

“O MY MOTHER”: MORMON FUNDAMENTALIST MOTHERS IN HEAVEN AND WOMEN’S AUTHORITY

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The doctrine of Heavenly Mother has long been invoked by Mormon women and Mormon feminists to posit an expanded view of gender in Mormon cosmology and offer women a tangible representation of their eternal future. At the same time, the lack of worship or veneration of a divine feminine in Mormonism raises the question of whether the doctrine has the potential to influence the temporal state of Mormon women. Historically missing from the literature and theological critiques is the inclusion of Mormon groups where this is already happening. Mormon communities outside of the LDS Church *have* given Heavenly Mother a place in their meetinghouses, a priesthood role in temple liturgy, and considered the tangible outcomes of her cosmological significance in late-night conversations around the dinner table once the children are asleep and the dishes are clean. This article explores the theology of Heavenly Mother in Mormon fundamentalisms and the way it influences access to religious authority.

In 2018, I sat in a meeting of the Apostolic United Brethren (AUB) at the Rulon C. Allred building in Bluffdale, Utah and opened the hymnbook to Hymn no. 3, “O My Father.”¹ As I prepared to sing the

1. Eliza R. Snow, “My Father in Heaven,” *Times and Seasons* 6, Nov. 1845, 1039. For a discussion of this poem and hymn, see Jill Mulvay Derr, “The Significance of ‘O My Father’ in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow,” *BYU Studies* 36, no. 1 (1996–97): 84–126.

hymn that became both a foundational theological text and a staple in LDS meetinghouses across the nation, I looked to the previous page and saw Hymn no. 4, “O My Mother.” The hymn, attributed to Eliza R. Snow, moves beyond LDS speculation of a Heavenly Mother and offers women an avenue for seeing themselves in Mormon cosmology.² Their exaltation is not invisible, it is tangible and reflected in the voices of women who sing the hymn at their Sunday afternoon meetings.

O my Mother, my heart longest
To again be by Thy side,
In the Home I once called heaven
In Thy Mansion up on high.
How you gave me words of counsel
Guides to aid my straying feet.
How you taught me by true example
All of Father’s laws to keep.

This hymn is not the only place where Heavenly Mother is invoked in the fundamentalist movement. Since their earliest publications, fundamentalists spoke highly of Heavenly Mother, even hypothesizing a “Trinity of Mothers” and referencing the “Goddess of this world.”³ For many fundamentalists, Heavenly Mother is not absent; they know they have “Mothers there,” as Snow wrote with assurance. As a perceived continuation of early Mormonism, the fundamentalist movement relied on the work of nineteenth-century thinkers such as Eliza R. Snow and Edward W. Tullidge to posit a Heavenly Mother with divine authority as an integral part of Mormon cosmology.

At the same time, the doctrine that potentially affords women eternal representation is complicated by its entanglement with plural marriage, something both LDS and non-LDS feminist theologians have

2. The hymn was written by William C. Harrison and originally published as “Companion Poem to Eliza R. Snow’s ‘Invocation’” in the March 1, 1892 issue of the *Juvenile Instructor*, edited by George Q. Cannon.

3. Joseph W. Musser, “Comments on Conference Topics,” *Truth*, May 1938.

long deemed oppressive. The possibility of increased access to religious authority does not overshadow the numerous traumatic experiences of women within fundamentalism nor the documented abuse in these communities. Mormon groups that developed from Alma Dayer LeBaron's ordination claim, referenced throughout this article, are fraught with cases of incest and underage marriage. The accounts of women's access to a divine feminine stand alongside abusive experiences. An acknowledgment of Heavenly Mother and women's priesthood in Mormon fundamentalism does not negate or diminish the harm caused to many women and children of the tradition.

Mother(s) There

Three decades after the publication of "O My Father," Eliza R. Snow published another poem with additional insight into the divine feminine and the earth's Heavenly Mother. In her 1877, "The Ultimatum of Human Life," Snow penned:

Obedience will the same bright garland weave,
 As it has done for your great Mother, Eve,
 For all her daughters on the earth, who will
 All my requirements sacredly fulfill.
 And what to Eve, though in her mortal life,
 She'd been the first, the tenth, or fiftieth wife?
 What did *she care*, when in her lowest state,
 Whether by fools, consider'd small, or great?
 'Twas all the same with her—she prov'd her worth—
 She's now the Goddess and the Queen of Earth.⁴

For Snow, a plural wife, the doctrine of Heavenly Mother was part and parcel of Smith's cosmology that fashioned a "material heaven, comprising eternal sealed relationships between believers, both male and

4. Eliza R. Snow, "The Ultimatum of Human Life," in *Poems, Religious, Historical and Political* (Salt Lake City: The Latter-day Saints Printing and Publishing Establishment, 1877), 8–9.

female.”⁵ The doctrine of exaltation was dependent on an intricate connection between the entire human family, of which women were a significant part.

While there are no firsthand sources from Smith that directly reference women’s exaltation or Heavenly Mother, historian Jonathan Stapley notes that the assumption of women’s participation was prevalent to the women who were among Smith’s close associates.⁶ As part of the construction of the Mormon heaven, Smith initiated complex sealings that sought to bind the entirety of humanity. Through temple sealings, Smith constructed a way to “[bridge] the gap that divided Mormons from each other in the cosmological priesthood network.”⁷ Part of this sealing network were the institutions of both adoption and polygamy. By the time Snow penned “O My Father,” she was aware of the polygamous sealings that were part of the kinship bonds of heaven. Three years prior, on June 29, 1842, Snow married Smith as a plural wife. As such, her beloved hymn included the assumption of plural marriage. When she wrote her assurance of a Mother in Heaven, which she testified as evident based on both reasonable and eternal truth, she likely assumed there was more than one.⁸

Women’s exaltation, like men’s exaltation, is tied to the bonds forged over temple altars: their marriages and children. For this reason, Mormon cosmology is based on a required gender reciprocity. Men and women are, as scholar Amy Hoyt has written, “interdependent and must rely on each other for exaltation, although they may be individually saved.”⁹ This is echoed by theologian Blaire Ostler, who emphatically

5. Jonathan A. Stapley, *The Power of Godliness: Mormon Liturgy and Cosmology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 11.

6. Jonathan A. Stapley, “Brigham Young’s Garden Cosmology,” *Journal of Mormon History* 47, no. 1 (Jan. 2021): 68–86.

7. Stapley, *Power of Godliness*, 20.

8. “O My Father,” *Hymns*, no. 292.

9. Amy Hoyt, “Beyond the Victim/Empowerment Paradigm: The Gendered Cosmology of Mormon Women,” *Feminist Theology* 16, no. 1 (2007): 97.

argued, "His godhood is dependent on Her, just as Hers is dependent on Him."¹⁰ However, the emphasis on a single exalting union is a recent development. Celestial marriage only became synonymous with eternal marriage, rather than plural marriage, in the late nineteenth century.¹¹ Prior to this time, Mormons believed in a theological framework where the exaltation and deification of women was inseparable from plural unions.¹²

Like the rituals necessary for exaltation, the power behind the sealing ritual required a gender reciprocity in the early years of the Church. During the period that Smith revealed the sealing ritual, he further elaborated on the doctrine of priesthood through the temple liturgy. In his work on the early evolution of Mormon priesthood, Jonathan Stapley differentiates between the ecclesiastical priesthood, marked by offices and ordination, and the temple or cosmological priesthood, which was a means of "materializing heaven" and forging eternal bonds.¹³ The cosmological priesthood was the force that cemented earthly relationships and solidified the human family through a complicated web of dynastic sealing. For the cosmological priesthood to function, women's participation was not only welcome but vital.¹⁴ Because it was familial in nature, the priesthood in the temple required women's participation.

10. Blaire Ostler, "Heavenly Mother: The Mother of All Women," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 51, no. 4 (Winter 2018): 181.

11. James E. Talmage, "The Story of Mormonism," *Improvement Era* 4, no. 12 (Oct. 1901): 909. For an overview of the shifting view of celestial marriage in Mormon history, see Stephen C. Taysom, "A Uniform and Common Recollection: Joseph Smith's Legacy, Polygamy, and the Creation of Mormon Public Memory, 1852–2002," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 113–44.

12. For notable examples of Heavenly Mother described as a monogamous wife of God in Church history, see David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, "A Mother There: A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven," *BYU Studies* 50, no. 1 (2011): 70–97.

13. Stapley, *Power of Godliness*, 11.

14. Stapley, *Power of Godliness*, 26.

In the nineteenth-century Mormon context, the temple liturgy that instructed the initiated in the sacred knowledge of exaltation was intimately tied to polygamy and reserved for participants in the Anointed Quorum.¹⁵ The families forged on altars “had become the lingua franca of an exaltation that was steeply gendered and rooted in polygamy. In this version of plural theology, women are not denied exaltation, by any means,” writes scholar Peter Coviello.¹⁶ Further, “As mothers of children, they become gods in their own right. . . . They may become gods—Mothers in Heaven—but they are gods who obey. They emerge, we might say, as gods in subjection.”¹⁷ Like Mormon men, who understood themselves as “gods in embryo,” women similarly foresaw their future exalted state as one of deity.¹⁸ Within this framework, women’s deification was specifically connected to their status as wives and mothers. This was further promoted by Brigham Young, who centered both plurality of wives and women’s reproduction in his discussions of exaltation.¹⁹

The connection between plural marriage and exaltation was difficult to untangle as the Church moved away from the practice. This was only further complicated by the continuation of plural temple sealings for divorced Latter-day Saint men and widowers, as well as the continued canonical status of the plural marriage revelation. Given the connection between plural marriage and women’s deification, some LDS women authors focus their attention on “the consequences of a

15. See David John Buerger, “The Development of the Mormon Temple Endowment Ceremony,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 4 (Winter 1987): 33–76.

16. Peter Coviello, *Make Yourselves Gods: Mormons and the Unfinished Business of American Secularism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 126.

17. Coviello, *Make Yourselves Gods*, 126.

18. Coviello, *Make Yourselves Gods*, 55.

19. Stapley, “Brigham Young’s Garden Cosmology,” 84.

female deity for women," one being eternal polygamy.²⁰ It is this underlying assumption in Snow's poetry that informed many early views of women's eternal nature as well as the current fundamentalist theology of exaltation. At the same time, while embraced by polygamists across the Restoration, it is the assumed polygamous heaven of the nineteenth century that lends to concern among Latter-day Saint women who fear an eternal state unlike the monogamous one they know on earth. Carol Lynn Pearson's *The Ghost of Eternal Polygamy: Haunting the Hearts and Heaven of Mormon Women and Men* documented this sentiment through research among LDS women who remain concerned about the potential for plural marriages.²¹ In addition to hesitancy about their own eternal state, some Mormon women claim that the LDS Church's silence on Heavenly Mother is connected to the anxiety-riddled question: Is there more than one?²²

For members of the Mormon fundamentalist movement, this question was never unanswered. Those who attained exaltation were destined to eternal polygamous unions, just as their Heavenly Mothers. While the institutional LDS Church stagnated on doctrinal teaching around Heavenly Mother, the Mormon fundamentalist movement continued to offer insight into the nature of Heavenly Mothers. Drawing on nineteenth-century Mormon doctrine, Lorin C. Woolley's School of the Prophets began teaching about Heavenly Mother in 1932 at a meeting of the members of his Priesthood Council. On March 6, Woolley offered

20. Danny L. Jorgensen, "The Mormon Gender-Inclusive Image of God," *Journal of Mormon History* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 100.

21. See Carol Lynn Pearson, *The Ghost of Eternal Polygamy: Haunting the Hearts and Heaven of Mormon Women and Men* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Pivot Point Books, 2016).

22. Pearson.

names for the wives of Adam, whom he understood as the Heavenly Father of this world:²³

Adam probably had three wives on earth before Mary, Mother of Jesus.

Eve—meaning 1st

Phoebe " 2nd

Sarah " 3rd, probably mother of Seth. Joseph of Armenia [Arimathea], proxy husband of Mary had one wife before Mary and four additional after.²⁴

Woolley's comment came with little context or extrapolation. However, his prophetic counsel initiated a tradition of naming the women who were deified as Mormonism's Heavenly Mothers. Reference to the first people, Adam and Eve, as well as Phoebe and Sarah, gave early leaders an opportunity to explain the path toward women's theosis, the ability for human beings to become gods, and the place of gendered faith in the process.

Six years after Woolley's first reference to the divine feminine, Joseph W. Musser expanded the doctrine and gave increased import to the women of the Creation narrative. In his 1938 Mother's Day editorial, he again drew on Eliza R. Snow and the "great and glorious truths pertaining to women's true position in the creations of the Gods" found in her poems.²⁵ He wrote, "A Goddess came down from her mansions of glory to bring the spirits of her children down after her, in their myriads of branches and their hundreds of generations!"²⁶ "The celestial Masonry of Womanhood! The other half of the grand patriarchal economy of heavens and earth!" he declared of the elevated state his

23. Brigham Young, Apr. 9, 1852, *Journal of Discourses*, 1:46.

24. Joseph W. Musser, *Book of Remembrances*, transcribed and edited by Bryan Buchanan, 7. As described in the *Book of Remembrances*, Woolley further speculated that the wives of Jesus were "Martha (Industry), Mary (of god), Phoebe, Sarah (Sacrifice), Rebecca (given of God), Josephine (Daughter of Joseph), Mary Magdalen, and Mary, Martha's sister."

25. Musser, *Book of Remembrances*.

26. Joseph W. Musser, "Mother's Day," *Truth*, May 1938.

cosmology supposedly afforded women in plural unions.²⁷ Women were not only eternal spouses, they were part of the cosmological structure powered by priesthood authority.

In addition to the literal exalted state of women, Musser spoke of the metaphorical feminine that permeates Mormon theology and existed prior to Adam and Eve's descent to a telestial state.²⁸ According to his theology, the order of the cosmos was not only formed through patriarchal priesthood, but the birthing of the cosmological order necessitated womanhood and matriarchal power. Referring to Edward W. Tullidge's nineteenth-century speculation on the nature of God, he asserted that before the temporal existence of our earth's god, womanhood was manifest in the eternal structure of the "Trinity of Mothers—Eve the Mother of the world; Sarah the Mother of the covenant; Zion the Mother of celestial sons and daughters—the Mother of the new creation of Messiah's reign, which shall give to earth the crown of her glory and the cup of joy after all her ages of travail."²⁹ This trinitarian image of divine womanhood spoke to the theological place of the feminine not only embodied in women but inherent to the eternal worlds of Mormon cosmology, even before the creation of their temporal counterparts.

Becoming Queens and Priestesses

Women's representation in the fundamentalist cosmos has the potential to afford women an avenue toward temporal authority. The exalted familial bond that exists as God in Mormonism allows for an interpretation of God's power, or priesthood, as embodied in both men and women. Heavenly Mother not only represents women's eternal future but the necessity of women's priesthood to elevate her to godliness. As with their LDS sisters, motherhood is elevated and often equated with

27. Musser, "Mother's Day."

28. Musser, "Mother's Day."

29. Musser, "Mother's Day." See Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormonism* (New York, 1877).

priesthood. Blaire Ostler notes the conundrum this presents: “Motherhood is of such importance for Latter-day Saint women that it is often compared to a man’s priesthood ordination—not in his participation in parenthood as a father, but in his divine right to act in the name of God through priesthood authority.”³⁰ Within the LDS Church, where priesthood is not offered to women at this time, women’s authority remains located in the reproductive sphere. Unlike with LDS women, early differentiations between an ecclesiastical and cosmological priesthood allows some fundamentalist women a recognized authority in some religious spaces. This is most often attained through the Second Anointing, but also in independent ordinations to various offices. With this in mind, one of the overarching questions is the extent to which cosmological parity translates into the elevated temporal status of women, a question long raised by the Mormon feminist movement.

In the nineteenth century, women who practiced polygamy diminished their marital desires in the present life for a reward in the next life. Women could be gods, but only in relation to men. “The revelation on plural marriage promised women greater celestial glory in exchange for consenting to the practice, and anecdotal evidence agrees that at least some (and perhaps most) of the women were motivated by otherworldly promises for them and their families,” notes historian Danny L. Jorgensen on the conundrum of Mormon deity.³¹ Despite the authority afforded to women who elevated their social position through marriage and family life, it remained the case that women’s divinity was centrally located in the polygamous family. Peter Coviello has written that “the Heavenly Mother discourse, though valuable inasmuch as it counteracts the marginlessness of the identification between authority and masculinity, does very little to unwrite the confining of femininity, and especially feminine divinity, to the sphere of reproduction.”³²

30. Ostler, “Heavenly Mother,” 175.

31. Jorgensen, “Mormon Gender-Inclusive Image of God,” 118–19.

32. Coviello, *Make Yourselves Gods*, 269n57.

While women did not hold priesthood offices and were not ordained in early Mormonism, they were a vital component to the manifestation of God's power on earth. The power that forged the cosmos was shared and manifest in the temple liturgy. This included being raised to the status of queen and priestess in the "fulness of the priesthood."³³ Lucy Kmitzsch found her place within the fundamentalist movement shortly after her excommunication from the LDS Church in 1934. She and her sisters all married prominent members of the community, including Joseph Musser, Lorin C. Woolley, and J. Leslie Broadbent. In reminiscences of Lucy Kmitzsch's life by her husband, she is referred to one of the best women in Zion *and* at performing ordinances.³⁴ The 1940 ordinance referenced by Musser resembled his diary entry for November 30, 1899, when he received his Second Anointing in the Logan Temple with his first wife.³⁵ For that reason, some assume that he both passed his priesthood authority to those outside the institutional Church and offered women the authority that stems from this ordinance. While this ordinance is no longer readily available to men and women in the LDS Church, this ceremony remains the avenue that many Mormon fundamentalist women are made sure of their exaltation and sealed into eternity as queens and priestesses.

In 2017, I witnessed the potential for cosmological motherhood to translate into priesthood at the semi-annual Solemn Assembly of the Righteous Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. During a women's meeting, the general Relief Society president, a convert to the group from the LDS Church, stood to share a talk on the perseverance of the Saints and the place of women as central to building the faith in Zion. After her talk, I spoke with a member of the

33. Coviello, *Make Yourselves Gods*, 17.

34. "Journal, July 28, 1940," Joseph White Musser Journals, 1929–1944, file no. 17. Photocopy in author's possession.

35. "Journal, May 1904," Joseph White Musser Journals, 1895–1911, MS 1862, Journal 2, p. 104, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City.

Apostleship about her comments. To my admiration of her eloquence and contribution, he simply replied, “Of course it was powerful. She has priesthood.” Like Kmitzsch, the continuation for the Second Anointing afforded the Relief Society president an authoritative position within her religious community, much like her own eternal Mothers. Within this ritual, women symbolically perform the biblical event when Mary anointed and blessed Jesus through a foot washing in preparation for his death and exaltation. Like Mary, interpreted as a wife of Jesus, Mormon women who participate in this ceremony prepare their husbands for exaltation and thus ensure their own eternal status.

Save for a couple of exceptions, fundamentalist groups do not offer priesthood ordination to women independent of the Second Anointing, an ordinance connected to marriage. However, for those that do, women share in the priesthood of their eternal Mother in their temporal lives. Some of the earliest examples of this occurred under the hand of Ross Wesley LeBaron, one of three successors to Alma Dayer LeBaron’s priesthood claim from Benjamin F. Johnson. During LeBaron ordinations to the patriarchal priesthood, women were ordained alongside their husbands in a joint ordinance symbolizing the gendered nature of the cosmos and the eternal state of all exalted people. In one ordination record, two serve as representative examples:

“William Edward Aldrich summer 1982 (and then his wife, Gloria, was ordained as Matriarch)

Thomas Arthur Green 19 Feb 1985 (and then Tom ordained his wife, Beth, as Matriarch).”³⁶

One of the men ordained by LeBaron in November 1978, Fred C. Collier, continued this tradition among the women in his own Mormon community, even affording women “all the keys of the priesthood.”³⁷ For Collier’s group, this takes the form of full ordination to the

36. “Men who have been ordained by Ross W. LeBaron,” 1958–1995. Copy in author’s possession.

37. “Ordinations and Confirmations at Hanna,” Apr. 3, 1992. Copy in author’s possession.

priesthood. Jacob Vidrine, a historian of LeBaron priesthood, explains, "Fred teaches that women can perform all ordinances for other women, but says that sacrificial ordinances/the sacrament are male priesthood responsibilities properly performed by men, but that ordained women did have authority to perform them also."³⁸ The authority to perform ordinances extends to women's authority to baptize, confirm, bless, and ordain others to priesthood offices.³⁹

In a 2014 photograph of one such ordination, a young woman wearing a black blouse sits in a folding chair in a living room. She is surrounded by five women with their right hands placed on her head and their left hands on the right shoulder of the woman beside them. The woman receiving the ordinance was ordained to the office of elderess on that day, by ordained high priestesses. This image speaks to the broader tradition within the group. A 1992 ordination record exemplifies the practice. In the minutes of the proceedings, the officiant laid his hands on the woman's head and declared:

[name redacted], through the authority of the High Priesthood of the Holy Order of God, we lay our hands upon your head and ordain you to the office of High Priestess and confer upon you all those keys and all those rights and privileges of this office. We ordain you and we confer upon you the High Priestesshood after the Holy Order of God. We do this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.⁴⁰

The record for this ordination reflects two women ordained to the office of high priestesshood, the same office assumed by the exalted women in their cosmology. Within the context of this branch of Mormonism, "all the keys" included the power to seal families for eternity. In addition, there is one case of a woman ordained to the office of presiding matriarch.

38. Jacob Vidrine, interview by Cristina Rosetti, June 25, 2021.

39. Even in groups where priesthood ordination is not conferred upon women, blessings remain a central part of fundamentalist women's experience. This is especially true of Confinement Blessings before birth.

40. "1992 Collier Ordination Record." Copy in author's possession.

In their own literature, fundamentalist Mormons explain the priesthood of women extending back to the early days of the Restoration and the role of their eternal Mother, Eve. Along the same theological lines of Adam's exaltation as an example to all men, it is Eve's position that became embodied by all women, including Emma Smith, the wife of the first Mormon prophet: "It was the Prophet's mission to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth—it was a family kingdom. Its powers were vested in the King and Queen, the anointed husband and wife. In this order the parents literally stand as God and Goddess to their own family kingdom. The Prophet Joseph had chosen for his Queen the elect lady Emma—just as Joseph stood as Adam, Emma stood as Eve. She was the first woman received into the Holy Order and the first woman to be ordained to the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood."⁴¹

As a religious tradition that argues for its place as an authentic expression of nineteenth-century Mormonism, the continued ordination of women is not seen as a deviation from Restoration history but a continuation. For this Mormon group in particular, women's ordination does not come with limitation. On the contrary, their writing on the restoration of matriarchal priesthood argues that "had Emma been worthy to receive it, she would have presided over the kingdom as presiding Matriarch, High Priestess, Queen, Goddess and Eve. Even Brigham Young would have been subject to her—she would have been his Mother, Queen and Goddess!"⁴² It is precisely because of Heavenly Mother that Mormon women across the Restoration can see themselves as active participants in the cosmological priesthood with their male priesthood counterparts. Whether this will translate into ecclesiastical priesthood in the future remains to be seen.⁴³

41. William B. Harwell, "The Matriarchal Priestesshood and Emma's Right to Succession As Presiding High Priestess and Queen," in *Doctrine of the Priesthood* 8, no. 3 (Mar. 1991): 12–13.

42. Harwell, "Matriarchal Priestesshood," 13.

43. There are currently no women leading Mormon groups. The only woman to lead a Latter-day Saint denomination, Church of Christ, was Pauline Hancock,

Conclusion

Speculation on the place of Heavenly Mother began soon after the introduction of the temple liturgy. Eliza R. Snow took Joseph Smith's teachings on embodied gods and exaltation and traced them to their logical conclusion, a Mother in Heaven. Since Snow penned her famous poetry on gendered deity, the doctrine of Heavenly Mother has expanded among Mormon women as a way to make sense of their eternity. At the same time, Mormon feminists have looked to the history of priesthood and Heavenly Mother as entry points to understand women's authority in the Church. However, the authority of women in the temple and the theology of Heavenly Mother was historically tied to relationship. Women could exercise priesthood and become gods, but only within the bonds of marriage, specifically polygamous marriage.

As the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints moved away from the plural marriage revelation, a marital system that created the cosmological backdrop for the doctrine of Heavenly Mothers, the status of the divine feminine became increasingly distant from the lived experience of LDS women. Ecclesiastical changes altered women's place within the cosmos. However, for women involved in the fundamentalist movement, where the ambiguity over eternal polygamy is absent, the doctrinal continuity afforded women more space to institutionally discuss the place of women in the afterlife. The cosmological priesthood associated with their theological view of Heavenly Mother remains an avenue for women's authority.

who broke from Community of Christ. See Jason R. Smith, "Pauline Hancock and Her 'Basement Church,'" *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 26 (2006): 185–93.

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