, what she and Adam were to eat.” And Adam parrook, without “interfering with her domestic arrangements.” Sewing must be women’s role, quipped M. C. Woods, “since our mother Eve must have used some sort of thread to sew the strings on her fig leaf apron.” The domestic sphere is, of course, the theatre of woman’s peculiar role, but did God intend her to be a domestic drudge? asked Hannah Tapfield King. Toil is not mentioned in Eve’s curse, she reminds readers. “That was especially man’s punishment.”  

Women not only looked to Eve for an example of how to keep their separate sphere in the home, but also, somewhat ironically, as an example of proper attire and as a critique of the vanity and folly of nineteenth-century women’s fashions. Speaking of the “Idol of To-Day,” Ruby Lamont, the pen name of Maria Miller Johnson, asked, “Does anyone suppose for a moment that Eve was supported by [a corset of] bones and steel’s? And that outrage to all modesty and beauty, that disgusting deformity of the human form and dishonor to God’s handiwork and ourselves—the bustle! How must angels frown and demons laugh to see our sisters, the daughters of Zion! with that thing on to mock at and deform the shape that God has made!” Citing the law given to Eve that “her husband should rule over her,” Emily Spencer worried that for the woman’s movement “to encourage women in wearing or imitating the dress of man is ridiculous.” A woman responding to her did not discount how ridiculous it might be to dress like men.

53. Ex. [psued.], “A Vindication of Women,” Woman’s Exponent 5, no. 10 (October 15, 1876): 79.  
57. R.M.F. [Ruth May Fox], “Lecture on Suffrage,” Woman’s Exponent 24, no. 6 (August 15, 1895): 41.  
64. Ruby Lamont (psued. of Maria Miller Johnson), “The Idol of To-Day,” Woman’s Exponent 16, no. 3 (July 1, 1887): 17.
but stated that she had not heard of "man's dress for woman, or anything approximating thereto, having been advocated among Latter-day Saints."65 Mary Ann Pratt, on the other hand, looked to men's styles as a model for women's when she commented on the degrading influence of women's fashion: "Womankind should have respect for her fellow man, for as she looks upon him she sees the image of her Heavenly Father reflective. Man has not lost his original form as much as woman, he is not as much governed by fashion in dress as she is, in that which depresses the natural form."66 Despite the fact that the only thing recorded in the scripture about Eve's apparel was that she and Adam wore fig leaves in the garden and that God made "coats of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:7, 21) upon their expulsion therefrom, some women looked to Eve as an example of a dress code that was unostentatious and uniquely feminine.

Post-War Eve

General Authorities seldom spoke about Eve between 1890 and the 1950s. When she was mentioned, she was typically not being singled out for her unique role, but simply in passing as Adam's wife, and General Authorities have mentioned Adam many times more often than they have mentioned Eve. (See Figs. 2 and 3.) Indeed, as Carrie Miles has noted, talks in general conference only rarely discussed women's roles and only eighteen articles were indexed under the word "women" in the Improvement Era between 1891 and 1940, its first fifty years of publication.67 One notable exception to this dearth of discourse about Eve was an address by President J. Reuben Clark, then first counselor to President George Albert Smith, delivered at the Relief Society general conference in October 1946. The talk veered between reverence for Eve and a strange sort of sexism. On the one hand he called Eve "radiant and divinely fair . . . the last created being" of the creation and suggested that Adam had prepared for her a "bridal home, . . . the Garden that from then till now has been the symbol of heaven on earth." But in contrast, Clark referred only to her role "to be a creator of bodies under the faculties given her by the Priesthood of God, so that God's design and the great plan might meet fruition." Clark continued, "This was her calling: this was her blessing, bestowed by the Priesthood. . . . From that day, when Eve thus placed first among her blessings the power to bear children, the greatest glory of true womanhood has been motherhood."68 While motherhood is certainly a noble role, Clark stressed, it was bestowed by the (presumably male) priesthood. He does not recognize Eve's other roles: as the wise initiator of human progression, as a capable theologian who understood the importance of opposition in human development, or as an astute soul who discerned the Adversary.

65. Emily B. Spencer, "Answer to Inez," Woman's Exponent 4, no. 2 (June 15, 1875), 16; Inez, "Eve's Curse: Is It Never To Be Removed?" Woman's Exponent 4, no. 3 (July 1, 1875), 22–23.
66. Mary Ann M. Pratt, "Woman's Vote," Woman's Exponent 19, no. 24 (June 15, 1891), 189.
Eve and the Backlash to Second-Wave Feminism

The 1960s represented an upheaval in sexual mores and gender roles. The birth control pill was approved by the FDA in 1960; Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963; the Kennedy administration advocated women's rights as part of its New Frontier and established the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, a proposal made by a Mormon, Esther Peterson (director of the U.S. Women's Bureau and Assistant Secretary of Labor in the Kennedy administration). LDS Church leadership and much of the rank-and-file membership began to perceive second-wave feminism as a threat to the family. The Church mounted a significant opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment and stressed traditional gender roles in discourses, publications, and manuals. Again, Eve was held up as a model for virtuous womanhood. Nevertheless, societal changes affected Mormons just as much as they affected the rest of the nation. More women began working outside the home and having fewer children.

 Calling motherhood a "sacred calling," Church president Spencer W. Kimball admonished women not to forgo children or marriage for careers. "Our beloved mother Eve began the human race with gladness, wanting children, glad for the joy that they would bring to her, willing to assume the problems connected with a family, but also the joys." In the beginning, Adam was instructed to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow—not Eve," stressed Apostle Ezra Taft Benson in 1981:

 Contrary to conventional wisdom, a mother's place is in the home! I recognize there are voices in our midst which would attempt to convince you that these truths are not applicable to our present-day conditions. If you listen and heed, you will be lured away from your principal obligations. Beguiling voices in the world cry out for "alternative life-styles" for women. They maintain that some women are better suited for careers than for marriage and motherhood. These individuals spread their discontent by the propaganda that there are more exciting and self-fulfilling roles for women than homemaking. Some even have been bold to suggest that the Church move away from the "Mormon woman stereotype" of homemaking and rearing children. They also say it is wise to limit your family so you can have more time for personal goals and self-fulfillment.

 After becoming Church president in 1987, Benson repeated almost verbatim much of this talk in a special fireside for parents. "In the beginning, Adam—not Eve—was instructed to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow. Contrary to conventional wisdom, a mother's calling is in the home, not in the market place."

 A Parent's Guide, which the Church published in 1985, proposes Adam and Eve as ideal parents: "The relationship between a man and a woman is so significant that our Heavenly Father himself placed Adam and Eve together as husband and wife." Much of the advice the manual gives on rearing children is neutral, like its admonishment to teach both daughters and sons "to seek opportunities to learn and to exploit every such opportunity fully. Girls and boys should learn all they can about every subject within their capabilities. They should nurture and develop their gifts (see D&C 46:11–26), striving always to achieve their full potential and to fill the measure of their creation (see D&C 88:19)." However, the pamphlet goes on to stress gender-specific roles for girls and boys: girls need to learn "the arts and sciences of housekeeping, domestic finances, sewing, and cooking," whereas boys should learn "home repair, career preparation, and the protection of women." The pamphlet stresses that the realities of the world—divorce, death of spouse, etc.—may necessitate some modifications. It goes on to state that men need to know some basic domestic skills as women need to plan for a career, but it insists that "for all of the children of God, this life is primarily a probationary experience designed to prepare them for the eternal roles of husband and father, wife and mother." The implication—that in the eternities husbands and fathers will be repairing homes, working in careers, and protecting women, while wives and mothers will be practicing the "arts and sciences" of cooking, cleaning, and sewing—seems rather odd.

 Next to these rigid gender roles lies a competing, and many would argue contradictory, discourse about equality. For example, Ezra Taft Benson stated: "Adam and Eve provide us with an ideal example of a covenant marriage relationship. They labored together; they had children together; they prayed together; and they taught their children the gospel—together. This is the pattern God would have all righteous men and women imitate." Emphasizing the need for couples to work together in their families, Elder Russell M. Nelson noted, "I presume another bone could have been used [to create Eve], but the rib, coming as it does from the side, seems to denote partnership. The rib signifies neither

69. Miles, "LDS Family Ideals," 114.
dominion nor subservience, but a lateral relationship as partners, to work and to live, side by side.” And Apostle Richard G. Scott called Eve Adam’s equal, “a full, powerfully contributing partner.”

**Equal Partner or “Complementing Differences”**

In October 1993, Elder Boyd K. Packer spoke in general conference of the “complementing differences” between Adam and Eve, biological differences that allowed them to “multiply and fill the earth” as well as social roles that “are the very key to the plan of happiness.” Men are to be “protector, the provider” while women are to be “the primary nurturer of the children.” The contradiction of maintaining gender equality and patriarchal rules was not evident in “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” which echoed many of Packer’s words. God’s first commandment to Adam and Eve “to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force.” While stating that fathers and mothers are “equal partners,” it stresses separate gender roles for each: “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.” Compared with the 1985 Parent’s Guide, the Proclamation on the Family is much less specific at defining gender roles, and in many places it is even quite progressive. It begins by affirming that “all human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God” (there is no difference between women and men as there was for Philo and Augustine) and that “fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.” Nevertheless, the basic taxonomy of differing gender roles is distinctly lopsided. Fathers are assigned three gender-specific roles: presiding, providing, and protecting. Mothers have only one: nurturing, and even it is given provisional status as only “primarily” theirs.

The proclamation’s roles are similar to the Aristotelian model of gender roles, with men occupying the public sphere and women the domestic. As noted earlier, the motive for publishing the document appears to have been to establish the Church’s position against same-sex marriage; however, it enshrines traditional gender roles in an unprecedented way which Church members seem to have accepted uncritically. (See Janice Alford’s analysis of the Proclamation on the Family as the cornerstone of current gender theology in Chapter 4.)

Elder Bruce Hafen took a somewhat softer position about gender roles in his 2005 book on marriage: “The Victorian model treated women as dependent on their husbands. Today’s liberationist model treats women as independent of their husbands and husbands as independent of their wives. But the restored gospel teaches that husbands and wives are interdependent with each other” Hafen invoked Adam and Eve: “In their life after the Fall, these interdependent partners worked together . . . they prayed and worshipped God together . . . and they taught their children together.”

In a subly subversive talk given in the Relief Society general meeting of October 1999, Virginia Jensen, then first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, spoke of how two birds—a swallow and a robin—built nests in her backyard. She detailed the pains both mother birds went through to build nests, protect the eggs, and, eventually, feed their babies in their “daily vigil of protecting and nurturing” their brood. She went on to quote male Church leaders on the importance of work done in the home, stating, “Some think there are other uses of a woman’s time and talents that are more important than the family.” Then she emphasized that “prophets have been relentless in declaring that the role of homemaker is one of the most sacred and meaningful pursuits possible to man or woman.” So while affirming the traditional message that, as David O. McKay put it, “no other success can compensate for failure in the home,” Jensen gently challenged the notion that gender roles are fixed. The mother birds both protect and nurture; the role of homemaker is noble for both men and women.

During the general women’s session of the April 2015 conference, the twentieth anniversary of the Proclamation on the Family was highlighted with a special video presentation, and the three women who spoke—leaders of the Primary, Young Women, and Relief Society—all stressed the importance of family. Bonnie L. Oscarson, the Young Women general president, described the proclamation as “our benchmark for judging the philosophies of the world” and issued a call for all Latter-day Saints to become “defenders” of the proclamation. Interestingly, however, Oscarson did not emphasize the strict gender roles enshrined in the document. Instead, she advised her audience to teach their children that “there is no greater honor, no more elevated title, and no more important role in this life than that of mother or father” and she challenged them to elevate the term


"homemaker." “All of us—women, men, youth, and children, single or married—can work at being homemakers,” Oscarson stressed.81

Just as in the nineteenth century, twentieth-century women have looked to Eve as a role model. And some of the most touching examples of how Eve exemplifies the lived experience of Mormon women are found in poetry. Reminiscent of Emily Dickenson’s finest poetry, Carol Lynn Pearson’s sparse “Eve’s Meditation,” is particularly poignant. Celebrating the divine words of Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man in our own image, male and female,” Pearson’s Eve deduces from the rest of God’s creation the essential oneness of her union with Adam:

Trunk and leaf
Make the tree,
Body and wing
Make the bee.
Gazing at the garden
I cannot think it odd
That you and I together
Make the image of God.82

In a line from her poem “Tefnut,” which celebrates the lives of goddesses and holy women throughout history, Penny Allen points to the central task Eve, Adam’s helper, accomplished, moving Adam out of the Garden and, in so doing, unleashing human potential:

What secrets did she insist on knowing
When she took the fruit? Made to be a
Helpmeet, she helped Adam out of Eden.83

A poem published in the Church’s Ensign magazine in 1976 portrays Eve as Adam’s companion in every sense of the word, working alongside him as he worked to subdue the “lone and dreary world.”

... she helped him
Tame the land, shared the aching length of days,
The moisture-beaded brow. Endowed with knowledge now,
She dared the thistle paths that pierced her spirit,
Strong in new-found peace.
Pain-bent, she brought forth seed, sorrowing
For those who erred, while guiding gently
toward the light.

The poem also depicts Eve as Adam’s equal and goes on offer Eve as a model for all womanhood:

Mother Eve,
Now reaching out through centuries of time
To me, a daughter of the latter day,
You give your knowledge-gift
Enthralled, shining strands of service
And wrapped with dedication to eternal choice.
Our sacred trust defined, you bridge eternity
And set a jeweled precedent for me,
And womankind.84

As this example shows, Mormon women of the twentieth century looked to Eve as a model of an independent, courageous, powerful, and liberated woman.

In “To Eve—With Empathy throughout the Years,” Shirley Adewena Harvey imagines Eve’s loss of both her sons, Abel to death, Cain to banishment.

Gone—two sons of promise—
One never to see tomorrow’s dawn,
Never to father generations.
The other wrenched from you,
Marked and cast out.

When the poet describes the pain “that tore heart and soul” one feels not only the grief of Eve, but of generations of women who have lost children. But the poem also offers comfort:

There would be other dawns—and other harvests—
With long hours of toil to fill empty days.
Then slowly, surely, as pain gives way to faith,
You feel God’s love surround you,
Warm as a shawl on your shoulders,
And you hear His spirit whisper to your spirit
That sometime—somewhere in eternity—
A mother’s heart will heal.85

Another poem depicts this same heartbreaking scene, emphasizing Eve’s gift of healing and her developing understanding of death as the full pain of mortality sinks in. Speaking to Adam, Eve states:

I am trying to understand.
You said, “Abel is dead.”
But I am skilled with herbs

82. Carol Lynn Pearson, “Eve’s Meditation,” Beginnings and Beyond (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 2005), 125.
Remember when he was seven
The fever? Remember how—
Herbs will not heal?
Dead?

Eve then protests God's taking her sons from her:
But God can't do that.
They are my sons, too.
I gave them birth.
In the valley of pain.

As the grief of losing her sons sinks in, Eve contemplates the word "multiply" in God's words in his commandment "to multiply and replenish the earth" as well as in the curse that he will "multiply thy sorrow."

Abel, my son dead?
And Cain, my son, a fugitive?
Two sons
Adam, we had two sons
Both—Oh, Adam—
multiply
sorrow
Dear God, why?
Tell me again about the fruit
Why?
Please, tell me again
Why?

The question hangs in the air, with no answer forthcoming. And again, we sense that generations of mothers can empathize with Eve's pain and sorrow and the nagging questions about God's kindness and justice that persist in such tragic times.

Sarah Page's "Corning the Apple," which appeared in 2009, is strongly reminiscent of Robert Frost's sonnet "Never Again Would Bird's Song Be the Same." Frost's poem celebrates Eve as the creator of the soft eloquence of sound, coequal in her work to Adam's task of naming (creating words), the two abilities necessary, ultimately, for poetic production. But Page is not simply imitating Frost. While Frost honors Eve's (in fact all women's) gift of granting beauty to the world, Page celebrates Eve as a hero, as the shaper of divine destiny.

I would like to ask Eve someday
What she saw in the apple.
Before she chose
The fire-stung glory of mortality,
Did she pause for even the space of a breath,
Tremble at the bruise of pain, the sharpness of the brier?
Perhaps she sensed the hope nestled star-like
In the core of the fruit.

And so risked all she was for the quickening—
The promise of the seed dreaming deep in the loam.
I would like to ask Eve someday
What she saw in me. 87

While Page's poem calls to mind Frost, it is also uniquely Mormon. She, like these other poets, uses Eve as a courageous woman, making a conscious choice, aware of the enormous stakes of that choice—but also seeing the limitless potential of future generations. It is common among Latter-day Saints to believe that, as he was suffering in Gethsemane and on the cross, Jesus thought about each of us personally and took upon himself each of our individual sins. But it is a unique insight to think that Eve was also aware of each of our lives and all of our potential when she took that fateful bite. These LDS poets recognize that, for Latter-day Saints of the twenty-first century, Christ is not so much the Second Adam as he is the Second Eve. For it is Eve who is celebrated for making the glorious decision to become mortal and wise, and it is Christ who transforms humanity from mortal to immortal, from wise to exalted. Even as she is still held up as a model of Mormon womanhood and traditional gender roles, a competing vision of Eve exists as the giver of life and knowledge.

APPENDIX

AMICUS CURIAE BRIEFS AND THE PROCLAMATION ON THE FAMILY


I have only found two amicus briefs with which the Church has been affiliated in some way that did not cite the proclamation: It was not included in the Brief Amici Curiae of National Association of Evangelicals, et al., *U.S. v. Windsor*, No. 12-307, U.S. Supreme Court filed January 29, 2013, http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/supreme_court_preview/briefs-v2/12-307благ_меритс_nae-v-етал.authcheckdam.pdf (accessed May 12, 2015); and it was not included in the amicus brief filed by Hawaii's Future Today, a lobbying organization that received significant backing from the Church. In the latter, it is somewhat ironic that the brief relied, in part, on the Reynolds decision which invalidated LDS marriages of the nineteenth century. Footnote 11 reads, "Beyond its precedential value, the polygamy cases also should provide great concern from a practical point of view. Should this Court determine that the State of Hawaii possesses no compelling governmental interest supporting its current traditional marriage laws when weighed against challenges brought by homosexuals, it is very difficult to conceive of a compelling governmental interest which would save Hawaii's traditional marriage laws when weighed against a challenge by polygamists." Hawaii's Future Today Amicus Curiae Brief, *Baehr v. Miike*, No. 20371 Supreme Court State of Hawaii filed September 1996, http://www.qrd.org/qrd/usa/legal/hawaii/baehr/1997/brief.hawaii.future.today-03.16.97 (accessed May 12, 2015).

Chapter 4
LDS Gender Theology: A Feminist Perspective

Janice Allred

As Mormon women voice their desire for priesthood ordination, they offer many reasons to explain why they see ordination as a good thing both for Mormon women and for the LDS Church. They affirm the value of equality and maintain that equality cannot be achieved in the Church until women are ordained. The ordination of women would strengthen the Church as it would allow and encourage women to develop and utilize their spiritual gifts and magnify their talents. Bringing women into Church governance would broaden the perspective of Church leadership, making Church governance more effective and more equitable. Women leaders would serve as role models for young women and encourage all women to see themselves as empowered, full participants in the family, Church, and community.

These are strong, cogent reasons that express the hopes and desires of many people, men as well as women, for equality in the Church. However, they are often dismissed by mainstream Church members as secular or feminist ideas that fail to take into consideration the gospel or the nature of God's plan for the Church and the family. The ideal of equality and the use of activism to achieve it are intrinsic to feminism. Activism gets attention when reasoned arguments do not. Mainstream members also view activism as a secular method that is inappropriate for bringing about change within the Church. But there are no channels within the Church for members to bring their concerns and questions to the top leadership. Individuals are not heard, but the concerted voices of activists speak loudly. Although Ordain Women uses activism in pursuing its goal of priesthood ordination for women, its members ground their activism in belief. Recognizing the sole authority of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve to change Church doctrine and practice, women activists appealed to them, asking them to seek revelation from God concerning the ordination of women to priesthood. This appeal acknowledged the Church's teaching that these men are prophets who receive their authority and teachings from God. The failure of Church leaders to respond directly to Ordain Women and the excommunication of Kate Kelly, one of the organization's co-founders, has convinced many Mormons that the question of priesthood for women is closed.1 However, the way of persuasion, long-suffering, and pure knowledge remains open.

1. John Deihl, a longtime activist and advocate for more historical transparency, gay rights, and women's rights, among other causes, was summoned at about the same time to a high council court, but his court was delayed until February 2015. He was excommunicated.
Voices for Equality

Ordain Women and Resurgent Mormon Feminism

Edited by
Gordon Shepherd, Lavina Fielding Anderson, and Gary Shepherd

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