

And they did wax strong in love towards Mosiah; yea, they did esteem him more than any other man; for they did not look upon him as a tyrant who was seeking for gain, . . . for he had not exacted riches of them, neither had he delighted in the shedding of blood; but he had established peace in the land, and he had granted unto his people that they should be delivered from all manner of bondage; therefore they did esteem him, yea, exceedingly, beyond measure [Mosiah 29:40].

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## MOTHER IN HEAVEN

Latter-day Saints infer from authoritative sources of scripture and modern prophecy that there is a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints rejects the idea found in some religions that the spirits or souls of individual human beings are created *ex nihilo*. Rather it accepts literally the vital scriptural teaching as worded by Paul: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." This and other scriptures underscore not only spiritual sibling relationships but heirship with God, and a destiny of joint heirship with Christ (Rom. 8:16–18; cf. Mal. 2:10).

Latter-day Saints believe that all the people of earth who lived or will live are actual spiritual offspring of God the Eternal Father (Num. 16:22; Heb. 12:9). In this perspective, parenthood requires both father and mother, whether for the creation of spirits in the *PREMORTAL LIFE* or of physical tabernacles on earth. A Heavenly Mother shares parenthood with the Heavenly Father. This concept leads Latter-day Saints to believe that she is like him in glory, perfection, compassion, wisdom, and holiness.

Elohim, the name-title for God, suggests the plural of the Caananite *El* or the Hebrew *Eloah*. It is used in various Hebrew combinations to describe the highest God. It is the majestic title of the ultimate deity. Genesis 1:27 reads, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, *male and female* created he them"

(emphasis added), which may be read to mean that "God" is plural.

For Latter-day Saints, the concept of eternal family is more than a firm belief; it governs their way of life. It is the eternal plan of life, stretching from life before through life beyond mortality.

As early as 1839 the Prophet Joseph SMITH taught the concept of an eternal mother, as reported in several accounts from that period. Out of his teaching came a hymn that Latter-day Saints learn, sing, quote, and cherish, "O My Father," by Eliza R. SNOW. President Wilford WOODRUFF called it a *REVELATION* (Woodruff, p. 62).

In the heav'ns are parents single?  
 No, the thought makes reason stare!  
 Truth is reason; truth eternal  
 Tells me I've a mother there.  
 When I leave this frail existence,  
 When I lay this mortal by,  
 Father, Mother, may I meet you  
 In your royal courts on high? [Hymn no. 292]

In 1909 the *FIRST PRESIDENCY*, under Joseph F. SMITH, issued a statement on the origin of man that teaches that "man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father," as an "offspring of celestial parentage," and further teaches that "all men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity" (Smith, pp. 199–205).

Belief that there is a Mother in Heaven who is a partner with God in creation and procreation is not the same as the heavy emphasis on Mariology in the Roman tradition.

Today the belief in a living Mother in Heaven is implicit in Latter-day Saint thought. Though the scriptures contain only hints, statements from *PRESIDENTS OF THE CHURCH* over the years indicate that human beings have a Heavenly Mother as well as a Heavenly Father.

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