

Restoring the Patriarchal Order

Robert L. Millet

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For further information write:

BYU Family Expo
136 Harman Continuing Education Building
Provo, Utah 84602
(801) 422-3559
E-mail: conferences@byu.edu
Home page: <http://familyexpo.byu.edu>

Much has been said in the last two decades about patriarchy, a good portion of which has been negative. For many, patriarchy has come to be associated with male domination, chauvinism, sexism, and discrimination. Indeed, we should not expect that something so very important in the great plan of happiness as the patriarchal order should come forth without opposition, whether in terms of abuse, distortion, or misunderstanding. In this presentation, we will speak of the patriarchal order, of its origins, purpose, and restoration through the Prophet Joseph Smith. We will consider what it is, what it is not, and what it shall yet be. In doing so, we will lean heavily upon prophetic declarations—perhaps more so than would normally be the case—in order to establish doctrine and clarify what may be rather sensitive issues.

Origins

The patriarchal order is an order of the Melchizedek Priesthood; it is, in fact, the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, an order entered into by men and women whenever they are married in the temple by one having proper sealing authority. The patriarchal order was established by God and predates mortal institutions. Our God is also our Father, our Father in heaven. He is a man, a glorified, resurrected man, a Man of Holiness (Moses 6:57). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that God was once a mortal, that he dwelt on an earth, worked out his salvation, and inherited the fullness of light and knowledge and power. “God himself was once as we are now,” the Choice Seer declared, “and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like

yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks and communes with another.”⁽¹⁾

President Brigham Young explained: “After men have got their exaltations and their crowns—have become Gods, even the sons of God—are made Kings of kings and Lords of lords, they have the power then of propagating their species in spirit; and that is the first of their operations with regard to organizing a world.”⁽²⁾ We know that “man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal body to undergo an experience in mortality.”⁽³⁾ Thus God lives in the family unit. Indeed, godhood is defined in terms of (1) inheriting, possessing, and receiving a fulness of glory; and (2) the continuation of the family unit into eternity (D&C 132:19–20). In the premortal existence—our first estate—we lived under the patriarchal order, the family order. It was an order consisting of Father, Mother, and children, an order presided over by our Parents and directed by love, kindness, gentleness, and godly persuasion. We are thus children of God, members of the royal family. Our souls are eternally attuned and acclimated to family things, and thus our greatest happiness (and therefore our greatest sorrows) are associated with the family.

Adam is described in modern revelation as “the son of God, with whom God, himself, conversed” (Moses 6:22; see also Luke 3:38). Adam and Eve were created “in the image of the Gods” (Abraham 4:27). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that Adam and Eve were married in the Garden of Eden.⁽⁴⁾ We know that they were taught the gospel by angels, by the voice of God, and by the power of the Holy Ghost (Moses 5:1–8, 58). They were baptized, received the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enjoyed the quickening and renovating powers of the Spirit in their lives. “The priesthood was first given to Adam,” the Prophet Joseph explained; “he obtained the First Presidency, and held the keys of it from generation to generation.”⁽⁵⁾ We would also assume that Adam and Eve participated in sacred ordinances associated with the perpetuation of the family. Adam “heard a voice out of heaven, saying: Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost. This is the record of the Father, and the Son, from henceforth and forever; and thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity. Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons.” (Moses 6:66–68).

Adam and Eve were born again and became, through the Atonement, a son and daughter of Christ. But there was more. They became, through the powers of the holy priesthood and the ordinances associated therewith, a son and daughter of God, meaning the Father.⁽⁶⁾ In referring to the experience of our first parents, President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “To Adam, after he was driven from the Garden of Eden, the plan of salvation was revealed, and upon him the fulness of the priesthood was conferred.”⁽⁷⁾

President Ezra Taft Benson, in an address delivered at the Logan Temple Centennial in May of 1984, said: “The temple is a sacred place, and the ordinances in the temple are of a sacred character. Because of its sacredness we are sometimes reluctant to say anything about the temple to our children and grandchildren. As a consequence, many do not develop a real desire to go to the temple, or when they go there, they do so without much background to prepare them for the obligations and covenants they enter into. I believe a proper understanding or background will

immeasurably help prepare our youth for the temple. This understanding, I believe, will foster within them a desire to seek their priesthood blessings just as Abraham sought his.

“When our Heavenly Father placed Adam and Eve on this earth, He did so with the purpose in mind of teaching them how to regain His presence. Our Father promised a Savior to redeem them from their fallen condition. He gave to them the plan of salvation and told them to teach their children faith in Jesus Christ and repentance. Further, Adam and his posterity were commanded by God to be baptized, to receive the Holy Ghost, and to enter into the order of the Son of God.

“To enter into the order of the Son of God is the equivalent today of entering into the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which is only received in the house of the Lord. Because Adam and Eve had complied with these requirements, God said to them, ‘Thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity’ (Moses 6:67).⁽⁸⁾ Jehovah spoke to the Ancient of Days: ‘I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever’ (D&C 107:55). Truly, as John Taylor proclaimed, ‘Adam was the natural father of his posterity, who were his family and over whom he presided as patriarch, prophet, priest, and king.’”⁽⁹⁾

Having overcome spiritual death through gospel regeneration, Adam and Eve sought to introduce their offspring to the realm of divine experience. As given to us in modern revelation (and as recorded originally in the book of Enoch), we learn that three years prior to his death Adam gathered together his numerous posterity—some seven generations of people—in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, bestowed upon them his last blessing, and “predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation” (D&C 107:53–56). Adam blessed his posterity, the Prophet Joseph explained, because “he wanted to bring them into the presence of God.”⁽¹⁰⁾ President Benson asked: “How did Adam bring his descendants into the presence of the Lord? The answer: Adam and his descendants entered into the priesthood order of God. Today we would say they went to the house of the Lord and received their blessings. The order of priesthood spoken of in the scriptures is sometimes referred to as the patriarchal order because it came down from father to son. But this order is otherwise described in modern revelation as an order of family government where a man and woman enter into a covenant with God—just as did Adam and Eve—to be sealed for eternity, to have posterity, and to do the will and work of God throughout their mortality.”⁽¹¹⁾

Both Adam and Eve, as a partnership, rejoiced in the Fall and the Atonement, exulted in the opportunities for growth and refinement the great plan of happiness provided for them and their posterity. “Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God. And Eve, his wife, heard all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient” (Moses 5:10–11). Modern revelation affirms that Eve and her husband continued to lift their voices in testimony in the postmortal spirit world after their mortal death (D&C 138:38–39).⁽¹²⁾

The Patriarchal Order Anciently

From the days of Adam, the Melchizedek Priesthood was administered under the patriarchal order. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written: “Adam, our father, the first man, is the presiding high priest over the earth for all ages. The government the Lord gave him was patriarchal, and from the expulsion from Eden to the cleansing of the earth by water in the day of Noah, the righteous portion of mankind were blessed and governed by a patriarchal theocracy.

“This theocratic system, patterned after the order and system that prevailed in heaven, was the government of God. He himself, though dwelling in heaven, was the Lawgiver, Judge, and King. He gave direction in all things both civil and ecclesiastical; there was no separation of church and state as we know it. All governmental affairs were directed, controlled, and regulated from on high. The Lord’s legal administrators on earth served by virtue of their callings and ordinations in the Holy Priesthood and as they were guided by the power of the Holy Ghost.”⁽¹³⁾

Elder Erastus Snow further noted that “Adam was the first man appointed of God as the ruler of the earth; to him it was said, Thou shalt have dominion over the earth and over the things therein. And as he began to multiply and replenish the earth, and as his children and their families increased in the land, there was a right of dominion given; it was called the birth-right, and it belongs to the first-born of the sons. And this seems to have been an order existing in the heavens even before Adam. For it is written of Jesus, the Lamb of God, that he was the first-born of many brethren. Moreover, his rights of dominion as the first-born continued with him because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity.”⁽¹⁴⁾

And so it was that Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah presided over the kingdom of God during their respective times on earth. From Noah to Abraham, an additional ten generations, righteous men were called upon to officiate in the Lord’s theocratic system. They were high priests. They were presiding patriarchs. Others held the priesthood, but these men held the keys, the directing power over the affairs of God on earth.⁽¹⁵⁾ It was a family order, an order of family government presided over by a father and a mother. Yes, in the ultimate sense, the father was responsible and accountable for the family. “Of necessity,” the revelations affirm, “there are presidents, or presiding officers” within God’s program (D&C 107:21). Knowing what we know, however, about the Lord’s system of priesthood government, we must assume that in ancient times husbands and wives counseled together on the government of the family. It was called the patriarchal order because the law of primogeniture was in effect and the blessings of the priesthood and the birthright descended from father to oldest worthy son. As President Joseph Fielding Smith stated, “It is true that the patriarchal priesthood was handed down from father to son, and that the keys of it belonged to the oldest son by right of primogeniture; but notwithstanding this, all of the faithful men who obtained the priesthood had this patriarchal office from the days of Adam down to the days of Moses. This order of the priesthood was the one conferred upon these ancient prophets and teachers, whether they were the first-born or the last-born, if they were faithful.”⁽¹⁶⁾

Few details are given in the Bible or the Book of Mormon concerning the lives or contributions of the great matriarchs. The scriptural records were kept by men and focused on certain fundamental doctrinal messages or precepts. But it is important for us to know that both Adam

and Eve called on the name of the Lord, heard the voice of the Lord, received commandments to offer animal sacrifices, and obeyed the will of the Almighty (Moses 5:1–8). “Adam held the priesthood,” Elder Russell M. Nelson observed, “and Eve served in matriarchal partnership with the patriarchal priesthood.”⁽¹⁷⁾ Adam did not receive the fulness of the blessings of the priesthood alone, nor will any man; Eve was by his side as an intelligent, contributing, and equal partner. Again, the patriarchal order is celestial marriage, the new and everlasting covenant of marriage (D&C 131:1–4). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may have qualified for exaltation in the highest heaven, but they did not so achieve on their own; they stand now, with their eternal companions, not as angels but as gods and goddesses (D&C 132:37). The patriarchal order is a partnership.

Let us take a few illustrations from scripture to point up the vital place of woman in the patriarchal order. The revelation on marriage explains that “Abraham received all things, whatsoever he received, by revelation and commandment, by my word, saith the Lord” (D&C 132:29). And how was it done? That Abraham and Sarah counseled together on important matters, and that the Lord often made His will known through Sarah, is clear from the Old Testament. “Now Sarai Abram’s wife bore him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai” (Genesis 16:1–2). Later in the story when Sarah insists that Hagar and Ishmael depart, Abraham is hurt and hesitant. “And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Genesis 21:12).

In Genesis 25 we find the story of Isaac and Rebekah. Elder McConkie has stated: “I think Rebekah is one of the greatest patterns in all the revelations of what a woman can do to influence a family in righteousness.” After having quoted several verses that speak of the twins struggling within Rebekah’s womb, Elder McConkie continued: “Now note it well. She did not say, ‘Isaac, will you inquire of the Lord. You are the patriarch; you are the head of the house,’ which he was. She went to inquire of the Lord, and she gained the answer: ‘And the Lord said unto her [the woman], Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.’ (Genesis 25:23). That is to say, ‘To you, Rebekah, I, the Lord, reveal the destiny of nations that are to be born which are yet in your womb.’”⁽¹⁸⁾

The Old Testament is a stunningly human record, a chronicle of men and women who wrestled with the challenges of mortality. We are told that Isaac loved Esau, while his wife Rebekah loved Jacob, meaning, presumably, that the father and mother of the family had their favorites. We read further that Esau despised and sold his birthright (Genesis 25:29–34) and chose to marry outside the covenant (Genesis 26:34–35). In Genesis 27 we are told that Isaac the patriarch had grown old and was losing his eyesight. For reasons that are unclear—and we look forward one day to having the full account—Isaac intended to deliver his first blessing, the birthright, to Esau, in spite of the latter’s disobedience and disloyalty. Rebekah interceded and coaxed Jacob into a bit of intrigue that seems to some readers to border on dishonesty in an effort to have the birthright go to the worthy son. Erastus Snow explained: “From the story that is told of Rebekah helping her son Jacob to get the first blessing from his father, Isaac, on purpose to secure the

birthright from his brother Esau, many would be inclined to think that deceit, dishonesty and unrighteous means were employed to secure it, and they perhaps wonder why it should be so. This was really not the case; it is only made to appear so in the eyes of those who do not understand the dealings of God with man, and the workings of the Holy Spirit to bring about His purposes. . . . The Lord therefore saw fit to take [the birthright] from [Esau], and the mother was moved upon to help the younger son to bring about the purpose of the Lord, in securing to himself the blessing through the legitimate channel of the Priesthood. And as you know, the father was induced to bless him and confirm this blessing upon him.”⁽¹⁹⁾

If we might be so bold, we might suggest that on this occasion Isaac was not as much in tune with the workings of the Spirit and the mind of God as was Rebekah, and that it took her inspired intervention to bring about the purposes of the Lord. This admission in no way minimizes the greatness and importance of Isaac, one who, as we have noted above, has ascended the throne of godhood. It does point up, nonetheless, that the patriarchal order is a family order, a partnership, a joint stewardship. “It is an eternal principle—the man and the woman are not alone: neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord. Women are appointed, like Rebekah, to be guides and lights in righteousness in the family unit, and to engineer and arrange so that things are done in the way that will result in the salvation of more of our Father’s children.”⁽²⁰⁾

The patriarchal order continued in the Old World until the days of Moses, when the children of Israel proved unworthy of the higher priesthood and unwilling to receive its highest privilege—entering the presence of Jehovah (see Exodus 20:19; D&C 84:19–27). When Moses was translated and taken from the midst of ancient Israel, the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood—including the right to pass that divine authority from father to son—were taken also. The fulness of the everlasting gospel, including the blessings of the holy order of God, were taken. The preparatory gospel, with its governing priesthood, the Aaronic Priesthood, was then given to the people (JST, Exodus 34:1–2; JST, Deuteronomy 10:1–2).

There were, of course, people living on the earth after this time who held the Melchizedek Priesthood—including the sons of Aaron, the seventy elders of Israel, and the prophets who were called thereafter—but the keys, the right of presidency, including the right to confer the higher priesthood, were taken from the generality of the people. “All Priesthood is Melchizedek,” Joseph Smith taught, “but there are different portions or degrees of it. That portion which brought Moses to speak with God face to face was taken away; but that which brought the ministry of angels remained. All the prophets had the Melchizedek Priesthood and were ordained by God himself.”⁽²¹⁾ That is, prophets after Moses like Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Lehi were called by God and received the Melchizedek Priesthood and its keys by special dispensation. We are instructed in a modern revelation that Nathan and “others of the prophets who had the keys of this [sealing] power” officiated in sacred saving ordinances (D&C 132:39) in Old Testament times after the Melchizedek Priesthood was taken from the body of ancient Israel.

It was not until the mortal ministry of Christ that the keys of the higher priesthood were once again delivered more universally to men on earth.⁽²²⁾ Jesus bestowed apostolic authority upon His chosen Twelve, and they were thereby empowered to bind on earth and bind in heaven, to seal on earth and seal in heaven (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). Modern revelation and modern prophets

affirm that in addition to receiving the keys of the kingdom from Moses, Elijah, and other heavenly messengers on the Mount of Transfiguration, the chief apostles also received their temple endowment and perhaps even the more sure word of prophecy (Matthew 17:1–9; 2 Peter 1:16–19.⁽²³⁾)

It would appear, therefore, that the powers of the priesthood necessary to perform eternal marriage—that is, to establish the patriarchal order—were on earth during the Savior’s ministry. Joseph Smith taught: “If a man gets a fulness of the priesthood of God he has to get it in the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord.”⁽²⁴⁾ Following His resurrection, the risen Lord “shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Though scripture is relatively silent, New Testament apocryphal writings (“forty-day literature”) abound in teachings on washings and ritual cleansings, holy garments, new names, sacred marriages, etc.⁽²⁵⁾ We know that the Master organized his church, but that with the death of the apostles the keys of the kingdom were taken. And thus for seventeen centuries the world was without sufficient power and understanding to comprehend the glory of the priesthood and the ordinance of eternal marriage.

The Patriarchal Order Restored

The restoration of the patriarchal order of the Melchizedek Priesthood would be an essential part of the restitution of all things (Acts 3:21). The dispensation of the fulness of times was destined to be a day of consummation, an age in which all things would be brought to fruition, a time when everything would be gathered together in one, in Christ (Ephesians 1:10). All of the rivers of dispensations past were destined to flow into the ocean of our final dispensation. It was necessary that “a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times” (D&C 128:18).

Hosts of angels came to Joseph Smith from the courts of glory, “all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!” (D&C 128:21). Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthoods were restored in 1829 and the Church was organized in 1830. The first high priests were called in June of 1831, the First Presidency was organized in 1832, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy were called in 1835.

In April of 1836 Moses restored the keys to gather Israel, to bring people into the Church and kingdom through missionary work. Elias restored the keys associated with the patriarchal order, the power to organize the Saints into eternal families through the covenant and ordinance of eternal marriage. And Elijah restored the keys associated with the fulness of the priesthood, the powers necessary to bind families and seal them up unto eternal life. The ordinances associated

with the ministry and bestowal of keys by Moses, Elias, and Elijah (culminating in temples of the Lord) are the capstone blessings of the gospel and the consummation of the Father's work: they provide purpose and perspective for all other gospel principles and ordinances (D&C 110:11–16.⁽²⁶⁾)

And so with the coming of heavenly messengers to the Kirtland Temple, the ancient order of things was restored to earth. The order in which Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah were a part, even those keys and powers and rights are once again available to men and women. The Prophet Joseph once spoke of “patriarchal authority.” He said: “Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood.”⁽²⁷⁾ Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “I went to the temple, and I took my wife with me, and we kneeled at the altar. There on that occasion we entered, the two of us, into an ‘order of the priesthood.’ When we did it, we had sealed upon us, on a conditional basis, every blessing that God promised Father Abraham—the blessings of exaltation and eternal increase. The name of that order of priesthood, which is patriarchal in nature, because Abraham was a natural patriarch to his posterity, is the New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage.”⁽²⁸⁾

Distortions and Misunderstandings

It would be highly unusual for an institution as significant as the patriarchal order to go unnoticed by Satan or unattacked by those who either misunderstand its place in the Lord's scheme of things or who have been misled. The following represent but a few of the many ways in which this divine program has been abused, misused, or misunderstood:

1. **Equating Priesthood with Male Administration.** In the ultimate sense, the priesthood is the power of God by which the worlds were made, by which all things are held in check in this and a myriad of universes, and the power by which human souls are regenerated, renewed, resurrected, redeemed, and glorified. In addition, the priesthood is the power and authority of God, delegated to man on earth, to act in all things for the salvation of men and women. It is not a person, nor a group of people. It is a power, God's power. Men and women alike do themselves a great disservice when they equate priesthood with men or with male administration. Elder James E. Faust explained: “Many people do not understand our belief that God has wisely established a guiding authority for the most important institutions in the world. This guiding authority is called the priesthood. The priesthood is held in trust to be used to bless all of God's children. Priesthood is not gender; it is blessings from God for all at the hands of the servants He has designated.”⁽²⁹⁾

Men and women are equal before God. Both are equally necessary to the fulfillment of the Eternal Father's plan for our redemption and happiness. And yet there are presiding officers in all divinely appointed organizations, including the family. The husband and father is appointed to lead the family as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ leads His Church (Ephesians 5:22–29). In modern revelation we learn that the Twelve Apostles form a quorum equal in authority and power to the First Presidency, and at the same time the Twelve serve under the direction of the Presidency. Thus equality among individuals (marriage partners) or organizations (the Church) does not preclude the necessity for a presiding officer.

We do not know why God has chosen to bestow the priesthood upon worthy men, but we do know that women are entitled to every blessing of the priesthood, including the fulness of the priesthood, the power to become queens and priestesses before God in the patriarchal order. When we reject or rebel against the patriarchal order, we rebel not against men or maleness or masculinity but against eternal marriage, against eternal lives, against God and godhood. Without the priesthood and the ordinances thereof, neither men nor women can enjoy the powers of godliness (D&C 84:21) and thus achieve their highest potential.

2. Assuming Too Much for Men. A young woman came to me as her priesthood leader many years ago. She indicated that a young man in her ward had approached her, declared that an angel had come to him, and instructed him to marry her. The angel, he added, was her brother, who had passed away two or three years earlier. She asked what she should do. I inquired: “Have you prayed about this? What has the Lord said to you?” She stated rather matter-of-factly that she had not prayed about it. I asked why. “He holds the priesthood,” she responded, “and so I trust his judgment.” I replied that revelation is not gender specific and that something this important demanded at least a confirmation of the Spirit to her. The thought had never crossed her mind.

All of us, men and women, are expected to become gospel scholars, to learn the gospel and to live the gospel. The right to know the will of the Lord—as well as the right to enjoy the gifts of the Spirit—is freely available to all who have been baptized, received the gift of the Holy Ghost, and lived worthy of that supernal gift. I am not aware of anything in the revelations or the teachings of latter-day prophets that suggests that men who hold the priesthood have any kind of superior intelligence, greater spiritual standing, or exclusive right to the mind of God. Women may know in the same way that men may know. This is as true for single women who preside over families as it is for married women. In fact, in recent years the Brethren have emphasized more than once the importance of priesthood leaders seeking the counsel of the women of the Church, not just to be polite or considerate but to draw upon the wisdom and perspective of those who contribute equally with men to the growth of the kingdom.⁽³⁰⁾

3. Unrighteous Dominion. The Church or ecclesiastical order is a hierarchical system with one person presiding at the head of the respective organization. In the ward, for example, although there are many important duties to be performed and several vital positions of authority, one man, the bishop, presides. He may seek counsel (and should do so regularly) and discuss his feelings with others, but he must eventually make decisions and move the work along. The family or patriarchal order is a partnership, with father and mother counseling together, in conjunction with the children, toward the resolution of family challenges and difficulties.

The Church and the home are both divine institutions, and their modes of government are inspired. But attempting to apply one system of government to the other institution may lead to serious problems. For example, the family is not hierarchical in nature, even though it is presided over by the father. The Church is not a partnership, although people in the ward must work together in love and harmony. The bishop and Relief Society president really are not the father and mother of the ward. And a father in the home must not govern the family as though he were a despot or even a personnel manager at the head of a complex organization.

Too many men have assumed that their position as the head of the home entitled them to some kind of dictatorial following, that the patriarchal order allowed them to rule wife and children by virtue of their divine appointment as supreme officer over the family. This perception is false. It is damning. Unfortunately, too many women have entered into family living with a misperception and have therefore submitted themselves in ignorance to a man who is in reality dishonoring the priesthood he holds and thereby forfeiting the powers of the priesthood (D&C 121:37). President Gordon B. Hinckley has stated: “Some men who are evidently unable to gain respect by the goodness of their lives use as justification for their actions the statement that Eve was told that Adam should rule over her. How much sadness, how much tragedy, how much heartbreak has been caused through centuries of time by weak men who have used that as a scriptural warrant for atrocious behavior! They do not recognize that the same account indicates that Eve was given as a helpmeet to Adam. The facts are that they stood side by side in the garden. They were expelled from the garden together, and they worked together side by side in gaining their bread by the sweat of their brows.”⁽³¹⁾

President Howard W. Hunter likewise instructed the men of the Church: “A man who holds the priesthood accepts his wife as a partner in the leadership of the home and family with full knowledge of and full participation in all decisions relating thereto. Of necessity there must be in the Church and in the home a presiding officer (see D&C 107:21). By divine appointment, the responsibility to preside in the home rests upon the priesthood holder (see Moses 4:22). The Lord intended that the wife be a helpmeet for man (meet means equal)—that is, a companion equal and necessary in full partnership. Presiding in righteousness necessitates a shared responsibility between husband and wife; together you act with knowledge and participation in all family matters. For a man to operate independently of or without regard to the feelings and counsel of his wife in governing the family is to exercise unrighteous dominion.”⁽³²⁾

The word of the Master through the Prophet Joseph Smith is clear on this matter: “No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood” (D&C 121:41). One does not coerce individuals to follow him by virtue of the priesthood. One does not demand obedience by virtue of the priesthood. One certainly does not abuse family members, physically or verbally, by virtue of the priesthood. Power and influence come through righteous leadership, through persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, kindness, pure knowledge, and charity (D&C 121:41–45).

4. Attacks on Men in General. To be sure, men have not always been the most sensitive and considerate of creatures. This is true in the Church, as it is in the world. Some have been abusive, domineering, aloof, and almost uncaring in regard to the feelings and sentiments of loved ones. It is no wonder that women should grow weary of unrighteous dominion or should demand equality in terms of wages or opportunities. And to the degree that revolt has focused our attention more readily on the inequities and legislation has improved somewhat the conditions in society, so much the better. What is disheartening is to see male machismo replaced by female machismo; to witness harshness, roughness, and insensitivity becoming more and more characteristic of some females in society; to stand by helplessly as we substitute in some quarters female authoritarianism for male authoritarianism.

I am particularly troubled by the growing sentiment that men are unnecessary to a happy society. David Blankenhorn has written in his book, *Fatherless America*: “Fatherlessness is the most harmful demographic trend of this generation. It is the leading cause of declining child well-being in our society. It is also the engine driving our most urgent social problems, from crime to adolescent pregnancy to child sexual abuse to domestic violence against women. Yet, despite its scale and social consequences, fatherlessness is a problem that is frequently ignored or denied.” Blankenhorn goes on to say: “If you were an alien from another planet, curious about human fathers but confined to the Current Periodical section of a leading university library, what would you conclude about fatherhood in late twentieth-century America?”

“The basic answer is clear. Today’s expert story of fatherhood largely assumes that fatherhood is superfluous. More precisely, our elite culture has now fully incorporated into its prevailing family narrative the idea that fatherhood, as a distinctive social role for men, is either unnecessary or undesirable.

“An essential claim of the script is that there are not—and ought not to be—any key parental tasks that belong essentially and primarily to fathers. In this view, society no longer requires, or can afford to recognize, any meaningful difference between norms of fatherhood and norms of parenthood” (pp. 1, 67).

What an insidious development—to have a segment of our population declare that not only is patriarchy antiquated in our modern and enlightened age, but also that men and masculinity are no longer desirable or necessary in the perpetuation of the family in society. Elder James E. Faust noted more than two decades ago: “There are some voices in our society who would demean some of the attributes of masculinity. A few of these are women who mistakenly believe that they build their own feminine causes by tearing down the image of manhood. This has serious social overtones, because a primary problem in the insecurity of both sons and daughters can be the diminution of the role of the father image.”⁽³³⁾

More recently, Elder Faust taught: “It is useless to debate which parent is most important. No one would doubt that a mother’s influence is paramount with newborns and in the first years of a child’s life. The father’s influence increases as the child grows older. However, each parent is necessary at various times in a child’s development. Both fathers and mothers do many intrinsically different things for their children. Both mothers and fathers are equipped to nurture children, but their approaches are different. Mothers seem to take a dominant role in preparing children to live within their families, present and future. Fathers seem best equipped to prepare children to function in the environment outside the family. . . .

“In my opinion, members of the Church have the most effective cure for our decaying family life. It is for men, women, and children to honor and respect the divine roles of both fathers and mothers in the home. In so doing, mutual respect and appreciation among the members of the Church will be fostered by the righteousness found there.”⁽³⁴⁾

The prophets have spoken over the generations about the importance of each of us—men and women—understanding our assignments, accepting and magnifying our eternal and God-given roles, and contributing jointly to the establishment of Zion. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell pointed

out, “righteousness is not a matter of role, nor goodness a matter of gender. In the work of the kingdom, men and women are not without each other, but do not envy each other, lest by reversals and renunciations of role we make a wasteland of both womanhood and manhood.”⁽³⁵⁾ President Spencer W. Kimball similarly declared that in his wisdom and mercy, “our Father made men and women dependent on each other for the full flowering of their potential. Because their natures are somewhat different, they can complement each other; because they are in many ways alike, they can understand each other. Let neither envy the other for their differences; let both discern what is superficial and what is beautifully basic in those differences, and act accordingly.”⁽³⁶⁾

5. Apostate Cults. There is one final distortion that is worthy of brief mention. There are those, most of whom have been cut off from the Church, who claim scriptural or divine sanction (through secret ordinances or ordinations) for polygamous relationships on the basis that they are participating in what they call the patriarchal order. On the whole, they have chosen to reject the counsel of living prophets and thus forfeit the rights of membership in the living Church. Stated simply, the Lord does not work that way! Nephi explained that the Lord God does not work in darkness (2 Nephi 26:23). In 1933 the First Presidency of the Church wrote: “Any ceremony pretending to bind man and woman together beyond the period of mortal life, which is not solemnized by one who has been commissioned and authorized by the man who holds the keys of authority to bind upon earth with a covenant which will be binding in heaven, is of no efficacy or force when people are out of the world. . . .

“We do not wish to pass judgment upon or evaluate the motives of our fellow men—that is for the Lord to do—but we unqualifiedly say, as it is our right and duty to say, that the doctrines these persons [who claim some special authority to practice plural marriage] preach and the practices they follow, are born of the Evil One and are contrary to the revealed will and word of the Lord. We call upon them to repent and to forsake their false doctrines and evil practices. Unless they do so the Lord will not hold them guiltless. . . .

“Celestial marriage—that is, marriage for time and eternity—and polygamous or plural marriage are not synonymous terms. Monogamous marriages for time and eternity, solemnized in our temples in accordance with the word of the Lord and the laws of the Church, are celestial marriages.”⁽³⁷⁾

Conclusion

The family is the most important unit in time and in eternity. The Church exists to assist individuals and families in their quest to gain exaltation and eternal life. “Our very concept of heaven itself,” President Hugh B. Brown stated, “is the projection of the home into eternity. Salvation, then, is essentially a family affair, and full participation in the plan of salvation can be had only in family units.”⁽³⁸⁾ Indeed, the development of a celestial home is the object and design of all we do in the Church.

Today the family is under attack. And how could the Arch Deceiver more powerfully dismantle the family than to dismember it, to pull it apart or to pit male against female, to confuse or to convolute? Beverly Campbell stated: “If he (Satan) can make men and women see one another,

not as empowering partners, but as individuals who are of unequal worth or as competitors, seeking gifts the other has, he can cause great pain and anguish. He can distort the concepts of deity, spiritual powers, and the priesthood and thereby distort our response to each other.

“As men and women we need to recognize and validate the primary and many roles of women as well as those of men. We should strive to see that opportunities are provided and that equity abounds. . . .

“Satan knows that celestial (eternal) marriage is a basic principle on which all eternal promises hinge, and that its destruction is the only way whereby he can further frustrate the purpose of the Father.”⁽³⁹⁾

The patriarchal order of the Melchizedek Priesthood predates this mortal estate. Each of us is a spirit child of heavenly parents and was nurtured in the family unit long before we were born into earth life. As children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we come to earth with a spiritual predisposition to recognize and receive the truth,⁽⁴⁰⁾ and, if we will be true to our innermost longings and desires, with an inclination to establish our own eternal family unit. After we have been baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost, it is our duty as children of the covenant to qualify ourselves for the blessings of the holy temple. In that holy house we are truly gathered to Christ⁽⁴¹⁾ and endowed with power from on high; thereafter we may enter into that order of the Melchizedek Priesthood we know as the patriarchal order, also known as the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. And it is through fidelity and devotion to the ordinances and covenants of the house of the Lord that men and women qualify to become the sons and daughters of God. Through the mercy and grace of the Holy Messiah, we become by adoption the sons and daughters of Jesus Christ. Then as we prove faithful to temple covenants we eventually become “gods, even the sons [and daughters] of God” (D&C 76:58). These are they who are members of the Church of the Firstborn (D&C 76:54, 94), who become joint heirs with Christ to all that the Father has (Romans 8:14–18), who are then entitled to the blessings of the Firstborn, the blessings of the birthright.

The Apostle Paul taught that the man is not without the woman, neither is the woman without the man in the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:11). The patriarchal order of the priesthood is not an institution whereby men are exalted or where women are required to assume some lower station or powerless position. It is, rather, a divine system of family government. When entered into worthily and when the parties so live as to enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost, power in the priesthood is enjoyed by all concerned—husband, wife, and children—and peace, mutual respect, and individual and family growth are the order of the day. Such a family is thus a little bit of heaven on earth, inasmuch as the earthly family becomes thereby a reflection and a reminiscence of the heavenly family.

Having spoken at length concerning the ministry of the ancients, the scripture attests: “Now this same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also” (Moses 6:7). That is to say, what was true for the Former-day Saints is true for the Latter-day Saints. What inspired and motivated them can and should entice us to continued goodness in the household of faith. The patriarchal order that existed in the premortal world and that governed among the early people of God on earth has been restored through modern prophets and made available to all men

and women who prove worthy of the blessings of the temple. It will prepare us here and now for life on a celestialized earth. “And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy” (D&C 130:2). In the words of a modern apostle: “This is the priesthood which we hold. It will bless us as it blessed Melchizedek and Abraham. The priesthood of Almighty God is here.”⁽⁴²⁾

Notes

1. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), p. 345; cited hereafter as Teachings.
2. *Journal of Discourses*, 6 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards & Sons, 1851–86), 6:275.
3. *Messages of the First Presidency*, 6 vols., comp. James R. Clark (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75), 4:205.
4. *History of the Church*, 6 vols., ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957), 2:320.
5. *History of the Church* 2:320.
6. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–73), 2:474.
7. *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols., comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954–56), 3:81; see also *Discourses of Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), p. 64.
8. *Ensign*, August 1985, p. 8, emphasis added.
9. *Times and Seasons*, 6 vols. (Nauvoo, Illinois: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1839–46), 6:921–22.
10. *Teachings*, p. 159.
11. *Ensign*, August 1985, p. 9, emphasis added.
12. See also Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1971), p. 461.
13. *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985), p. 35.
14. *Journal of Discourses* 21:369.
15. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970), pp. 72–73.
16. *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957–66), 2:174; see also *Doctrines of Salvation* 3:104.
17. *The Power Within Us* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1988), p. 109.
18. *Ensign*, January 1979, p. 62.
19. *Journal of Discourses* 21:370–71, emphasis added.
20. McConkie, *Ensign*, January 1979, p. 63.
21. *Teachings*, pp. 180–81; compare Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 3:78; Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978), p. 412; see also a statement by John Taylor, cited in *Words of Joseph Smith*, comp. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), pp. 82–83.
22. *Teachings*, p. 274.
23. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* 2:165; Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 1:400.
24. *Teachings*, p. 308.
25. See Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, eds. Todd M. Compton and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. and F.A.R.M.S., 1987), pp. 10–44.
26. *Teachings*, pp. 172, 337–38; *Doctrines of Salvation* 2:115–28.
27. *Teachings*, p. 323.
28. “The Eternal Family Concept,” devotional address at the Second Annual Priesthood Genealogical Research Seminar, Brigham Young University, 23 June 1967; see also McConkie, Conference Report, October 1977, p. 50.
29. Conference Report, April 1993, p. 45, emphasis added.
30. See M. Russell Ballard, Conference Report, October 1993, p. 103; April 1994, pp. 31–34.

31. Conference Report, October 1991, p. 72. 32. Conference Report, October 1994, p. 68, emphasis added. 33. Conference Report, October 1973, p. 18, emphasis added. 34. Conference Report, April 1993, pp. 44–45, 47. 35. Conference Report, April 1978, p. 13.

36. *Ensign*, March 1976, p. 5. 37. *Messages of the First Presidency* 5:319, 329. 38. Conference Report, October 1966, p. 103.

39. “Mother Eve, Mentor for Today’s Woman: A Heritage of Honor,” address given 2 April 1993 at the eleventh annual conference of Collegium Aesculapium, Salt Lake City, Utah. 40. See Teachings, pp. 149–50; McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, pp. 38–39.

41. *Teachings*, pp. 307–308.

42. Bruce R. McConkie, Conference Report, October 1977, p. 35.