

My Search for the Mother and Daughter

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MY EARNEST SEARCH FOR THE MOTHER AND DAUGHTER began in a time of spiritual and emotional pain. I had been reading the Gospel of John, and kept coming across statements such as: "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (1:3); "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (1:4); "He was in the world, and the world was made by him" (1:10); and "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (5:26).

John says that two *men* (exalted and glorified men, but men nonetheless) created all life, and that it only took the Father to give the Son the ability to have life in himself. In nature, the creation of new life requires both a father and a mother. And the highest role that women are allowed to fill in current Mormon theology is that of giving birth and being mothers. But John says that all life was ultimately created by two men. If what John says is to be taken at face value, then the glorified and exalted place of motherhood in Mormon theology must be a temporary and transitory one, because in the heavens two men create all life (or three men if you go by the temple account). And the only heavenly parent we are "allowed" to pray to or be guided by or have anything to do with is our male parent.

What I read in John was painful to me as a woman. If heavenly women are left out of all this eternal creating, if they are unnecessary (or even just less important than men) to the creation of life in the eternities, then so am I. I'm a woman, too.

But of course this cannot be. Logic and reason insist that all life has both a father and a mother. Whenever the scriptures speak of the creating or giving of life, there must be both a father and a mother involved, even if they do not explicitly say so. Clearly the scriptures are not complete where womankind is concerned.

Mormon doctrine goes a little further than John, acknowledging that we do in fact *have* a mother in heaven. But I find this mother of current

Mormon doctrine to be a strange kind of mother. She is a mother we do not talk to or about, and she does not have anything to do with us, at least not during our mortal lives. She is supposedly a loving and perfect mother who is also anonymous, silent, and uninvolved in the lives of her children.

If our priesthood leaders believe the men-have-priesthood/women-have-motherhood model of divine role division accurately reflects eternal reality, then why doesn't the preeminence of this mothering role for women carry over into the next life? If we really can pray to only *one* of our heavenly parents, then shouldn't Heavenly *Mother* be the one we are taught to turn to for parental guidance and comfort, since parenting is her highest role in the eternities? It seems inconsistent to teach that on earth women are not meant to hold priesthood because their divine calling is to be mothers instead, and yet to also teach (by only "allowing" us to cultivate a relationship with our Heavenly *Father*) that in the eternities it will be fathers who fill the preeminent parenting role in the ongoing development of their spirit offspring. Once her mortal life is over, is woman's highest and most noble calling, that of eternal motherhood, one that she will ultimately carry out in silent anonymity, being uninvolved in the mortal lives of her children?

Why is Mother in Heaven silent and hidden? Is she less important to our salvation and exaltation than Heavenly Father? In heaven do fathers matter more than mothers? Are mothers not necessary to their children's growth and progress there? Do mothers in heaven really play no part whatsoever in their children's mortal stage of existence? If Mormon scripture contains a fullness of the gospel, then is she not a part of the fullness of the gospel?

And what about me, her daughter? If I should some day grow up to be like Heavenly Mother, would I be less important in my children's eternal lives than their heavenly father? Would I have to be invisible, anonymous, and silent, too? Would I exist in the shadows of their father, just standing by in the wings while he brings about our children's immortality and eternal life all by himself?

This current doctrine of Heavenly Mother (or lack thereof) has been painful to me as a Mormon woman. It feels as though in heaven as well as on earth men remain the most holy, the most important, and the highest authorities who will continue to make all of the final decisions, as if there is something innately inferior about women that makes us unfit for such responsibilities, both here as well as in the hereafter. It has been painful for me to be taught (if only by inference) that in the heavens, even on the level of Godhood where love reigns supreme, men are still over and above women—they still rule over us and will have the final say in all actions and decisions regarding us and our children. This feels wrong to me, and it put a stumbling block in my path to Heavenly Father and Jesus. Eventually I

came to the realization that if this was what the Celestial Kingdom was really like, then I didn't want to live there.

It became clear to me that I would have to make my own search for the Mother and Daughter. It hurt that I had to search for them at all. It hurt that they are not revealed in Mormon and Christian scripture as plainly and straightforwardly as the Father and Son are. And it hurt to be taught, if only by omission, that a knowledge and understanding of my gender's half of deity apparently is not as necessary in our lives as is a knowledge and understanding of the male deities.

It hurt that my church leaders seem totally unconcerned about this absence of the Mother and Daughter in our scripture, doctrine, and practice. Recently I came across a statement President Spencer W. Kimball made shortly after blacks were given the priesthood. He said, "We pray to God to reveal his mind and we always will, but we don't expect any revelation regarding women and the priesthood."¹ When I read that, I thought of all of the scriptures that say, "Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek, and ye shall find" (Matt. 7:7; 3 Ne. 14:7-8; D&C 4:7); and "If any of you lack wisdom, let him [or her] ask of God, that giveth to all men [and I assume women, too] liberally" (James 1:5). And it occurred to me that perhaps one reason our leaders have not received a revelation of the Mother and Daughter is because they do not ask. Maybe they do not "expect" (or even want) any revelation of female deity. It does not appear to cause them deep pain as it does me that she is completely excluded from our faith. None of them are women. They can all see their potential end in Heavenly Father and Jesus. I cannot. I will never be an eternal father or son, no matter what. (And I do not want to be.)

So in my pain and frustration I began my own search for the Mother and Daughter, without official sanction or help from my church leaders. I began by reading everything I could find that others, both in and out of the church, have written about their search for her.² Some have speculated that she could be Mother Eve, the Holy Ghost, the Virgin Mary, Mother Nature, Mother Earth, Wisdom, or the Bride of Christ. I do not know with absolute

1. In D. Michael Quinn, in "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, ed. Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 376.

2. Suggested reading includes Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976); Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); Sherry Ruth Anderson and Patricia Hopkins, *The Feminine Face of God* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991); *Womanspirit Rising*, eds. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (New York: Harper Collins, 1979, 1992); *Weaving the Visions*, eds. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (New York: Harper Collins, 1989); Margaret and Paul Toscano, *Strangers in Paradox* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990); and *Women and Authority*.

certainty which if any of these represents her true identity. I can only search and try to sort through what seems right to me at this point.

I thought that one of the most effective ways to find Mother in Heaven would be to simply pray to her and ask her to reveal herself to me ("If any of you lack wisdom . . ."). I worried at first that I might somehow anger or offend Heavenly Father by praying to my Mother. I meant no disrespect to him, and it was not my intention to diminish his role in my spiritual life. I only desired to add to my experience of him the experience of my Mother, so that my worship and spiritual life could be whole and complete. I tried to explain this to Heavenly Father in prayer, and I feel he understood. What father in this life would be offended or angered if his children sometimes wanted to speak with their mother too, and not always just with him alone?

One of the first questions I had was whether I could find the Mother and Daughter in Mormonism. I grew up in the Church of the Father and Son. In it I grew to believe in and love them, and to feel their love for me. I am grateful for my faith in them, and I have no desire to abandon the Father and Son or to replace them with the Mother and Daughter. I would feel no more at peace with the absence of the Father than I do with the absence of the Mother; no more content with the ruling of female over male than I do with the ruling of male over female.

So I wanted to know if I could find the Mother and Daughter within the context of Mormonism—in Mormon song, prayer, scripture, and ritual, or if I would have to look outside of Mormonism for them. Were they hidden somewhere, waiting to be found? Or would I need to have two separate faiths in my life—one of the Father and Son and another of the Mother and Daughter—in order to know and experience both of them? One thing was certain, I knew I would not give up my search for them. No one could compel me to, and I would go wherever the search led.

I included in my search a review of the scriptures. I began with the idea that the Holy Ghost could be a female deity. I was struck by Doctrine and Covenants 121:26-28 which I understood to say that the Holy Ghost has not yet been fully revealed but will be in a time to come in which nothing shall be withheld, and whether there is one God or many, they will be made manifest. So I wondered if it might be possible that part of the knowledge about the Holy Ghost which has not yet been revealed is its gender.

The idea of the Holy Ghost being a female deity made sense to me for several reasons. First of all, it would mean that the Godhead is not made up exclusively of men. It would mean that she has been here all along, in Mormon and Christian scripture, doctrine, song, and ritual, participating in our lives and growth just as Heavenly Father and Jesus have been. It would mean that she has not been an anonymous, silent, and lesser God. And it would mean that there was a female counterpart to Jesus Christ in our creation, salvation, and exaltation.

I decided to investigate this idea further by reviewing all of the specific references to the Holy Ghost in latter-day Mormon scripture (Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price). I wanted to see if anywhere in Mormon scripture the gender of the Holy Ghost was given or even alluded to by the use of "he," "him," or "his" when referring specifically to the Holy Ghost. I was both surprised and excited when, after going through each of these scriptures page by page, I found no reference to the gender of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost was always referred to as, "it," "who," or "which," in non-gender specific terms. This furthered my belief that there is at least room for the *possibility* in latter-day Mormon scripture that the Holy Ghost is indeed a female deity.³

I was also intrigued by the woman referred to as Wisdom in both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon. In the Old Testament a female voice identified as Wisdom says that those who seek her shall find her, that she leads in the way of righteousness, and that she was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth was made. She says she was there when the earth was created, that she was brought up with the Lord, and was his delight. (This sounds like a companion of the Lord, and a first-born spirit daughter of God.) She says that those who keep her ways are blessed, and that whoever finds her finds life (Prov. 8). The Book of Mormon also refers to Wisdom in female terms as someone we should seek and desire to have rule over us (Mosiah 8:20).

So the Holy Ghost and Wisdom are two possibilities that I encountered in my search for a female deity. While I do not claim to have a final, definitive revelation of her, my search has led me to some tentative conclusions. The conclusions I have reached thus far are these:

I still believe in the Father and Son. I believe in Christ and his atonement. I believe that he came to earth to save us from physical death through resurrection, and that through his atonement we can be reconciled to God and born into the new life of the Spirit. I believe he is my personal savior and redeemer. I believe that Jesus reveals the Father to us, and that if we know him, we also know the Father. I believe that Christ calls us to have faith in his love and in his atoning sacrifice, to repent of our sins, and to return to God. I believe in his teaching that in order to truly be his disciples, we must love one another. I believe that he loves us unconditionally and

3. In the Bible the Holy Ghost is referred to in masculine terms. However, as Margaret Toscano has pointed out in "Put on Your Strength, O Daughters of Zion" (in *Women and Authority*, 430), the original Greek term for the Holy Ghost was gender neutral. It is in Latin that it becomes masculine. If the biblical representation of the Holy Ghost as masculine is correct, then I find it curious that latter-day scripture does not confirm this masculine identity.

that he will forgive and accept us wherever we are. And I believe that his acceptance and love for us can help to heal our wounds.

My experiences in praying to Heavenly Mother have convinced me she also exists. I have felt her answers to my prayers. I have felt her presence, her understanding, and the comfort of her loving arms around me. I have felt understood by her as a woman, and I have experienced a greater love for my own earthly mother.

When I feel my Heavenly Mother near me, I experience a profound sense of my own connection with all of nature. I experience being a part of the whole circle of life, which includes the trees and animals and flowers and streams, and me, and I know that I am not alone. In her I find peace and comfort and the wisdom of nature.

In her wisdom I have also come to see something of the connection between our emotional and mental well-being and our spiritual well-being. She has helped me to understand that I cannot be completely whole spiritually until I am also emotionally and mentally whole, and that these three dimensions of my being are inextricably interwoven. And she has helped me to find a measure of emotional and mental healing, so that I could experience a spiritual healing as well. She has shown me that I matter to God more than my sins do, a possibility my heart never fully grasped during all of my growing up years in the church.

I believe that Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother together constitute God, and that together they have parented our spirits and sent us into mortality as the next step on our journey. I believe that Heavenly Mother participates fully as an equal partner with Heavenly Father in all of his dealings with us. I believe that whenever scripture, prayer, or song refers to Heavenly Father, it also refers to Heavenly Mother, and should be read to include her. I believe that both Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother hear and answer our prayers, and that they sent Jesus and the Holy Ghost to save and redeem us in this life and help us return to them.

I do not believe that Heavenly Mother is in any way subordinate to Heavenly Father, or that there is any need for him to "preside" over her. While I believe that they are surely one in their goodness, their love for their children, and their desire for our exaltation, I also believe that they each act out of their own power and authority, without any need for either one of them to be subject to the other.

I believe that the Holy Ghost is the Daughter, Christ's female counterpart in the Godhead. I believe that she is a full and equal participant with him in our creation, salvation, and exaltation. I believe that the scriptures which speak of Wisdom as a woman refer to her. I believe that her mission includes communicating directly with our spirits, comforting and guiding us, and teaching and leading us to all truth. I believe that she testifies of

Heavenly Father and Mother and Jesus, and that to know her is to know the Mother.

I believe that it is she who plants the seeds of faith and desire in our hearts that lead us to Christ, and that as we enter into his fold through baptism, we can find her living and waiting for us inside the church, filling it with her light and life (at least to the extent that we as members are willing to receive her in our hearts). I believe that as we emerge from the waters of our new birth in Christ, she takes our hand and becomes our constant companion, our personal guide and teacher throughout our spiritual journey.

I believe that the fruits of having her presence in our lives include love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and temperance (Gal. 5:22-23), and that her gifts include the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, prophesy, healing, discernment, tongues, and the working of miracles (1 Cor. 12:7-11).

If the scriptures which refer to the Holy Ghost do in fact refer to a female deity, then she has been intimately and powerfully involved in the spiritual life of humankind from the beginning. The creation of the earth began when the Spirit moved upon the face of the water (Moses 2:2; Gen. 1:2). Adam prophesied as he was moved upon by the Holy Ghost (Moses 6:8). After he was baptized, he was born of the Spirit and became quickened in the inner man, having been baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost (Moses 6:65-66). In some way Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost (Alma 7:10), and after his baptism the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove (1 Ne. 11:27; 2 Ne. 31:8; D&C 93:15). Joseph Smith was inspired by the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation of the church (D&C 21:2). And it is only through the Holy Ghost that Jesus manifests himself to the gentiles (3 Ne. 15:23; 1 Ne. 10:11).

If the Holy Ghost is a female member of the Godhead, then Mormon scripture is full of information about her attributes and mission. She quickens all things and makes all things alive (Moses 6:61). She fills us with hope and perfect love (Moro. 8:26). She dwells in us and carries the truth to our hearts (2 Ne. 33:1; D&C 8:2, 130:22). She teaches us truth, and the peaceable things of the kingdom (D&C 36:2, 50:14). She knows each of our hearts and souls, and is able to meet us wherever we are in our own spiritual journey, giving us the individual personal guidance we need at the time (2 Ne. 32:5; D&C 18:18, 75:10, 79:2, 124:97). She can do this because she knows all things and has all wisdom (D&C 35:19, 42:17; Moses 6:61). She gives us utterance and the ability to speak, write, and teach truth (2 Ne. 28:4; Ether 12:23; D&C 14:8, 21:9, 28:1, 4, 42:16, 47:4, 68:3, 124:97). And whatever is spoken under her influence is scripture, and is the will, mind, word, voice, and power of God (D&C 68:4).

If the Holy Ghost is actually the daughter of God, then she is a deity

of great power and influence in our lives. To reject her is to make a mockery of the plan of redemption (Jacob 6:8), and to deny her once she has had a place in us is to commit an unpardonable sin (Alma 39:6). She has all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgement (Moses 6:61). Revelations and prophesy are given by her power (D&C 8:2-3, 20:26, 35, 34:10, 42:16, 90:14), and by her power we can know the truth of all things (Moro. 10:5). The gospel is declared by her power (D&C 18:32). Angels speak by her power (2 Ne. 32:3), and the mysteries of God are unfolded by her power (1 Ne. 10:19; D&C 90:14). Priesthood bearers are ordained by her power (D&C 20:60, 90:11), and our meetings are to be conducted under her direction (Moro. 6:9; D&C 20:45, 46:2). Whatever form of priesthood authority exists in the heavens, she participates and shares equally in it.

If the Holy Ghost is an exalted and glorified woman, then it is she who testifies of and leads us to Heavenly Father (and Mother) and Jesus (1 Ne. 12:18; 2 Ne. 31:18; 3 Ne. 11:32, 36, 16:6, 28:11; D&C 20:27, 42:17; Moses 1:24, 5:9, 7:11). The Holy Ghost together with the Father (and Mother) and Son are one God (2 Ne. 31:21; Alma 11:44, 3 Ne. 11:27, 36; Morm. 7:7; D&C 20:28). She is involved in all of the basic principles and ordinances of the gospel. The Holy Ghost is the first Comforter, and Jesus is the second. We are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost as well as the Father (and Mother) and Son (3 Ne. 11:25; D&C 20:73). After we are baptized by water, we are then baptized of the Holy Ghost and receive a remission of our sins (2 Ne. 31:13-14, 17; 3 Ne. 9:20, 12:1; Morm. 7:10; Ether 12:14; D&C 20:41, 33:11, 39:6; Moses 6:66). She cleanses and sanctifies us, and we are born of her (Alma 13:12; 3 Ne. 27:20; Moro. 6:4; Moses 6:59, 65) and receive the gift of her transforming presence in our lives.

In our gospel ordinances as they are commonly understood, all spiritual life is imparted to us by men alone—the Father, Son, and a presumed male Holy Ghost. But if the Holy Ghost is a female personage, then there is a female deity who is also a life-giving force in our spiritual development. This would mean that the giving of new spiritual life in the gospel of Jesus Christ requires both male (Jesus) and female (the Holy Ghost) acting together. This makes good sense to me, and it mirrors what I see around me in the world that God created.

In our baptism we are spiritually born of Jesus, becoming his adopted sons and daughters. Perhaps in the subsequent baptism of the Holy Ghost, we are spiritually born of her and become her adopted sons and daughters as well. This would give us both a spiritual mother as well as a spiritual father in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That our mother in the gospel should dwell on earth as a spirit makes sense to me. It seems like something a mother would do, because it allows her to be as close to her children as she can be without being physically

present. If she were always present with us physically, this would defeat the purpose of our coming to earth to be on our own and to learn and grow spiritually. As a spirit, she is able to communicate with our spirits and give us ongoing guidance, comfort, and help without being physically present.

Jesus' mission on our behalf required that he be born into mortality with us in order to overcome mortal death and atone for our sins. He gave us a concrete, visible God, a mortal example to believe in and emulate, and he established his church on the earth. He could not have completely fulfilled this mission as a spirit. Likewise, the Holy Ghost plays an ongoing role in our spiritual development that she could not fulfill in a single mortal lifetime on earth. Perhaps her mission on our behalf must be fulfilled by someone who is a spirit personage. The missions of Jesus and the Holy Ghost are complimentary and of equal importance in our ongoing eternal progression. They are both necessary, and either one acting alone could not bring to pass the plan of salvation. He shows us the way, and she enables us to live it. Working together in perfect harmony and unison, they bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of humankind.

Of course I realize that if the Holy Ghost in reality is not a female deity, then my belief will not make it so. I could be mistaken in my belief. If the Holy Ghost is not the Daughter, and the Godhead is in fact made up entirely of men, then I believe that a separate, complimentary godhead of three females must exist, and that they are equal in power, purpose, glory, and perfection to the male godhead. (And I will continue my search for them.) Perhaps such a female godhead might be comprised of Heavenly Mother, Eve, and a female Holy Spirit.

I know that my search for the Mother and Daughter is just beginning. I believe it will be a life-long search. My beliefs are always subject to revision as my understanding and experience continue to grow and expand. So far my search has been a meaningful experience which has greatly enriched my spiritual life. And wherever it eventually leads me, it has engaged me in Mormon doctrine and scripture again, an involvement I have not felt drawn to for the past several years. It has also led to my return to participation in sacrament meeting each week, as I seek her in Mormon song, prayer, and ritual. And I am finding that for me it is possible to know and experience the Mother and Daughter within the context of Mormonism. I can find her in our songs when I hear them like this:

Choose the right, when a choice is placed before you;
In the right the Holy Spirit guides;
And her light is forever shining o'er you,
When in the right your heart confides.

Choose the right! Choose the right!
Let Wisdom mark the way before;
In her light, choose the right!
And God will bless you evermore (see *Hymns*, #239).

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I know my Mother lives,
And loves me too.
The Spirit whispers this to me,
And tells me it is true,
And tells me it is true (see *Hymns*, #302).

* * *

Through a still small voice,
The Spirit speaks to me
To guide me, to save me
From the evil I may see.

If I try to do what's right,
She will lead me through the night,
Direct me, protect me,
And give my soul her light.

Listen, listen.
The Holy Ghost will whisper.
Listen, listen
To the still small voice (see *Children's Songbook*, #106).

* * *

Children, God delights to teach you
By the Holy Spirit's voice.
Quickly heed her holy promptings,
Day by day you'll then rejoice.
O prove faithful, O prove faithful
To your God and Zion's cause (see *Hymns*, #96).

* * *

The Spirit, Lord, has stirred our souls,
And by her inward shining glow
We see anew our sacred goals
And feel thy nearness here below.

No burning bush near Sinai
Could show thy presence, Lord, more nigh (see *Hymns*, #157).

* * *

O my Mother, thou that dwellest
In the high and glorious place.
When shall I regain thy presence,
And again behold thy face?
In thy holy habitation
Did my spirit once reside?
In my first primeval childhood
Was I nurtured near thy side? (see *Hymns*, #292)

I can find her in our sacrament prayers when I hear them like this:

O God, our Eternal Parents, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this water to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God our Eternal Parents, that they do always remember him, that they may have the Holy Spirit to be with them. Amen (see D&C 20:79).

And I can find her in our sacred rituals when I hear them like this:

Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Mother, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen (see D&C 20:73).

My search for the Mother and Daughter in Mormonism does have some limitations. While reading scripture passages which refer to the Father to mean "Father and Mother" is an exciting beginning, if this is all we ever know of her then she may remain just a shadow-image of the Father. We may fail to see her own unique identity. I want to know more and more about the specific attributes and activities of both the Mother and the Daughter. And I want to know how they relate to their male counterparts—what is common to all of them and what is unique to each of them.

My search also feels limited by the fact that all of the revelations of God in our current scriptures have come through men in a patriarchal tradition. Growing up in the gospel I learned to love the scriptures. I have received inspiration, comfort, and guidance from them. And yet there are important parts of my life and my spiritual experience that they do not seem to address as fully as they do others. Our scriptures are replete with history and wars, doctrines and principles and theological teachings. These doctrines and theological principles have played an important part in my spiritual development over the years. But they do not express the whole of

my spiritual experience or my understanding of God. For me, as a woman, so much of my spiritual experience and understanding has come through my connections with others, through the many different kinds of relationships I have experienced. I have been forever changed by those I have known and loved, and those who have loved me. And it is this aspect of my spiritual life that I do not find fully addressed in our current scriptures.

I believe this is because women's voices and women's revelations are missing from our scriptures. Even if many of the revelations that make up our current scriptures were inspired by Heavenly Mother or the Holy Ghost, we are still limited to an official definition of deity and spiritual life that has come entirely through God's sons, without any of our scriptural understanding having come through their daughters.

Again, I do not wish to abandon the revelations that have come through the sons, because I have experienced their truth. I simply want to add to them some revelations of deity that have come through inspired women as well. I believe this would add balance and wholeness to our understanding and experience of God.

Although I do not believe in any restriction, institutional or otherwise, on praying to Mother in Heaven, I no longer wish for an official doctrinal definition of female deity from our church's priesthood leaders. My own personal search for the divine feminine has become one of the most joyful and meaningful spiritual endeavors I have ever undertaken. I treasure my moments of discovery of new ideas and possibilities for her. My flashes of insight and communion with her have been wonderful gifts in my spiritual life, and I want to continue to discover her for myself. I do not want my unfolding discovery of her to be circumscribed in any way by what could possibly turn out to be a limited institutional definition of her.

And so I continue to ponder the nature and gender of deity. On one hand I can see the danger in differentiating too strongly between male and female deities. It would be unwise to try to lock them into separate, rigidly defined roles in my spiritual life. The question of what a female deity can give me that Heavenly Father and Jesus cannot is a valid one. I believe that Jesus was a perfect man. I believe that he had all of the qualities that society has typically defined as male (strength, independence, intelligence, etc.), and also all of the qualities that society has typically defined as female (compassion, nurturing, connectedness, etc.). I believe Jesus was a perfectly complete and whole person, capable of giving us both "fathering" and "mothering." Likewise, I believe that any female deity is also perfectly whole and complete and has both of these sides to her personality as well. She would also be capable of giving us both "mothering" and "fathering."

If both the Father and Mother are whole and complete individuals, and either one is wise and loving enough to parent us well, then one might easily ask, "What's the big deal? What can a female deity possibly give you

that Heavenly Father and Jesus can't?" The answer is simple and yet profoundly important. Being able to see and know the Mother and Daughter gives me a picture of *myself*. Seeing them shows me where I came from, who I am, and what I can become. Knowing them empowers me. They show me what it means to be an eternal woman. And when I see the Mother and Daughter standing and working side by side with the Father and Son, I see a picture of my own infinite worth as a woman, and my *completely* equal place with men. I am able to see it in the heavens even if it does not exist on earth. I feel I must know my Mother and Sister in order to be whole.

So I will continue my search. My faith that it will be a fruitful one comes from our ninth Article of Faith: I believe all that God has revealed, all that they now reveal, and I believe that they will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the kingdom of God.