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## The Relief Society and President Spencer W. Kimball's Administration

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The Relief Society and President

Spencer W. Kimball's

Administration

Carrie Taylor Anguiano

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Mary Jane Woodger, Chair  
Lloyd D. Newell  
Kenneth L. Alford

Religious Education

Brigham Young University

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## ABSTRACT

The Relief Society and President  
Spencer W. Kimball's  
Administration

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Department of Religious Education, BYU  
Master of Arts

This thesis explores the relationship between ideology generated by advocates of the Women's Liberation Movement and President Kimball's purposes of using Relief Society to strengthen Latter-day Saint (LDS) women. Navigating women through the societal attack on womanhood, President Kimball, and other general Church leaders during his administration (1973-1985), taught LDS women of their privilege and duty to the organization and the importance of generating strength through a sisterhood focused on service. Relief Society programs, procedures, and curriculum were evaluated, adjusted, and reinforced to deepen women's commitment to divinely established roles, to enhance women's doctrinal confidence, and expand the influence of women's leadership.

The purpose of this thesis is to show how Relief Society strengthened LDS women's commitment to family and influenced increased cooperative efforts in defending families through Relief Society and priesthood organizations.

Keywords: Relief Society, Spencer W. Kimball, Barbara B. Smith, Women's Liberation Movement, Equal Rights Amendment, Womanhood, Marriage, Motherhood, Nauvoo Monuments

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I express gratitude to my parents, Norman and Debbie Taylor, who never gave up on me. I express gratitude to my siblings and close friends who listened to my ideas and gave me perspective. I express deep gratitude to my husband, David Anguiano, for keeping the vision alive, inspiring me with new ways of thinking, and providing me the time to complete my thesis. I express gratitude to God, who gave me the courage to continue and the inspiration to finish.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

On December 30, 1973, Spencer W. Kimball succeeded Harold B. Lee as president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The following day, President Kimball stated in a press conference that his intention for the Church was to move forward and further emphasize the programs President Lee had begun. More specifically, he declared, “We are especially interested in the family and the home and hope to encourage and increase, if possible, this great work.”<sup>1</sup>

Building on the past, President Kimball applied his unique leadership skills and prophetic vision to generate one of the most dynamic periods of Church history. While perhaps most remembered for his emphasis on missionary work and his revelation allowing all worthy males to hold the priesthood, an examination of his vision for the potential influence of Relief Society upon women and families provides findings that encouraged, and still encourages women to evaluate their own priorities and values. Likewise, understanding President Kimball’s prophetic vision provides insight into the principles that guided the programs of Relief Society and how general Church leaders used the organization to strengthen families and the kingdom of God.

### Statement of Purpose

Advocates for the Women’s Liberation Movement (1960s-1970s) were vigorous in their attempts to free women from what they called constrictions of gender.<sup>2</sup> By re-defining the

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<sup>1</sup> David Mitchell, “President Spencer W. Kimball Ordained Twelfth President of the Church,” *Ensign*, February 1974, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Georges Duby, Michelle Perrot, and Francoise Thebaud, ed. *A History of Women in the West: Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 10, 539.

traditional roles of womanhood, supporters for the movement also re-defined and de-valued the importance of the family. Recognizing this ideology, President Kimball sought guidance for ways to fortify families. This thesis bases its premise upon a representative statement President Kimball gave in March 1976. Speaking to women, he declared,

As the First Presidency, we feel strongly enough about the blessings that come through Relief Society that we have asked presidents of stakes, missions, and districts to foster Relief Society attendance, to help the brethren understand the *great strength to the priesthood and to families that comes from the activity of the sisters in Relief Society*. We have particularly asked them to encourage single sisters to participate in Relief Society.

The Relief Society is the Lord's organization for women. It complements the priesthood training given to the brethren. *There is a power in this organization that has not yet been fully exercised to strengthen the homes of Zion and build the Kingdom of God—nor will it until both the sisters and the priesthood catch the vision of Relief Society.*<sup>3</sup>

Drawing from President Kimball's words, the purpose of this thesis is twofold: First, in light of the Women's Liberation Movement, it seeks to answer how President Kimball's administration viewed Relief Society's position in strengthening women's commitment to family. Second, it seeks to discover how understanding and applying President Kimball's vision for Relief Society has the ability to increase cooperative work between men and women in strengthening the homes of Zion and building the kingdom of God.

## **Rationale**

This thesis is meaningful for two reasons. First, President Kimball's words offer clarification to questions and concerns that affect contemporary women. In the October 2010 Relief Society general conference, Julie B. Beck, general Relief Society president, expressed:

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<sup>3</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "Relief Society—Its Promise and Potential," *Ensign*, March 1976, 2 (emphasis added).



“Our presidency has prayed, fasted, pondered, and counseled with prophets, seers, and revelators to learn what God would have us do to help His daughters be strong in the face of ‘the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth.’ An answer has come that the sisters of the Church should know and learn from the history of Relief Society. Understanding the history of Relief Society strengthens the foundational identity and worth of faithful women.”<sup>4</sup>

Modern-day controversies over women’s roles and a continuing trend of the breakdown of families parallels the challenges Church members faced during President Kimball’s time. Julie Beck’s counsel elicits greater incentive to examine why President Kimball’s encouragement for women to participate in Relief Society and his vision of how Relief Society strengthens women, families, and the Church continues to be relevant.

Second, for women and men alike, this study has the potential to inspire as it provides an opportunity to contemplate the importance of Relief Society, the influence of womanhood, and women’s roles in the Church. To prepare LDS women to be full partners in the latter-days with priesthood leaders and in strengthening families and the Church, this thesis provides insight by synthesizing the counsel, policies, and doctrines regarding women given during President Kimball’s administration.

### **Previous Scholarship**

This thesis takes a different approach than prior research. Such research includes many books on the history of Relief Society; however, most published literature focuses on the general history and development of Relief Society. For example, *Women of Covenant*, by Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, provides an excellent foundation of Relief Society by covering its beginnings (1842) through the year 1992. One chapter, “Stars to

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<sup>4</sup> Julie B. Beck, “Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society,” *Ensign*, November 2010, 112-115.

Steer By,” provides information about changes, challenges, and successes Relief Society experienced during President Kimball’s administration. While informative, its focus is historical and does not explore the specific *why* and *how* behind President Kimball’s counsel and guidance.

Edward Kimball, son of Spencer W. Kimball, provides an excellent framework for understanding the Kimball administration in his book *Lengthen Your Stride*. Of the nearly 500 pages, twenty-two pages focus on women’s issues. These pages provide outlines and summaries of events and emphases that influenced LDS women during his father’s service as prophet.

In 2011, the First Presidency published *Daughters in My Kingdom*. This book used historical themes and events to teach Relief Society’s objective and history. While the book draws information and examples different presidencies, it does not heavily concentrate on any particular prophet’s administration.

The most detailed publication related to Relief Society and LDS women during 1973-1985 is *A Fruitful Season*, written by Barbara B. Smith. As general Relief Society president during the Kimball administration, Barbara Smith provides her personal insight to specific aspects concerning the development of Relief Society and responses of LDS women. This book contributes background and insight into the *how* and *why* of President Kimball’s administration. Many of Barbara Smiths insights, narratives, and explanations provided greater clarity and support to this thesis.

Other resources explain the background of Relief Society or provide historical information on each general Relief Society president’s administration, but the research does not expand on the history of Relief Society during President Kimball’s administration and its impact on LDS women, families, and the Church. This thesis draws heavily upon previous scholarship concerning Relief Society, talks, and other sources given by leaders during President Kimball’s

administration. This thesis is unique as it explores the implications of *why* Relief Society strengthens women's commitment to family and *how* this improves the ability for men and women to work cooperatively to build the kingdom of God.

## Sources

Research for this thesis focuses on the administration of President Spencer W. Kimball (December 1973-December 1985). The use of secondary sources provides the historical foundation of the development of Relief Society during the Kimball administration. *Ensign* magazine articles serve as a primary source. Interviews with individuals involved in general Church leadership during President Kimball's administration assist in confirming or countering inferences and conclusions made in the content analysis. Oral interviews include:

- Beverly Campbell—Director of International Affairs for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and spokesperson on the Equal Rights Amendment and other women's issues.
- Elaine L. Jack—general Relief Society board member 1972-1984 and general Relief Society president 1990-1997.
- Shirley W. Thomas—general Relief Society board member 1972-1978 and second counselor in the general Relief Society presidency 1978-1983.
- Barbara W. Winder—general Relief Society board member 1977-1984 and general Relief Society president 1984-1990.

Also included in this research is a 1980 TV episode of *The Phil Donahue Show* concerning the Church's stand on the Equal Rights Amendment, which featured Barbara B. Smith and Beverly Campbell.

Repositories drawn from include the LDS Church History Library in Salt Lake City, the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, and Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University, and the official website for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

## **Methodology**

This thesis begins by providing a synopsis of the American Women's Liberation Movement and the Equal Rights Amendment. These provide context that enables the reader to sense the significance of changes made, and focus given to Relief Society during President Kimball's administration. Also included is an overview of general Relief Society president Barbara Smith's efforts in navigating LDS women through that time of great deliberation concerning women's roles.

This study relies heavily upon a content analysis of LDS Church publications from 1973-1985 that concern women and Relief Society. It examines resources such as talks, *Ensign* articles, news articles, books, histories, media, handbooks, and Relief Society curriculum. Observations of counsel, doctrines, and warnings frequently emphasized, changes made to Church procedures and curriculum, and significant events relating to women within the Church serve to substantiate the conclusions made in this thesis. Likewise, interviews with general Relief Society leaders who served during the Kimball administration contribute to the conclusions made.

## **Structure of Study**

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows:

### *Chapter 2: The Influence of the Women's Liberation Movement*

Chapter 2 contextualizes the social conditions existing in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s—most notably the Women's Liberation Movement and the Equal Rights Amendment. This chapter outlines and evaluates effects upon general Church membership as societal philosophies and the ideals taught within Relief Society experienced considerable collision.

### *Chapter 3: The Role of Relief Society*

Chapter 3 stresses President Kimball's desire for LDS women to participate in Relief Society. It examines the emphasis President Kimball and other general Church leaders placed on teaching LDS women the importance of their privilege and duty to participate in Relief Society, nurturing the sisterhood, becoming doctrinally strengthened, and contributing to their family and Church membership. This chapter explains how President Kimball encouraged LDS women understand that Relief Society was a program intended to develop women's physical and spiritual self-reliance and increase their capability of working as a sisterhood with the priesthood in strengthening members of the Church.

### *Chapter 4: Changes in Relief Society*

Chapter 4 enumerates certain emphases made by President Kimball's administration that increased general respect for womanhood and Relief Society. It also examines how specific changes made to some Church procedures and the Relief Society curriculum offered LDS women greater visibility and influence within the Church. These changes demonstrate President Kimball's desire to strengthen women's influence and encourage greater cooperation between Relief Society and priesthood organizations.

### *Chapter 5: Defining Womanhood*

As the Women's Liberation Movement was redefining womanhood within society, President Kimball's administration provided guidance to LDS women by clarifying the roles of women as established by the Lord. Chapter 5 identifies ways general leadership emphasized these roles, one in particular being the Nauvoo Monuments to women. These thirteen statutes represented the Church's view of the roles associated with womanhood, marriage, motherhood, and family. This chapter shows how general Church leaders defined womanhood and encouraged

LDS women to cultivate their character, femininity, leadership skills, and spirituality by magnifying their roles of womanhood.

#### *Chapter 6: The Role of Women as Wives*

In a time when many in society disparaged marriage, this chapter shows that President Kimball and other general Church leaders honored and accentuated the eternal doctrine of marriage. It stresses that one objective of Relief Society was to prepare women for marriage by strengthening her character and commitment to womanhood. It explores how women could strengthen marriages by magnifying their femininity. This chapter also discusses how President Kimball and leaders of Relief Society encouraged women to see the differences between men and women as an asset to the marriage partnership.

#### *Chapter 7: The Role of Women as Mothers*

This chapter addresses the societal attack on motherhood triggered preeminently by Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*. In light of Friedan's influence, this chapter identifies and evaluates President Kimball's and other general Church leaders' teachings regarding the doctrine of motherhood and a mother's eternal influence upon her family. It shows how President Kimball and other Church leaders worked to preserve within the minds of Church members an honor and respect towards motherhood and the divinity of that role. The chapter also analyzes why it was felt by President Kimball's administration that participation in Relief Society would provide greater strength to mothers in defending the institution of the family.

#### *Chapter 8: Conclusion*

This chapter summarizes and brings together the points that show President Kimball's emphasis in using Relief Society as a means to strengthen women's commitment to family and thereby improving LDS men and women's cooperative ability to strengthen homes and the

Church. It also offers suggestions for further research associated with the influence of the Women's Liberation Movement and women's willingness to accept their divinely appointed roles. This chapter concludes that through Relief Society, women gain greater insight to the significance of their roles as women and their influence on families. As women deepen in their understanding of the strength of womanhood, it increases the ability for men and women to work cooperatively in strengthening the family and Church.

### **Summary**

Research on the role and history of Relief Society between 1973 and 1985 indicates there were significant changes within the Church and Relief Society. At the time, many women within American society were deliberating the value and role of womanhood. By encouraging participation in Relief Society, President Kimball hoped women would possess greater strength in using their agency to make righteous choices. Since Relief Society's strength today is dependent upon individuals with a vision of the organization, it is imperative that women understand the results of President Kimball's administration and the effect it had upon the organization. President Spencer W. Kimball summed it up by saying: "Women who have a deep appreciation for the past will be concerned about shaping a righteous future."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Maurine Mouritsen, ed., *Blueprints for Living: Perspectives on Mormon Women in History* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Publications, 1980), 1.

## Chapter 2: The Influence of the Women’s Liberation Movement

One particular political interest group in the early 1960s that gained momentum was the Women’s Liberation Movement (WLM). Historians have classified the Women’s Liberation Movement (WLM) in the United States into “first wave feminism” and “second wave feminism.” The first wave of feminism, beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth part of the century, pushed for achieving basic political rights and waned with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. The second wave of feminism began in the 1960s with an emphasis of fighting for greater equality in education, the workplace, and at home.<sup>1</sup> Championed foremost by radical feminists, this second wave of feminism has come to be associated with the WLM.

### The Women’s Liberation Movement

Due to feminism’s numerous viewpoints and claims, the feminist movement is difficult to characterize. In *Feminism: Opposing Viewpoints*, Christina Fisanick cites several definitions of feminism. She suggested, 1) “Feminism is an umbrella term for a range of views about injustices against women,” 2) “Feminism is about bringing an end to injustices against women,” 3) “Feminism is the radical notion that women are human beings,” and 4) “The movement for social, political, and economic equality of men and women.”<sup>2</sup>

For LDS, the WLM raised an awareness of societal traditions and injustices against women that LDS Church leadership acknowledged needed correction.<sup>3</sup> However, the

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<sup>1</sup> Christina Fisanick, ed., *Feminism: Opposing Viewpoints* (Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>3</sup> “The Church and the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment: A Moral Issue,” *Ensign*, March 1980, insert: 1.



predominant social sentiment, which seemed to blame men for social injustices, precipitated a need to remind Church membership that whatever the perception may be, discipleship still required Christ-like behavior for both men and women.<sup>4</sup>

American feminists at this time advocated for a variety of rights. Some worked to celebrate differences between men and women, others worked for inclusion of women of all races, and some focused on international human rights for women. However, feminists who fought for liberation regarding the “oppression of women” seemed to have the greatest influence upon society and upon members of the Church. These feminists sought for change by protesting or picketing specific groups associated with the government, media, educational institutions, and religions. For example, in 1968 they picketed the Miss America Pageant professing it was a sexual exploitation of women. These radical feminists sought ways to create a sisterhood within America that separated them from men.<sup>5</sup> Their approach led to divisive opinions over the definition and application of “equality” between men and women.

American and women’s history books frequently cite a bestseller *The Feminine Mystique*, by Betty Friedan, as a factor that supposedly ignited the second wave of feminism in 1963. By posing the question, “What does it really mean to be a woman?” and providing strong reasoning for why being a housewife limited a woman from reaching her full potential, Friedan’s persuasive volume brought suppressed discontentment in thousands of women to the surface.<sup>6</sup> The media brought myriads of questions, assertions, and demands to the forefront, which in turn

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<sup>4</sup> Patricia T. Holland, “A Woman’s Perspective on the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, July 1980, 24.

<sup>5</sup> Tonya Bolden, ed., *33 Things Every Girl Should Know about Women’s History: From Suffragettes to Skirt Lengths to the E.R.A.* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2002), 164.

<sup>6</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1963), xvii.

ignited a spirit within women (and men) to find solutions to satisfy their new and disgruntled awareness.<sup>7</sup>

Friedan's premise was that "women today suffer a problem of identity." She continued, "Victorian culture did not permit women to accept or gratify their basic sexual needs, our culture does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfill their potentialities as human beings, a need which is not solely defined by their sexual role."<sup>8</sup> Her theory was that "being a wife and mother cannot possibly allow a woman to grow to her maximum human potential." Friedan reasoned that women needed a new life plan because being only a wife and mother brought discontent and emptiness.<sup>9</sup>

For many, Friedan's reasoning was accurate; many women felt disgruntled with the rigors of child-raising and household duties. Despite the traditional doctrine of womanhood and motherhood taught within the Church, Friedan's ideas resonated with some LDS women. The book gave many women a vocabulary and permission to articulate deep-seated dissatisfaction with their role in life.

With this "liberation," feminists founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966 and created "a Bill of Rights for women, which became the basis for feminist action everywhere [which they eventually] called for an Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution...and by the fall of 1967, women liberation groups began to emerge among student

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<sup>7</sup> Maurine Ward, *From Adam's Rib, to Women's Lib* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1981), 57.

<sup>8</sup> Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 77.

<sup>9</sup> Ward, *Adam's Rib*, 57.

activists across the country.”<sup>10</sup> By the 1970s, feminism not only included economic and legal equality, but psychological and sexual equality as well.

### **The Equal Rights Amendment**

Many of those involved in the WLM became aggressive in propagating their feminist philosophy to the public, leading to both houses of Congress (Senate and House of Representatives) passing the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)—a proposed Twenty-seventh Amendment to the U.S. Constitution—in 1972. The bill received a seven-year deadline (1979) to attain the required number of state ratifications. It reads as follows:

Section 1: Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Section 2: The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3: This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.<sup>11</sup>

At first glance, these fifty-eight words seemed benign and supportive of gender equality. In time Anti-ERA organizations emerged within the nation as individuals and organizations studied the proposal and recognized potential negative implications it could have on women and ultimately on society. Beverly Campbell, LDS Church spokesperson concerning the ERA and

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<sup>10</sup> “National Organization for Women also worked to support: the enforcement of Title VII (a portion of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which protects an individual from employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin); maternity leave rights, home and child-care tax deductions for working parents; child-care centers; equal education and job-training opportunities; and reproductive rights.” Wilma Mankiller, et al., *The Reader’s Companion to U.S. Women’s History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 396.

<sup>11</sup> “Different versions of an Equal Rights Amendment have been considered by Congress since 1923. On March 22, 1972, a Congressional resolution proposed the current Equal Rights Amendment, without allowing any moderating amendments, which would have provided for reasonable exceptions. Congress specified that ratification by three-fourths of the states should take place within seven years of that date. In 1979, that ratification deadline was extended to 30 June, 1982.” “The Church and the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment: A Moral Issue,” *Ensign*, March 1980, insert 1.

other women's issues shared, "Before the Church made any statements I had studied the ERA on my own, studied the legislation, and I recognized it simply was bad law—sameness is not equality."<sup>12</sup> Like Campbell, the ERA motivated American women to question the effect it would have upon the status, rights, and role of women. Questions about the ERA affected LDS members as well, and many looked to the Church for guidance to make sense of the confusion. The initial guidance offered by President Kimball's administration was through Relief Society leadership.

### **Relief Society and ERA**

In October 1974, two years after the ERA proposal, President Kimball called Barbara Smith to serve as general Relief Society president. Of those first years of service, she expressed:

Very soon, it became apparent that I must be part of the continuing discussions going on about the role of women in today's society. I do not suppose that a more vocal [or] more strident questioning of that role has occurred than during the seventies. The first part of that decade found many women involved in a consciousness-raising campaign to help others become acquainted with, and more concerned about, their situations in life. There was an enormous effort to uncover all the inequities and problems that women faced, and to push for changes. Against this backdrop, a defense of the more traditional role of wife and mother was rarely represented, especially by the media, and when represented, it was seen to be anti-woman or a defense of the stereotype.<sup>13</sup>

In November 1974, the Special Affairs Committee of the Church invited the new Relief Society president to take part in discussions regarding possible repercussions if the proposed amendment were to pass.<sup>14</sup> As the Church had not yet made any formal public statement

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<sup>12</sup> Beverly Campbell, oral history, interview by Carrie Taylor Anguiano, October 15, 2011, Salt Lake City, in author's possession.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara B. Smith, *A Fruitful Season* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 62.

<sup>14</sup> "The Public Affairs Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized in 1972 in response to a long-felt need for channeling and coordinating information about the growing Church throughout the world. In 1983, the department's name was expanded to Public Communications/Special Affairs after

regarding the ERA, the committee determined it was time to deliver a statement against the ERA. Barbara Smith recalled one concern the committee had in giving a statement on women's rights was that the public would misinterpret it to mean that the Church did "not want the women of the Church to achieve, [and] that Mormon men were trying to put women down and have them controlled by men."<sup>15</sup> At length, the committee determined that statement should be given by the general Relief Society president—Barbara B. Smith.

On December 13, 1974, Barbara Smith presented a statement to a gathering of students at the LDS Institute of Religion near the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. Barbara Smith's statement initially outlined a husband/wife relationship as given by God in scripture, along with a description of the unique talents, roles, and contributions women have had on mankind through all ages—specifically the family unit.<sup>16</sup>

Acknowledging her support for improving women's rights, she stated,

In my opinion, many of the concerns are valid, and the efforts being made to correct injustices, and unfair practices, and attitudes are deserving of support. . . . Many of these organizations and many individual citizens, however, are pinning their hopes for betterment upon a single act—the adoption of an amendment to the United States Constitution—popularly called, "The Equal Rights Amendment." They feel the passage of the amendment will somehow be a panacea for all that remains to be accomplished. It is my considered judgment that The Equal Rights Amendment is not the way.<sup>17</sup>

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the original department merged with Special Affairs, the Church's government and community relations office. The department is responsible to, and counsels with, the Church's Special Affairs Committee, comprised of members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and members of the Quorums of the Seventy. It maintains ongoing contacts with news media at local, national, and international levels." "Frequently Asked Questions about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *BYU Studies Online*, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://ldsfaq.byu.edu/viewQuestion.aspx?view=6105b032-a619-4c0f-a793-f7a2f094803e>.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *A Fruitful Season*, 74.

<sup>16</sup> Barbara B. Smith, "Receive the Gift Bestowed" (Speech, Institute of Religion, The University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, December 13, 1974), 10.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 (emphasis in original).

Barbara Smith further supported her position by explaining that passage of the ERA could potentially nullify other protective laws for women, eliminate rights of privacy, mandate military conscription for women, and create a system without allowances for physical, biological, or emotional differences between genders.<sup>18</sup> With continued boldness she declared that the ERA was “too broad,” “too vague,” and “too non-definitive,” making it a dangerous “blanket approach” to finding solutions for women’s issues.<sup>19</sup>

Concluding with a strong emphasis on her desire for women to have their God-given rights and opportunities, Barbara Smith encouraged that instead of the ERA a more effective approach would be an evaluation of specific laws perceived as inhibiting woman’s progress be made. She suggested, “Is there a law which is unfair to men? If so, change it though the legislative process. Is there a law [that] is unfair to women? If so, change it. Seek redress in the legislatures, in the courts, through presidential decree, or by group action. Make sure that each law is carefully considered individually. Insist on the enforcement of laws in an orderly process as exemplified by the greatest suffragette leaders of the past. As you do, make sure the uniqueness of the individual is protected and the family strengthened.”<sup>20</sup>

This first statement regarding the ERA given by Barbara Smith created a variety of responses. Many women gratefully accepted the statement as guidance and direction. For others however, the introductory phrasing to Barbara Smith’s ERA position—“It is my considered judgment that...” and “It is my opinion that...” —caused questions of whether her position was

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 13 (emphasis in original).

representative of the Church or merely personal opinion.<sup>21</sup> Barbara Smith responded that she had felt the Lord's hand in the preparation and delivery of her message.<sup>22</sup>

As it would be almost two years after Barbara Smith's statement before the First Presidency would make their official statement on the issue, Barbara Smith became the target of questions and criticism. Of this she reflected, "The year of 1975 was my first full year in office. I doubt that any previous general Relief Society presidency had ever faced a more constant spotlight than was directed at my counselors and me. Relief Society became the focal point of intense scrutiny. The media tended to pit my associates and me against the proponents of equal rights for women. It was a continuing frustration."<sup>23</sup>

Shirley Thomas, a general Relief Society board member at the time, shared her insight on Barbara Smith's influence, "I don't know if anyone realizes what [Barbara Smith] did for the ERA, she made a real difference. She went everywhere, she had to cross picket lines, she had the protection of the police, and she was in danger in many instances of protecting the Church's position because those people were fierce. The ERA was a big thing, very well organized, and supporters did not intend to lose. But they did lose, and a lot of the reason they did was because Barbara marshaled a lot of forces."<sup>24</sup> Despite Barbara Smith's efforts and position, there remained a lingering ambiguity over what the Church's official position was on the ERA.

On October 22, 1976, the First Presidency delivered their first official statement regarding the proposed amendment in the *Ensign* magazine. Ironically, this statement reiterated

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<sup>21</sup> Smith, *A Fruitful Season*, 75.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>24</sup> Shirley Thomas, oral history, interview by Carrie Taylor Anguiano, January 14, 2012, Salt Lake City, in author's possession.

Barbara Smith’s position declaring, “There have been injustices to women before the law and in society generally. These we deplore. There are additional rights to which women are entitled.

However, we firmly believe that the Equal Rights Amendment is not the answer.”<sup>25</sup>

Even with an official Church statement, confusion and questions continued to abound, thus in 1978 the First Presidency provided further explanation for their position against the ERA:

a. Its deceptively simple language deals with practically every aspect of American life, without considering the possible train of unnatural consequences which could result because of its very vagueness—encouragement of those who seek a unisex society, an increase in the practice of homosexual and lesbian activities, and other concepts which could alter the natural, God-given relationship of men and women.

b. It would strike at the family, the basic institution of society. ERA would bring ambiguity to the family structure which could encourage legal conflict in the relationship of husbands and wives.

c. ERA would invite legal action on every conceivable point of conflict between men and women. Its sweeping generalizations could challenge almost every legally accepted social custom, as well as every morally accepted behavior pattern in America.

d. Men and women have differences biologically, emotionally and in other ways. The proposed Equal Rights Amendment does not recognize these differences. For example, present laws protecting the rights of pregnant women in the working force could be challenged if ERA becomes law.

e. Passage of ERA, with its simplistic approach to complex and vitally important problems, could nullify many accumulated benefits to women in present statutes, such as those protecting mothers and children from fathers who do not accept their legal responsibilities to their families.<sup>26</sup>

Even with prophetic guidance, many LDS continued to wrestle with the rampant ideologies pressed upon them. Barbara Smith recalled there being a “divisive spirit...upon many

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<sup>25</sup> “The Church and the Proposed Equal Rights Amendment: A Moral Issue,” *Ensign*, March 1980, insert: 1.

<sup>26</sup> “First Presidency Reaffirms Opposition to ERA,” *Ensign*, October 1978, 63–64.



men and women in and out of the Church” and “an underlying awareness of the unrest that was upsetting the thinking of some of our sisters and causing them much pain as they struggled to find harmony in their hearts and minds.”<sup>27</sup> Elaine Jack, a general Relief Society board member at the time, remembered, “It was during that time was when there was a lot of unrest and dissonance among our women. There were those who were protesting and criticizing the Church’s attitude toward women.”<sup>28</sup>

One LDS woman, Sonia Johnson, brought national attention to both Relief Society and the Church as she aggressively advocated for the ERA. In an overzealous attempt to rally support for her pro-ERA loyalties, she developed anti-LDS attitudes and behaviors, which ultimately led to her excommunication in December 1979. This action created a significant stir nationwide as media coverage made it appear the Church was a strong patriarchy silencing women who spoke out for woman’s rights. Great confusion abounded in the nation and within the Church over the reasons for Johnson’s excommunication. An article in the February 1980 *Ensign* provided a clear explanation for the action:

The excommunication of Mrs. Sonia Johnson from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been widely reported in the news media. The real reasons for the excommunication, however, have often been overlooked or ignored by the media, although we provided a detailed explanation after announcing the decision to Mrs. Johnson.

That Mrs. Johnson had taken public issue with the Church’s opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment was *not* among the grounds for the ecclesiastical action leading to her excommunication. But, in her advocacy of ERA, Mrs. Johnson expressed attitudes and views which went beyond that issue and constituted a direct and irresponsible attack upon the Church, its leaders, doctrines, and programs.

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<sup>27</sup> Smith, *A Fruitful Season*, 76.

<sup>28</sup> Elaine L. Jack, oral history, interview by Carrie Taylor Anguiano, November 21, 2011, Salt Lake City, in author’s possession.

In public statements she urged the obstruction of the Church's worldwide missionary effort, demonstrated that she was not in harmony with Church doctrine, and misrepresented and held up to ridicule the leadership and membership of the Church.<sup>29</sup>

Because the Johnson incident became publically controversial, it caught the attention of national talk show host Phil Donahue.<sup>30</sup> Initially Donahue invited Barbara Smith to make an appearance with Johnson on one of his shows. Barbara Smith politely declined the offer and suggested Beverly Campbell, the Church's ERA spokesperson, be invited in her place. When invited, Campbell accepted. However, at the last minute, Donahue canceled with Campbell saying that Johnson had refused to appear with her. Johnson aired alone for the full hour.<sup>31</sup>

Oddly enough, during the show Donahue explained to the audience that Johnson appeared alone because "no woman from the Mormon Church would appear with Mrs. Johnson."<sup>32</sup> Barbara Smith recalled how LDS women all over the nation called Campbell wanting to confirm Donahue's assertion. Donahue also received phone calls—mostly calls from upset women.<sup>33</sup> In time, he again invited Barbara Smith to appear on his show and offered her the full hour. Barbara Smith asked Donahue to invite Campbell to appear with her and requested that Donahue give a public apology for his false statement. Donahue agreed to her requests.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> "LDS Scene," *Ensign*, February 1980, 80.

<sup>30</sup> "The Phil Donahue Show, also known as *Donahue*, is an American television talk show that ran for 26 years on national television. Its run was preceded by three years of local broadcast in Dayton, Ohio, and it was broadcast nationwide between 1967 and 1996." Wikipedia, s.v. "The Phil Donahue Show," accessed June 6, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Phil\\_Donahue\\_Show](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Phil_Donahue_Show).

<sup>31</sup> Smith, *A Fruitful Season*, 163.

<sup>32</sup> "The Phil Donahue Show," (Multimedia Inc., 1976–1982, Chicago, Illinois), February 4, 1980 (hereafter cited in text as Donahue Transcript).

<sup>33</sup> Smith, *A Fruitful Season*, 165.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 163-164.

Barbara Smith and Campbell appeared on the Phil Donahue Show on February 4, 1980. As promised Donahue delivered a public apology for his misleading statement and then led a lively discussion that initially targeted Johnson's excommunication and why the Church spoke out on the ERA. Barbara Smith and Campbell competently responded to both Donahue and the audience's questions and comments through the duration of the program.

In response to Johnson's situation Barbara Smith clarified the difference between disagreeing and dissenting from Church doctrine. When asked by Donahue if it was correct that she was against the ERA, Barbara Smith replied with a simple, "We are."<sup>35</sup> Campbell articulated the Church's position as supportive of women's rights but that the ERA was not the right answer to achieve those goals. She particularly emphasized that laws were already in place to provide the equality and rights women need.<sup>36</sup>

Concerning potential effects of the ERA, Barbara Smith shared her unease with a requirement for women to enter into military combat due to the brutalizing effect combat can have on a woman and the effect that could have on a family. Barbara Smith conveyed to the audience that central to a woman's role is the importance of protecting the family. She received supportive audience applause with her statement, "Women have a different role than men. Women must bear and nurture children, and we can't destroy the life giving source and then expect civilization to go on."<sup>37</sup>

While agreeing with her statement, Donahue expressed his concern that LDS Church leaders were molding their members' thoughts by making the Church's position on the ERA

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<sup>35</sup> Donahue Transcript.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

doctrinal.”<sup>38</sup> Campbell responded with what was perhaps at the heart of the Church’s position on ERA, “We feel it’s a moral issue and these issues can affect family. That’s why churches exist—to protect moral issues.”<sup>39</sup>

In the remaining seconds of the show Barbara Smith attempted to answer Donahue’s final question, “What has the Mormon Church done for women in general?”<sup>40</sup> Her response touched on the idea that Relief Society provided positions of responsibility and opportunities for leadership and that the work of women in the Church is equal but different to the work of men. Campbell added that without women working within the Church, the Church would not function.

In hindsight, Barbara Smith wrote that she felt that the time aired on The Phil Donahue Show had been effective.<sup>41</sup> The fact that both she and Donahue had such a response after the show through letters and phone calls provided evidence to her that women of the Church wanted someone to represent and speak up for them and that her appearance had been of value.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps the greatest benefit of Barbara Smith and Campbell appearing on The Phil Donahue Show was the opportunity to clarify on a national level that despite the Church’s position on the ERA it did indeed support equality for women and was open to discuss the issues in non-contentious ways. Ultimately, the ERA issue created division and controversy during the 1970s and into the early 1980s, but in 1982 the proposal was three states short for ratification and expired.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Smith, *A Fruitful Season*, 168.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 169.

For some, the confusion and contention over the ERA served as an obstacle to individual faith and commitment to womanhood, marriage, and family. Sonia Johnson's conduct also created some misunderstandings for many about the Church. Barbara Smith's opportunity to discuss the issue on The Phil Donahue Show provided opportunity to explain that while the Church was indeed against the ERA it was supportive of correcting injustices towards women through other avenues. This model for talking to others in non-contentious ways about the Church's position gave LDS men and women guidance and confidence to do the same.

Barbara Smith and other general Church leaders were concerned with the idea of 'agency.' Feminists maintained their view of 'liberation' as license to think, act, and live in a manner of their choosing, without restraint; displaying a loss of understanding regarding choice and accountability. Barbara Smith emphasized the doctrine of agency stating, "Responsibility is a key word as we try to understand and relate to any idea in the world today. We have many options as to how to spend our lives, but we must not forget that option and agency do not mean license. The fundamental concept of agency is that one who makes choices must also accept the responsibility for whatever comes of that choice."<sup>43</sup>

Barbara Smith's statements indicate that she hoped Relief Society women would recognize opportunities offered to them, but use their agency and knowledge of truth to act with moderation and wisdom, to become confident and educated mothers, and to be committed to marriage and family. She observed, "One of the fundamental and urgent questions being explored [at that time] was that of the right of women to choose the direction of their lives.

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<sup>43</sup> Barbara B. Smith, "Roots and Wings," Brigham Young University Speeches, Provo, Utah, February 9, 1978, 6.

Energy and time were also devoted to raising women's awareness of their situations in life, with an emphasis on what were perceived as inequitable situations."<sup>44</sup>

It quickly became evident to Barbara Smith that Relief Society was not designed to support political purposes, rather it was to unite women with testimony, care for those in need, and internalize and teach the doctrines of salvation.<sup>45</sup> President Kimball's vision for women through Relief Society was to create a service-oriented sisterhood of confident, articulate, spiritually grounded women who were committed to womanhood, marriage, and family. Elder Boyd K. Packer, of the Quorum of the Twelve, clearly articulated this need,

Sisters, you are needed in [Relief Society]. We need women who will applaud decency and quality in everything from the fashion of clothing to crucial social issues. We need women who are organized and women who can organize. We need women with executive ability who can plan and direct and administer; women who can teach, women who can speak out. There is a great need for women who can receive inspiration to guide them personally in their teaching and in their leadership responsibilities. We need women with the gift of discernment who can view the trends in the world and detect those that, however popular, are shallow or dangerous. We need women who can discern those positions that may not be popular at all, but are right.<sup>46</sup>

Like President Kimball and other general Church leaders, the battle Barbara Smith came to recognize was how general Church leadership could help maintain or instill within women the beauty and divinity of their eternal role as a woman, wife, and mother through the organization of Relief Society.

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<sup>44</sup> Smith, *A Fruitful Season*, 83.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>46</sup> Boyd K. Packer, "The Relief Society," *Ensign*, November 1978, 7.

## **Summary**

The effects of the WLM had a significant influence on society and LDS women during President Kimball's administration. The rhetoric presented from advocates for the WLM, ERA, and other associated groups seemed to target the areas President Kimball was focused on strengthening—women and family. For many LDS women, this generated great confusion—a cognitive dissonance—in how they related to their roles as wives and mothers and how to pursue new opportunities for personal growth. As society attempted to draw women away from home and family, LDS Church leadership focused on using Relief Society to help women understand their right and privilege of being the defenders of the home and family.

### Chapter 3: The Role of Relief Society

Barbara Smith once asked the prophet if she could do anything for him. He replied promptly, “Yes, you can get the women to Relief Society.”<sup>1</sup> His response was telling. The Kimball administration, which included President Kimball, Barbara Smith, their presidencies, the Quorum of the Twelve, and other general authorities, offered strong encouragement for all LDS women to attend Relief Society.

When President Kimball became the prophet in 1973, general Church membership was approximately 3.4 million with Relief Society membership slightly above 785,000.<sup>2</sup> Through President Kimball’s vision and efforts to expand missionary work, by clearly stating that every worthy nineteen-year-old male should serve a mission, the Church experienced a dramatic increase in membership. By the end of President Kimball’s administration in 1985, there were nearly 6 million members (with an annual growth rate of 4.96%).<sup>3</sup> Relief Society membership increased to a staggering 1.6 million members (with an annual growth rate of 6.11%) during President Kimball’s administration.<sup>4</sup> With such an increase in Relief Society membership, it is apparent that general Church leaders made great efforts to “get the women to Relief Society.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “The Bond of Charity,” *Ensign*, November 1980, 103.

<sup>2</sup> “Statistical Report 1973,” *Ensign*, May 1974, 20.

<sup>3</sup> Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 2005), 116. In 1974, the LDS Church had 17,000 full-time missionaries. Within a few years, there were 25,000 full-time missionaries. Between the years 1976-1978, the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah was built and dedicated.

<sup>4</sup> “Relief Society Counselors Chosen,” *Ensign*, July 1984, 75.

<sup>5</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “The Bond of Charity,” *Ensign*, November 1980, 103.



This chapter examines how women’s participation in Relief Society could strengthen their commitment to family. An examination of the research shows that the Kimball administration urged LDS women to participate in Relief Society by teaching that it was a sacred duty, emphasizing the need for greater sisterhood, and by increasing opportunities for women to contribute doctrinally.

### **A Duty**

General Church leaders encouraged women to attend Relief Society because it was their duty. In the October 1978 session of general conference, Elder Packer stated, “Sisters, it is your duty to attend Relief Society, just as it is the duty of the brethren to attend their priesthood meetings.”<sup>6</sup> Two years later in the October 1980 session of general conference, Elder Packer provided greater impetus to a woman’s Relief Society duty by declaring, “A strong, well-organized Relief Society is crucial to the future, to the safety of this Church.”<sup>7</sup> Teaching that participation in Relief Society was a duty provided men and women opportunity to view the auxiliary as more than a women’s club or a Sunday school lesson.<sup>8</sup>

To help LDS women sense the significance of their duty to Relief Society, general Church leaders worked to simplify Church auxiliary programs by ensuring they provided the most essential aspects of gospel teachings. President Kimball explained in the 1976 *Ensign*, “The mission of the Church to its members is to make available the principles, programs, and priesthood by which they can prepare themselves for exaltation. Our success, individually and as a Church, will largely be determined by how faithfully we focus on living the gospel in the

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<sup>6</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Relief Society,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Circle of Sisters,” *Ensign*, November 1980, 109.

<sup>8</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Relief Society—Its Promise and Potential,” *Ensign*, March 1976, 2.

home. Only as we see clearly the responsibilities of each individual and the role of families and homes can we properly understand that priesthood quorums and auxiliary organizations, even wards and stakes, exist primarily to help members live the gospel in the home.”<sup>9</sup>

President Kimball clarified that auxiliary programs were to improve gospel living within the home. This understanding enhanced men and women’s ability to perceive how Relief Society participation supported a woman’s knowledge of basic gospel doctrines and capacity to serve. From a 1977 memo sent from President Kimball and his counselors to stake and ward Church leadership, it appeared that President Kimball viewed Relief Society in a unique way. The memo stated, “Relief Society . . . plays a special, supportive role, different in purpose and magnitude than the roles played by the other auxiliary organizations.”<sup>10</sup> In this way, President Kimball provided priesthood leadership an opportunity to understand how essential Relief Society was to the success of the Church.

Speaking to LDS women in 1978, President Kimball linked women’s participation in Relief Society to their capacity for strength, faith, and leadership. He said, “Mormon women have chosen to live by a creed and a way of life that can be demanding at best. From the earliest days of the Church, active membership has meant faith, fortitude, denial, selflessness, and good service.”<sup>11</sup> He then added, “All Church programs are designed to assist us, whether we are men or women, in becoming better Latter-day Saints. All Church programs are designed to bring us closer to our Heavenly Father and live lives more like that of his perfect son, Jesus Christ.”<sup>12</sup> President Kimball re-affirmed that the auxiliary of Relief Society was a duty for women because

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<sup>9</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Living the Gospel in the Home,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 100.

<sup>10</sup> E. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride*, 165.

<sup>11</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 101.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

it provided opportunity to deepen discipleship to Jesus Christ and improve their abilities to assist priesthood leadership.

Inviting women to understand the blessings associated from participation in Relief Society, Elder Packer shared his witness of its divine role. In October 1978 general conference he testified,

This great circle of sisters [Relief Society] will be a protection for each of you and for your families. The Relief Society might be likened to a refuge—the place of safety and protection—the sanctuary of ancient times. You will be safe within it. It encircles each sister like a protecting wall. Service in the Relief Society magnifies and sanctifies each individual sister. Your membership in Relief Society should be ever with you.

We now move cautiously into the darkening mists of the future. We hear the ominous rumbling of the gathering storm. The narrow places of the past have been a preliminary and a preparatory testing. The issue of this dispensation now is revealed before us. It touches the life of every sister. We do not tremble in fear—for you hold in your gentle hands the light of righteousness. It blesses the brethren and nourishes our children. God bless you sisters of the Relief Society who bring so much. . . . [You are] God’s organization for women upon this earth—the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>13</sup>

General Church leaders during President Kimball’s administration made efforts to help Church membership recognize Relief Society was not an optional social club to attend when convenient. They clearly taught that the divinely ordained organization of Relief Society was to generate strength to bless women, marriages, families, and Church. Elder Packer further testified, “I endorse the Relief Society without hesitation, for I know it to have been organized by inspiration from Almighty God. . . . After months of prayerful concern over this matter [of Relief Society], having inquired myself of Him whose organization it is, without reservation, without hesitancy, I endorse and applaud the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

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<sup>13</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Circle of Sisters,” *Ensign*, November 1980, 109.

Saints.”<sup>14</sup> Because of the WLM and other factors at that time, President Kimball’s vision and leadership was necessary as his administration both clarified and defined a woman’s duty to Relief Society and the role it played as a means to spiritually strengthen each woman in defense of the family.

### **Sisterhood**

Belle S. Spafford, general president of Relief Society from 1945-1974, said to Barbara Smith when she was called to the Relief Society General Board, “You know that you are a part of the most glorious sisterhood upon the face of the earth, don’t you?”<sup>15</sup> In time Barbara Smith shared her witness, “I know that Relief Society [is] the organization given to the women of the Church by the Lord to teach them his ways so they might give unselfish devotion to all of his children and loyally support the priesthood. I [can] see that each [individual] needed to be aware that Relief Society was an integral part of the Church and that it was an evidence of our Heavenly Father’s concern for his daughters.”<sup>16</sup> With rapid Church growth and a shift in traditional lifestyles, it became of utmost importance that Church leaders effectively encouraged women to keep a strong sisterhood through participation in Relief Society.

As women’s organizations and women of the world were uniting together concerned about personal needs and *gaining* ‘power,’ Relief Society offered LDS women a means to meet their needs by *generating* a ‘power’ or strength—through a sisterhood of service. Barbara Smith articulated this by saying, “We look upon ourselves as being part of the family of the Lord, and so our sisterhood is one that has a deep understanding of this relationship. We are not a

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<sup>14</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Relief Society,” *Ensign*, October 1978, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “The Bonds of Sisterhood,” *Ensign*, March 1983, 21.

<sup>16</sup> Barbara B. Smith, *A Fruitful Season* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 44.

sisterhood seeking power, as are some women of our time. Our sisterhood is that which is unique to the family of the Lord—a sisterhood that cares for one another.”<sup>17</sup> The strength of Relief Society was dependent upon men and women who understood that the foundational objective of the organization intended to create a service-oriented sisterhood.

Comparing the ‘mission and purpose’ sections of the 1976 and 1983 Relief Society handbooks, indicate that President Kimball’s administration focused on sisterhood within Relief Society more than previous administrations. While both clearly state a purpose of caring for the poor, sick, and unfortunate and fostering talents in homemaking, religion, arts, education, knowledge of the gospel, etc., the 1983 handbook is markedly different. It begins by clearly articulating that the “purpose of the organization was to unite the efforts of the women in a cause for Zion.” It continues, “the mission of Relief Society [was] to unite the women of the Church in a valiant sisterhood that helped each perfect her life, strengthen her home, and further the purposes of the Lord through pursuit of knowledge and dedication charitable services.”<sup>18</sup> The fact that the 1976 handbook says nothing directly pertaining to sisterhood or uniting women did not mean it was not encouraged by general leadership; however, with such distinct change in the wording of the purpose and objective of Relief Society it is apparent that increasing sisterhood was a strong focus during President Kimball’s administration.

One of the barriers to maintaining a sense of community and sisterhood seemed to be a general lack of participation in Relief Society. In 1976, Barbara Smith shared in an *Ensign*

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<sup>17</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “A Conversation with Sister Barbara B. Smith, Relief Society General President,” *Ensign*, March 1976, 7.

<sup>18</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, *Handbook of Instruction: Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1983), 2.

interview that only twenty-eight percent of LDS women were taking part in Relief Society.<sup>19</sup> As Barbara Smith traveled worldwide visiting with LDS women, she received feedback for why many were not participating in the program. For some, Relief Society classes and topics lacked significance because they did not focus on politics or technology. Some reported they felt different from other women because they were working outside the home. Others stated they were too tired, had transportation limitations, felt Relief Society required too much perfection, or simply did not like Relief Society.<sup>20</sup>

These responses exemplified how many women did not, and perhaps still do not, understand the purpose of Relief Society. In the same interview, Barbara Smith responded to these reasons stating that people tend to find time for things they want to do. She encouraged women to evaluate the direction and character of their lives to ensure that the guidelines set by the Lord were their priority.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Elder Packer queried, “If you are absenting yourself from Relief Society because you don’t get anything out of it, tell me, dear sister, what is it that you are putting into it?”<sup>22</sup> It seemed that too many women were hoping to *get* something out of Relief Society rather than finding ways that they could *give* to Relief Society.

The idea that women would find themselves when immersed in service contrasted the world’s view of finding self-fulfillment. While many women at that time with feminist notions demanded fulfillment by escaping the home, pursuing a career, and seen as “equal” to men in the political realm, Relief Society leaders upheld the Lord’s way. Barbara Smith said, “When we

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<sup>19</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “A Conversation with Sister Barbara B. Smith, Relief Society General President,” *Ensign*, March 1976, 7.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Relief Society,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 7.

serve, we begin to do away with greed, selfishness, hate, and envy—all those things that can destroy us. We begin to feel the selflessness, love, and dedication that the Savior’s life exemplifies. A person cannot fulfill the truly important needs of life without those Christ-like attributes.”<sup>23</sup> Relief Society’s divine purpose was not to get needs met by receiving something from the organization, but to have needs met by *giving something*.

A strong Relief Society sisterhood needed service-oriented women. In 1984, an interviewer for the *Ensign* asked Barbara Smith how Relief Society helped women serve. She and her counselors responded by explaining the programs within Relief Society, such as the compassionate service program which provides a network of women powered by the visiting teaching program to know how and when to act in behalf those within the wards.<sup>24</sup> Ann S. Reese, second counselor to Barbara Smith, emphasized that Relief Society curriculum played a role in providing opportunities for women to teach the principle of service as the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup>

Lastly, Marion R. Boyer, first counselor to Barbara Smith who was known for her emphasis on homemaking skills, shared that the homemaking program enhanced a woman’s ability to serve not only her own family, but others also as she improved and developed skills to make home a place of peace and beauty.<sup>26</sup> Each example demonstrated the need for women to cultivate an outlook of giving as they participated in service programs of Relief Society. With such involvement in Relief Society, sisterhood strength would increase.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> “Service Makes the Difference: A Conversation with the Relief Society General Presidency,” *Ensign*, March 1984, 17.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

In a world preoccupied with ensuring women’s needs were met, President Kimball’s administration promised personal relief to their own needs as they gave themselves to the work of Relief Society.<sup>27</sup> By reinforcing service aspects associated with programs offered by Relief Society—curriculum, compassionate service, visiting teaching, and homemaking—women were encouraged to find fulfillment through service and love, both within their homes and the Church. President Kimball praised women of the Church saying, “I am grateful for the way in which our sisters are encouraged to perform acts of Christian service as a result of their affiliation with Relief Society and other Church organizations.”<sup>28</sup> These points each added to the significance of Elder Packer’s clarion call, “You who lead this work must now find ways to bring back and to increase the sisterhood, the fraternal spirit of the society.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Strengthened Doctrinally**

One way general Church leaders intended to draw women to Relief Society was by strengthening them doctrinally. President Kimball stated, “We are not asking for something spectacular, but rather for women of the Church to find real self-fulfillment through wise self-development in the pursuit of righteous and worthy endeavors.”<sup>30</sup> He described his vision of Relief Society women in the latter-days as those who possessed spiritual knowledge, functioned independently with a testimony of Jesus Christ, were sure in the knowledge of their Creator, and understood the essential work of a woman’s role.<sup>31</sup> From this and other talks given by general Church leaders, it is evident that President Kimball placed great emphasis on encouraging LDS

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<sup>27</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Relief Society,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 7.

<sup>28</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 101.

<sup>29</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Circle of Sisters,” *Ensign*, November 1980, 109.

<sup>30</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 101.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*



women to strive for deeper understanding of gospel doctrines—particularly through increased scripture study.

A prominent theme President Kimball’s administration stressed was increased scripture study. In the 1976 *Ensign*, President Kimball encouraged general membership to become serious about their scripture study. He illustrated the importance of this theme by pointing out similar counsel General Authorities had recently given, along with the fact that scriptures had replaced other texts and materials in the adult Church curriculum.<sup>32</sup> President Kimball directly requested that LDS women increase their scripture study. In September 1979 he said,

Even though the eternal roles of men and women differ, as we indicated to you a year ago, this leaves much to be done by way of parallel personal development—for both men and women. In this connection, I stress again the deep need each woman has to study the scriptures. We want our homes to be blessed with *sister scriptorians*—whether you are single or married, young or old, widowed or living in a family.

Regardless of your particular circumstances, as you become more and more familiar with the truths of the scriptures, you will be more and more effective in keeping the second great commandment, to love your neighbor as yourself. Become scholars of the scriptures—not to put others down, but to lift them up! After all, who has any greater need to “treasure up” the truths of the gospel (on which they may call in their moments of need) than do women and mothers who do so much nurturing and teaching?<sup>33</sup>

The novel phrase—“sister scriptorians”—introduced by President Kimball established a standard of the vision he had for women. It seemed he viewed increased scripture knowledge as a way for women, wives, and mothers to activate self-sustaining spiritual power. Likewise, such spiritual stamina provided women with spiritual power that would effectively improve not only

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<sup>32</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “How Rare a Possession—the Scriptures!” *Ensign*, September 1976, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, November 1979, 102 (emphasis added).

their emotional and spiritual independence, but also the lives and testimonies of those within their sphere of influence.

The idea of being spiritually and emotionally independent was another concept emphasized by general Church leaders. In April 1978 general conference, Elder Packer taught, “Spiritual independence and self-reliance is a self-sustaining power in the Church. If we lose our emotional and spiritual independence, our self-reliance, we can be weakened quite as much, perhaps even more, than when we become dependent materially.”<sup>34</sup> President Kimball’s focus on women increasing their doctrinal confidence through scripture study seemed directed at enabling them to be more confident and capable in resolving personal issues.

Elaine Jack commented on this subject saying, “I used to say at conferences, ‘We can’t solve all your problems, but if we can *strengthen women so they can handle their own problems* that would be a plus.’ I wanted women to feel good about themselves; to know that they are worth something; and that [men and women] can work *together*. It doesn’t have to be one ahead of the other ahead.”<sup>35</sup> In a world of feminist sentiment and worldly enticement, President Kimball’s program called for developing spiritually self-reliant, mature women, with greater influence and capacity to strengthen their families.

Underscoring this visionary request of women, President Kimball did make clear that “much was to be done by way of parallel personal development” between LDS men and women.<sup>36</sup> Because the idea of ‘equality’ and gender roles were at the time highly debated topics in society and within the Church at the time, this statement was important. Elder Neal A.

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<sup>34</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “Solving Emotional Problems in the Lord’s Own Way,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 91.

<sup>35</sup> Elaine L. Jack, oral history, interview by Carrie Taylor Anguiano, November 21, 2011, Salt Lake City, in author’s possession (emphasis added).

<sup>36</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, November 1979, 102.

Maxwell provided supporting evidence of the need for greater parallel development by stating, “For too long in the Church, the men have been the theologians while the women have been the Christians.”<sup>37</sup> For whatever reason, there seemed to be a general feeling among members within the Church that men were doctrinally superior.

When asked if in general she observed that women felt doctrinally inferior to men during President Kimball’s administration, Elaine Jack replied, “Yes, unfortunately I do, particularly at that time, it’s much less now. That is just my opinion, but yes, there has been a definite change in that. However, I think it was a more traditional thing in regards to a family setting back then because it was a man’s world . . . I think the tradition assumed that men were the ones that held the priesthood, they knew the scriptures, and they taught the lessons.”<sup>38</sup>

Encouraging women to be better acquainted with the scriptures was a way President Kimball helped women to become more doctrinally independent. Culture and tradition may have fostered women feeling somewhat doctrinally inferior, but Elaine Jack added perspective: “I had a feeling that if women felt subservient at times, it was their own fault. I think that women needed to assert themselves; some allowed those inferior feelings. I know sometimes there was abuse and you can’t always just opt out on that sort of a thing, but I think women needed to recognize who they were, their strength, and how they could contribute.”<sup>39</sup>

Elaine Jack’s inference that women were responsible for their own doctrinal independence and learning was an aspect she felt general Church leaders needed to teach. Certainly, there were women who studied the scriptures daily, knew the scriptures well, and

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<sup>37</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, *See Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977), 127.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Elaine Jack, interview.

aligned their life with gospel principles. However, President Kimball’s prophetic appeal to all LDS women empowered each to accept more fully their responsibility to be scripturally self-reliant and confident in making decisions congruent with gospel principles.

Kathleen Pulsipher, a Relief Society member who followed President Kimball’s counsel, explained that early in her marriage she found herself depending on her husband for gospel understanding. In time, she realized his answers did not seem to stay with her or provide sustaining support or strength. Motivated by President Kimball’s counsel to evaluate her personal scripture study she determined to understand the gospel and develop a testimony through her own study of the scriptures. Of her efforts, she wrote in a 1980 *Ensign* article, “I can only say that as I have consistently and diligently studied, I have felt the influence of the Holy Ghost in my life more powerfully than before. I am far from being a gospel scholar. Yet even on my most frustrating days, I know there is at least one productive effort—my moments of scripture discovery. When discouraged by sorrows, pressures, or transgressions, I find emotional and spiritual renewal in the scriptures. And when I’m joyous, the Lord’s words lift me even higher.”<sup>40</sup>

This LDS woman’s personal experience was an example of how heeding counsel from general Church leaders to develop personal spiritual reservoirs provided strength in finding personal relief and renewal. Speaking to this type of spiritual power, Barbara Smith concluded, “There is nothing we need more than a sure testimony to help us solve our problems with courage and strength. But before we can know the truth with more than mere mental assent, we must go through the same process as have our prophet leaders. Our testimonies must be a

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<sup>40</sup> Kathleen Pulsipher, “Treasuring up Scripture in My Mind,” *Ensign*, March 1980, 24.

conviction of the heart and of the knowledge that fills our souls.”<sup>41</sup> Church leaders envisioned that women who heeded counsel given through Relief Society would have an increased understanding of applying gospel principles and administering spiritual and temporal relief to themselves, and to their marriages, homes, and communities. Thus, to the extent women internalized gospel principles, the greater the influence and power Relief Society had upon humanity.

Analyzing *Ensign* articles written by women from 1973-1985 illustrates that President Kimball’s administration focused on doctrinally strengthening LDS women. Due to correlation, when the *Ensign* was first launched in 1971, many Relief Society women had to adjust to losing *The Relief Society Magazine* and its traditional content for women that had been published for decades—short-stories, poems, artwork, household tips, recipes, lessons, and talks given by the apostles. To ease that transition the *Ensign* included a section geared towards women’s interests and adopted the poetry and short story contests that had become so popular. In the January 1971 *Ensign*, the section titled ‘Today’s Family’ was specified as a section to give “special attention to the Mormon woman in her home, her community, her church, and her world today.”<sup>42</sup>

While this section was helpful for women in the transition from the Relief Society Magazine to the *Ensign*, it is interesting to observe how women’s contributions shifted from fictional gospel stories, recipes, and information to an emphasis on teaching and real life application of discipleship through gospel principles and doctrines. For example, the thirty-eight articles women contributed to the *Ensign* in 1973 consisted mainly of recipes, fictional stories,

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<sup>41</sup> Smith, *A Fruitful Season*, 193.

<sup>42</sup> Mabel Jones Gabbott, “Today’s Family,” *Ensign*, January 1971, 91.

application stories, home ideas, music, and informational articles. Here is a sample of sixteen articles representative of the topics:

- January: Recipe  
Audrey M. Godfrey, “Simple Sunday Menus”
- February: Story  
Elaine S. McKay, “I Threw Away our TV”
- March: Story  
Barbara A. Lewis, “Lilies Grow Wild”
- March: Recipe  
Susan Arrington Hill, “Foil for all Seasons”
- April: Scripture Story  
Helen Selee, “And Jesus Wept”
- April: Informational/Inspirational  
Jaynann Morgan Payne, “Mary Smith Ellsworth:  
Example of Obedience”
- May: Gospel Application  
Elaine Cannon, “A Weeping Eye Can Never See”
- June: Story  
Iris Syndergaard, “The Outstretched Hand”
- June: Home Ideas  
Laurie Williams Sowby, “Bless Your Children with “Housework  
Memories”
- August: Recipe  
Susan Arrington Hill, “Fabulous Fondue”
- August: Home Ideas  
Eileen G. Kump, “L is for Indian”—And Other Family Projects”
- September: Recipe  
Loraine T. Pace, “Wheat Can Be a Treat”
- October: Informational/Inspirational  
Arta M. Hale, “Lessons in Womanhood: Insights for Latter-day Saint  
Women from the Lives of Vashti, Miriam, Ruth, Hannah, Jezebel, and  
Esther”

- November: Informational  
Janet Brigham and Herbert F. Murrell, “The Saints in Fiji”
- December: Music  
Joyce O. Evans, “Christmas Carols”
- December: Teaching  
Elaine Cannon, “Consider Christmas”

Eleven years later (1984), women contributed seventy-four articles to the *Ensign* with topics focused mainly on Church-wide emphases, gospel application stories, discipleship, and basic doctrines. Here is a sample of sixteen articles representative of the topics:

- January: Church-wide Emphasis  
Margaret Farnsworth Richards, “We Can Learn to Live within our Means”
- February: Church-wide Emphasis  
Samuella R. Hawkins, “We’re Glad they Called Us on a Mission”
- March: Church-wide Emphasis  
Sydney Smith Reynolds, “Teaching Values—A Mother’s Commission”
- March: Gospel Application  
Violet M. Tate and Lee S. Laney, “When the Lord Changed My Heart”
- April: Teaching  
Janene Wolsey Baadsgaard, “Finding the Miracle of Easter”
- May: Teaching  
Elaine A. Cannon, “A Generation Prepared to Make Wise Choices”
- May: Teaching  
Barbara B. Smith, “Warmed by the Fires of Their Lives”
- May: Teaching  
Barbara W. Winder, “I Love the Sisters of the Church”
- May: Music  
Ardeth Greene Kapp, “Youth of the Noble Birthright”

- June: Teaching  
Patricia T. Holland, “The Fruits of Peace”
- August: Gospel Application  
Rena N. Evers, “Finding a Friend in My ‘Enemy’”
- September: Gospel Application  
Ann S. Reese, “Being a Wife”
- October: Teaching  
Robert R. and Jill W. Dunford, “When ‘I’m Sorry’ isn’t Enough: Teaching the Principle of Restitution”
- November: Teaching  
Swan J. Young, “Keeping the Covenants We Make at Baptism”
- November: Teaching  
Ardeth G. Kapp, “Young Women Striving Together”
- November: Teaching  
Barbara W. Winder, “Striving Together, Transforming Our Beliefs into Action”

It is important to recognize that by 1984, women’s contributions to the *Ensign* had doubled, and the articles concurred with the Church-wide focus on gospel principles and doctrines. This demonstrates that doctrinal confidence and scholarship by women during President Kimball’s administration improved. Providing greater opportunities for LDS women influence others spiritually was one way to fulfill President Kimball’s vision for Relief Society.

### **Summary**

President Kimball and other general leaders encouraged LDS women to make Relief Society a priority because the principles and programs therein would fortify women and families. To increase the bond of sisterhood, general Church leaders emphasized the duty each woman had to participate in Relief Society with an attitude of giving. Barbara Smith offered encouragement saying, “The harder you work in the service of the Lord, the sweeter the sisterhood. . . Serving together, in an organized manner, women can be a marvelous force for good. Combining their



efforts to serve the Lord, sisters throughout the history of the Church have helped, and will yet help, to solve many pressing problems of the Saints.”<sup>43</sup>

President Kimball urged LDS women through Relief Society to set goals to help them meet greater levels of achievement, particularly related to doctrinal knowledge and contributions. He strongly endorsed the idea of women becoming “scripture scriptioners” and seeking to be doctrinally independent. In Barbara Smith’s words, LDS women who understood their duty to Relief Society also understood that “while individually learning and striving toward righteousness, [women were] collectively adding their strength toward establishing the kingdom of God . . . upon the earth.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “The Bonds of Sisterhood,” *Ensign*, March 1983, 21.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter 4: Changes in Relief Society

In efforts to improve the dissemination of doctrine to women of the Church, thus making them more doctrinally independent and of a greater influence on families and in the Church, the Church-wide emphasis of “simplification” was implemented in Relief Society—particularly the Relief Society Curriculum. Additionally, certain procedure modifications and emphases that further elevated and promoted women’s participation within Church councils and welfare services program encouraged greater cooperation between Relief Society and priesthood leadership. With family as the central focus for all programs, changes in curriculum, attitudes, and procedures improved cooperative partnerships between men and women within family and Church leadership.

### Curriculum Changes

The priesthood correlation plan initiated in the 1960s “focused on maintaining consistency in ordinances, doctrines, organizations, meetings, materials, programs, and activities with the intent of strengthening the family.”<sup>1</sup> Before correlation, Church auxiliaries—including Relief Society—had their own budget and raised money for it. Relief Society successfully financed their own programs, buildings, charities, lesson material, and magazine through self-sacrificing contributions and efforts from its membership.<sup>2</sup> On June 10, 1970, the First

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<sup>1</sup> *Church History in the Fullness of Times: Student Manual* (SLC, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 652.

<sup>2</sup> “The Relief Society had decided in 1898 to collect ten cents a year annual dues from each member and had set March 17 as its collection day; . . . Bazaars were the sisters’ chief method of raising funds to run their society, but money was not the only object. The primary purpose, said Sister Spafford, was ‘developing and promoting the creative arts of our sisters.’ Moreover, putting on a bazaar taught women useful principles of marketing—anticipating demand, controlling production, pricing, advertising, display techniques, and accounting.”

Presidency announced that under the direction of the priesthood the Church budget would support the financial needs of Relief Society.<sup>3</sup> These financial changes meant adjustments in the writing process and content of Relief Society curriculum.

Regarding the process of developing and determining Relief Society curriculum, the implementation of correlation was still evolving during President Kimball's administration. An article written in 2004 titled "'Changing Times Bring Changing Conditions': Relief Society, 1960 to the Present" captured the overall effect: "While changes [from correlation] would lessen the Relief Society's direct control over curriculum content, they would open realistic ways to accomplish the task of producing basic materials in a more efficient, culturally sensitive manner. This point becomes apparent in examining in greater detail (1) the *process* of lesson production (from Relief Society committees to curriculum committees overseen by priesthood leaders), and (2) the changes in *content* that reflected correlation's goals of simplifying and focusing on gospel principles for a diverse, international membership."<sup>4</sup>

Under correlation, the responsibility for lesson production—"the process"—shifted from curriculum writers chosen by the Relief Society general presidency and board to committees chosen and directed by the Church Curriculum Department.<sup>5</sup> Recalling her experience of working with curriculum committees during that transition, Elaine Jack, who served on the

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Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 164, 326.

<sup>3</sup> Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 341-342.

<sup>4</sup> Tina Hatch, "'Changing Times Bring Changing Conditions': Relief Society, 1960 to the Present," *Dialogue* 37, no. 3 (2004): 72.

<sup>5</sup> "Prior to correlation, the Relief Society general presidency and board chose writers and content for their lessons and magazine with relative freedom. . . . To reach the objectives of correlation, several committees were formed under priesthood leadership to identify the original purposes of the auxiliaries, to realign the auxiliaries to the newly defined Church goals, and to oversee all curriculum production and content for children, youth, and adult members. These committees were responsible for keeping all church programs, like the nervous system, 'operating harmoniously together.'" Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 712.

Relief Society general board 1972-1984, explained, “We still had some input and worked closely with them...I think they probably mostly chose the writers according to the subject, but we had developed the outlines for them.”<sup>6</sup>

Elaine Jack also recalled that the correlation committee gave curriculum committees content guidelines or master charts that contained twelve areas of essential gospel principles.<sup>7</sup> Because the correlation committee felt every member of the Church needed to study these twelve areas during their lifetime, curriculum members were instructed to ensure they included each area in both the men’s and women’s curriculum. Ultimately, this approach applied to all areas of curriculum and was coordinated so families would learn the same concept on the same day. Elaine Jack continued, “We [Relief Society] may not have had the same lesson, written exactly, but they were correlated so that men and women got the same subject. I don’t think anybody knew that, except the person who looked at the chart.”<sup>8</sup>

The Church’s drive for greater correlation between priesthood and Relief Society lessons and ease of lesson application for the worldwide Church greatly influenced the ‘content’ portion of Relief Society lesson curriculum. Relief Society general board member, Barbara W. Winder recalled, “We had to get the curriculum simpler; ...it had to be simpler.”<sup>9</sup> Elaine Jack explained that as the growing international Church created greater diversity of culture and language the need for simplification became more urgent because portions of lessons often could not be adapted to the variety of cultural needs. She explained,

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<sup>6</sup> Elaine L. Jack, oral history, interview by Carrie Taylor Anguiano, November 21, 2011, Salt Lake City, in author’s possession.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara W. Winder, oral history, interview by Carrie Taylor Anguiano, October 28, 2011, Salt Lake City, in author’s possession.

One year we studied the Constitution of America. There is no way in a worldwide Church that would work now, but at that time, it did. Also, we were somewhat naïve by expecting people in other lands to respond as we in America could. It was as though we wrote the curriculum for us and expected them to adapt. That was backwards thinking. We should have written the curriculum for them and then we would have adapted to them. Which I think is now what we have done. I think at that time the emphasis became a bit more focused on spiritual things—about 1980 we started to be more principle based.

It got to the point where the lessons needed to be totally redone and I think the fact that there was so much more doctrinal emphasis in the future lessons than the ones we had at that time was perhaps a reason for the emphasis of correlation in the curriculums.<sup>10</sup>

With simplification as the guide, Relief Society curriculum was evaluated and re-written. An *Ensign* article written in 1990 that reviewed the previous decade of the Church identified with this idea, stating: “[A] vital emphasis of the 1980s [was] the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon. During the early part of the decade, the curriculum of the Church was revised to encourage members to read and study the scriptures.”<sup>11</sup> Because every culture and language could apply doctrines and principles found within scripture, this emphasis enabled all LDS women the ability to utilize lesson material.

As the WLM influence continued to have sway on women, general Church leaders recognized the importance of ensuring LDS women internalized the doctrines and principles of the gospel. Shirley Thomas, who served as education counselor to Barbara Smith and worked closely with the curriculum department during President Kimball’s administration, shared her observation. She said, “There is a difference in studying the scriptures, and in having the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Hoyt W. Brewster, “The 80s—Looking Back; The 90s—Looking Ahead,” *Ensign*, January 1990, 13.

doctrines found within the scriptures become a part of you.”<sup>12</sup> As described below, Thomas was a key component of strengthening lesson effectiveness in Relief Society curriculum.

In an interview, Thomas explained that as education counselor she received all proposed curriculum for review and met with the curriculum department to offer her approval and suggestions. One area that became particularly important to her was “the thrust of the lessons; [meaning] a change from simply giving information to making the information provocative in a sense of ‘what difference does this make?’”<sup>13</sup> Thomas explained that one day before calling Curriculum with her review she had asked her husband for his opinion on a specific lesson. He responded, “You don’t have an idea in that lesson.” Surprised at his response, she asked what he meant. He helped her realize that an idea was a special working together of two concepts to bring about a thought process.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, this interaction with her husband changed how Thomas approached the development of Relief Society curriculum.

Thomas recognized that Relief Society lessons merely compiled information. This fact became more obvious as she compared Relief Society curriculum with conference talks given by General Authorities. Thomas discovered that rather than giving information, conference talks from the Brethren were full of concepts, assertions, and ideas and answered questions such as: “So what difference does that make?” and “What do you think about that?”<sup>15</sup> At this point Thomas began making evaluations and suggestions for Relief Society lessons that incorporated

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<sup>12</sup> Shirley Thomas, oral history, interview by Carrie Taylor Anguiano, January 14, 2012, Salt Lake City, in author’s possession.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

thought provoking information and questions such as, “Why?” or “What difference does that make?”

Despite this discovery, Thomas found great resistance from both the Relief Society curriculum committee and the general curriculum department when she suggested shifting the thrust of the lessons. Thomas described how she urged them to develop lessons with assertions rather than merely presenting information, but they repeatedly questioned her, as they did not understand what she meant. “It was hard to convince or help Curriculum realize a difference of point of view on a subject. It was very hard to get that turned around, I think the change occurred with subtle differences, but it is there now. This has changed the thinking of women, but that’s a change, we didn’t have that before and it is something that came about during Barbara Smith’s era,” Thomas explained.<sup>16</sup>

The idea of incorporating more than just information and standardizing the overall curriculum goals for each auxiliary within the Church was a new transition, yet the overall effect of these changes served to bolster Relief Society women in their ability to apply gospel doctrines and principles. President Kimball’s administration worked diligently for these adjustments in curriculum; however, it was not until two months after the prophet’s death that the *Ensign* published the changes for general Church implementation. The January 1986 *Ensign* presented the adult curriculum as follows:

The scriptures are the basis of all adult teaching in the Church, supplemented by the inspired statements of those we sustain as General Authorities. In the adult curriculum, the standard works are the texts. Although teachers’ supplements and study guides are prepared for use in organizing class instruction, the scriptures are the main source of reading for each adult member. . . . The priesthood and Relief Society instruction goes into depth on doctrines taught in the scriptures. Following are the major emphases in the adult curriculum.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

### *Melchizedek Priesthood*

- Gospel doctrines and principles
- Priesthood service and responsibilities
- Parenting skills
- Temple preparation

### *Relief Society*

- Gospel doctrines and principles
- Service
- Parenting skills
- Human relations<sup>17</sup>

The new curriculum had many benefits. Relief Society and priesthood lessons—the adult curriculums—were scripture based and more closely coordinated than the youth or primary auxiliaries. The intent behind this coordination was to foster greater unity between men and women and to deepen personal conversion in the process of gospel study. Likewise, it followed President Kimball’s requested desire that men and women needed to develop spiritually in parallel to one another.

Elaine Jack felt the curriculum change was beneficial for the image and position of Relief Society as she felt “many [Church members] held perceptions of the organization that devalued the significance and potential of organized womanhood. For a long time it seems men just thought, ‘Well, this is a woman’s organization.’ This was one of the perceptions that I felt important to change because it was sort of viewed as a woman’s club.”<sup>18</sup> It is possible that previous Relief Society lessons that focused on mothering, housekeeping, sewing, cooking, and general health led to misperceptions of Relief Society. The correlated curriculum equally positioned LDS men and women to motivate one another in learning through discussing, questioning, explaining, and researching together doctrines of the gospel.

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<sup>17</sup> “Church Curriculum: Helping Us Learn and Live the Gospel,” *Ensign*, January 1986, 20.

<sup>18</sup> Elaine Jack, interview.



President Kimball's administration anticipated that the adjusted curriculum in Relief Society would encourage women to feel a greater desire to study and love the scriptures. Ultimately, the goal was for LDS women to know the scriptures and enhance their ability to make choices compatible with gospel doctrine. In this way, Relief Society would become a means for assisting individual women in their capacity to generate their own spiritual power. With strong individual women, the sisterhood naturally increased its capacity to work effectively with priesthood leadership.

### **Changes in Emphasis**

As planned, in the middle of his 1978 address at the Welfare session of general conference, President Kimball invited Barbara Smith to speak. Barbara Smith addressed the audience by providing a brief history of the Relief Society wheat storage program. She then stated to President Kimball, "We [the general Relief Society presidency and board] wish to propose that the 266,291 bushels of Relief Society wheat now be made a part of the grain storage plan of Welfare Services for the benefit of all of the members of the Church."<sup>19</sup>

In turn, President Kimball accepted the gift and praised the women of Relief Society. He encouraged them to continue to support their organization. His next response was indicative of his general hope for Relief Society and the priesthood. President Kimball said, "We ask you also to support the Brethren, and we ask them to support you and to *work together as partners and companions* in furthering the work of the Lord and your own salvation. Let this gift from the Relief Society today *be* an example of the *cooperative effort* and harmony that can enrich our lives in the Church and in the home."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "The Fruit of Our Welfare Services Labors," *Ensign*, November 1978, 74.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, (emphasis added).

One point President Kimball and other general Church leaders repeatedly focused on was increasing the capacity for men and women to work together respectfully as partners and companions—often termed companion leadership or full partnership. The doctrine of equality between men and women was not a new concept to the Church; however, during this time the concept of equality and companion leadership needed greater emphasis and clarity. Because of his keen sensitivity to women’s issues, President Kimball gave specific topics greater attention and emphasis in order to help men and women grasp his vision of the power for good that resided within women of Relief Society.

President Kimball cared deeply about the women of the Church and recognized his capacity to assist in women feeling appreciated, nurtured, and needed. Barbara Smith recalled, “He often gave deference to women. I recognized that when, at the beginning of my administration, he blessed me that I would be able to help the women of the Church understand their feminine roles. He continued with courtesy and with that reaffirming consistency he accorded to me and other women.”<sup>21</sup> Because President Kimball’s main emphasis was to strengthen families it was essential to ensure respectful and cooperative partnerships between men and women.

Another point President Kimball emphasized was courtesy and respect toward womanhood—from men and women. Unfortunately, dialogue that permeated society during President Kimball’s administration encouraged some women to minimize and disparage their own femininity. In 1974 general conference, President Kimball cautioned both genders, declaring, “Some people are ignorant or vicious and apparently attempting to destroy the concept of masculinity and femininity. More and more girls dress, groom, and act like men. More and

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<sup>21</sup> Smith, *A Fruitful Season*, 149.

more men dress, groom, and act like women. The high purposes of life are damaged and destroyed by the growing unisex theory. God made man in his own image, male and female made he them. With relatively few accidents of nature, we are born male or female. The Lord knew best.”<sup>22</sup> The issue of protecting femininity and masculinity became vital.

In 1977, Elder Packer gave his position on the importance of defending gender traits by boldly declaring, “We must protect and honor the vital differences in the roles of men and women, especially in respect to the family. . . I am for protecting the rights of a woman to be a woman, a feminine, female woman; a wife and a mother. I am for protecting the rights of a man to be a man, a masculine, male man; a husband and father.”<sup>23</sup> President Kimball and other Church leaders recognized the value of traits in both men and women and urged each gender to respect and nurture them. Of women, President Kimball said specifically,

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. And may the brotherhood of the priesthood and the sisterhood of the Relief Society be a blessing in the lives of all the members of this great Church, as we help each other along the path to perfection.<sup>24</sup>

Men and women needed to view womanhood with a proper attitude for the Relief Society organization to function to its fullest capacity. Generating cooperative partnerships was most likely to develop when women and their counterparts viewed womanhood and femininity in positive ways.

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<sup>22</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “God Will Not Be Mocked,” *Ensign*, November 1974, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Equal Rights Amendment,” *Ensign*, March 1977, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Relief Society—Its Promise and Potential,” *Ensign*, March 1976, 2.

As the WLM and ERA revealed degrading or dominating attitudes and behaviors toward women, the treatment of women became a greater concern to many, including President Kimball. Concerned that men understood how to view and treat women, he cautioned them in the October 1979 Priesthood session, “I hope we will always bear that in mind, my brothers, in terms of how we treat women. . . . Sometimes we hear disturbing reports about how sisters are treated. Perhaps when this happens, it is a result of insensitivity and thoughtlessness, but it should not be, brethren . . . . Our sisters do not wish to be indulged or to be treated condescendingly; they desire to be respected and revered as our sisters and our equals.” He further clarified, “I mention all these things, my brethren, not because the doctrines or the teachings of the Church regarding women are in any doubt, but because in some situations our behavior is of doubtful quality.”<sup>25</sup>

President Kimball’s administration encouraged men and women to view womanhood with a proper attitude because it furthered the abilities of Relief Society and priesthood to function harmoniously. Emphasizing respect for womanhood and the need for cooperative partnership established greater awareness that in order for Relief Society women to be companions with the priesthood in providing effective temporal and spiritual relief, some procedural changes were also necessary.

### **Procedural Changes**

An *Ensign* article reviewing the 1980s highlighted significant growth and development in membership, temple building, and missionary work within the LDS Church. Regarding LDS women it reported, “[These years] saw increased visibility for women in the Church.”<sup>26</sup> The influence of the women’s movement produced greater awareness that motivated general Church

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<sup>25</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Our Sisters in the Church,” *Ensign*, November 1979, 49.

<sup>26</sup> Hoyt W. Brewster, Jr., “The ‘80s—Looking Back; The ‘90s—Looking Ahead,” *Ensign*, January 1990, 13.

leaders to evaluate how traditional procedures limited women’s visibility and influence within the Church. Carolyn Rasmus, an administrative assistant and professor at Brigham Young University during the 1970s, wrote in the August 1980 *Ensign* that the WLM and ERA issues seemed to provide a laser beam upon disparities between doctrines of equality and the reality of actual practices.<sup>27</sup> President Kimball’s administration modified certain procedures to improve actual practices of how men and women worked together in their God-designated stewardships.

Increased visibility of LDS women resulted from modifications to traditional *procedures* developed within the Church that did not necessarily have scriptural or doctrinal basis. It is important to note that modifications were made to ‘procedures’—defined as “an act or a manner of proceeding in any action or process,”—which were changeable and often prescribed by tradition or societal norms and differed from policies or doctrines.<sup>28</sup> While some adjustments were subtle and could almost have gone unnoticed, these changes represented a shift within the Church that would further elevate Relief Society women and enable them to have more access for influence within the Church.

One elevating change was the introduction of women speaking in general conference. In October 1976, general Church leaders began holding Welfare sessions on Saturday mornings as part of general conference. Barbara Smith spoke in that first welfare session and continued to do so almost regularly until October 1982 when they ended.

In the April 1984 session of general conference, President Kimball released Barbara B. Smith as general Relief Society president and called Barbara W. Winder; he then released Elaine A. Cannon as general Young Women’s president and called Ardeth Green Kapp. Each spoke in

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<sup>27</sup> Carolyn J. Rasmus, “Mormon Women: A Convert’s Perspective,” *Ensign*, August 1980, 68.

<sup>28</sup> Dictionary Online, s.v. “procedure,” accessed June 6, 2013, <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/procedure?s=t>.

the session. For the first time since 1929, a woman (in this case four women) spoke in a general session of conference.<sup>29</sup> Women did not speak again in general conference until April 1988 under direction of President Ezra Taft Benson, although in 1980 the First Presidency began inviting the general presidencies of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary to sit on the stand at general conference.<sup>30</sup> These changes were significant as they encouraged a perception of equality and importance between the work of Relief Society and the work of the priesthood.

In 1975, President Kimball announced the Church was discontinuing all auxiliary conferences. He explained, “In place of these conferences will come a more comprehensive program designed to reach the global, decentralized Church through all the leaders of the stakes and missions all over the world.”<sup>31</sup> In August 1978, the *Ensign* announced another change, “In a first-of-its-kind fireside, President Spencer W. Kimball will speak to women of the Church September 16 from the Salt Lake Tabernacle. The fireside will be broadcast closed circuit throughout the world. The Saturday-night fireside will use closed-circuit facilities set up for the priesthood session of general conference in October. All women members from twelve years of age will be invited to attend the fireside broadcast.”<sup>32</sup>

This first general women’s conference in 1978 held proximate to general conference became an annual event that eventually divided into two separate women’s conferences, one in

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<sup>29</sup> At general conference October 2, 1929 LDS Church President Heber J. Grant stated, “We have listened to a great many testimonies from our brethren during this conference. We shall now call on some of our sisters.” He then called on Louise Robison, Ruth May Fox, and May Anderson. Heber J. Grant, in Conference Report, October 1929, 84.

<sup>30</sup> Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 2005), 166.

<sup>31</sup> “News of the Church,” *Ensign*, August 1975, 90.

<sup>32</sup> “President Kimball to Address All Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, August 1978, 79.

the spring for young women and one in the fall for the women.<sup>33</sup> The change assisted women in feeling a greater bond of sisterhood and a unity of purpose. It also provided a venue for the general Relief Society presidency to address LDS women in a more direct way.

Elaine Jack recalled another elevating change, stating, “I can remember when women did not pray in Sacrament meetings.”<sup>34</sup> At the time, men were the only members of the Church who said prayers in Church meetings; however, in November 1978 President Kimball prefaced his address to Regional Representatives with this announcement: “The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve have determined that there is no scriptural prohibition against sisters offering prayers in Sacrament meetings. It was therefore decided that it is permissible for sisters to offer prayers in any meetings they attend, including Sacrament meetings, Sunday School meetings, and stake conferences. Relief Society visiting teachers may offer prayers in homes that they enter in fulfilling visiting teaching assignments.”<sup>35</sup> This change created opportunities for both men and women to appeal for the spirit, inspiration, and blessings that they felt needed by the congregation—one more indication that President Kimball recognized the need to increase women’s influence.

For many, new procedures required great effort to let go of deeply engrained traditional protocol. For example, one district president observed the Relief Society general presidency conducting several Relief Society regional conferences under the direction of Elder Mark E. Petersen and commented, “I didn’t think I would ever live to see a day when a woman would conduct a meeting at which an apostle of the Lord was present. I have learned something today.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Elaine Jack, interview.

<sup>35</sup> Marvin K. Gardner, “Report of the Seminar for Regional Representatives,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 100-101.

Elder Petersen has taught me by example.”<sup>36</sup> To accomplish the vision President Kimball foresaw of the partnership between men and women it was essential that men viewed women as inspired and capable counterparts in Church leadership.

Because President Kimball understood that the spiritual and physical objective of Relief Society was to assist the brethren in caring for needs of Church members, he made efforts to ensure that women experienced increased visibility and participation through Relief Society. Unquestionably, President Kimball recognized the influence for good a woman could have when empowered to channel her spiritual gifts through an organization focused on caring for needs of individuals.

### **Changes in Church Councils and Welfare**

From the beginning of the organization, one of the greatest duties women of Relief Society had was to the welfare program of the Church. Recognizing greater potential within Relief Society, President Kimball’s administration exerted great energy to enhance women’s contributions to both the councils of the Church and the welfare program.

In the late 1970s, the Church restructured welfare procedures such that it affected all levels of the Church and precipitated a general announcement and explanation. In 1979, Elder Benson gave a talk titled “Church Government through Councils” in which he outlined the new developments and procedures for councils at varying levels of Church administration. At the outset, however, he clearly stated, “This presentation about Church councils is *not* a new program, but it is a reemphasis of a principle based on the scriptures and on traditional Church government procedures.”<sup>37</sup> The new developments he outlined were as follows,

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<sup>36</sup> Belle S. Spafford, “Reaching Every Facet of a Woman’s Life: A Conversation with Belle S. Spafford, Relief Society General President,” *Ensign*, June 1974, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, “Church Government through Councils,” *Ensign*, April 1979, 86.



The First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve, and the Presiding Bishopric have determined to organize council meetings at the general Church level, the area level, and the region level. These councils will be called the Church coordinating Council (at the general level), area council, multi-region council (*only* if needed), region council, and the presently existing stake and ward correlation councils.

We have felt that in order to be effective, these councils need to be *comprehensive* in representing *all* Church programs so that there will be a *correlating, coordinating, planning, and resolving* body at each of these levels. These councils, properly organized and functioning, assure a unified approach to the management of ecclesiastical and temporal affairs. . . These title changes take effect immediately.<sup>38</sup>

True to Elder Benson’s statement of wanting the councils to be representative of all parts of the Church, general Church leaders ensured that Relief Society was involved. In October 1979, the First Presidency asked Barbara Smith to speak at the welfare session of general conference and explain the role Relief Society women would play within Church councils. Barbara Smith began her talk explaining that “a fundamental reason for organizing the Relief Society was so that the sisters could act together to extend the work of the bishop in caring for the Saints and thus help build the kingdom of God on earth.”<sup>39</sup> She felt that all Church members, especially Relief Society members, should understand how the new developments emphasized the essential aspect of Relief Society being involved at every level, adding that those who would be involved had a vast influence upon the Church.<sup>40</sup>

Barbara Smith continued by outlining each council established within the Church—the general welfare services committee, area council, multi-regional council, regional council, stake

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. (emphasis added).

<sup>39</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “The Role of Relief Society in Priesthood Councils,” *Ensign*, October 1979, 87.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

and ward councils, and family councils. In detail she explained the role women would play in each and then provided examples of how women had influenced decisions, types of data they had collected, input women had given that changed decisions, and compassionate perspective women had provided.<sup>41</sup>

Clearly, as stated by Elder Benson, the emphasis on Church councils was not a new program, but gave greater organization, representation, and support to the council system. Similarly, encouragement for women to participate in Church councils was not a new part of the program, but was more specifically outlined and expected that women be involved at every level of council.<sup>42</sup> In fact, for the first time the Welfare Services Department instructional handbook specified Relief Society participation at every level.<sup>43</sup> The emphasis perhaps indicated general refinement in effectively managing a growing international Church, but it also showed an increased willingness and ability for men and women to work cooperatively as companion partners in Church councils. Barbara Smith supported this assumption stating, “The cooperative effort of both priesthood and Relief Society in these councils continues to be a significant factor in successful ward and stake welfare services operations.”<sup>44</sup>

Barbara Smith played a major role in encouraging and teaching women and men how Relief Society was essential to the success of the welfare program. In the March 1982 *Ensign*, Barbara Smith provided greater detail of the role women played in assisting the priesthood,

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>42</sup> Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 313. According to Relief Society Minutes, President Belle S. Spafford spoke in the priesthood session of general conference in 1946 teaching encouraging bishops to work in partnership with Relief Society by utilizing the expertise of Relief Society presidents “in determining the needs of families receiving welfare assistance” to better meet the needs of their congregants.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 354.

<sup>44</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “The Role of Relief Society in Priesthood Councils,” *Ensign*, October 1979, 88.

The Relief Society assists the priesthood in doing the work of the Church. The priesthood leader who has overall responsibility for Church programs in his ward or stake delegates to a Relief Society president the work of the Relief Society. She meets regularly with him to submit plans and recommendations, report progress or problems, and to receive counsel and direction.

She serves on the coordinating council and in the welfare services committee, submitting agenda items relating to Relief Society, helping to assess needs and find solutions, especially those solutions that involve the resources of Relief Society.

Relief Society's function is to help see that the needs of women are met and their service goes forward in a supporting, cooperative relationship with the priesthood.<sup>45</sup>

As priesthood councils met with, respected, and heeded perspectives of women, Relief Society had greater purpose in encouraging women to fulfill their duties in visiting teaching, compassionate service, and maintaining a close sisterhood. Through these programs, Relief Society was capable of offering insight to the needs of women and families not seen by priesthood leadership. Individual Relief Society members who tended to their duties and relayed specific needs to the ward Relief Society presidents contributed to information available to priesthood leadership. Ward councils and other Church meetings that addressed welfare needs then became more effective. The importance of this idea was emphasized by Barbara Smith in the March 1980 *Ensign* where she described councils as a place for men and women to solve problems and find ways to care for the needs of ward and stake members.<sup>46</sup> Thus, working cooperatively, men and women had their vision increased, enabling them to generate greater power to minister and administer to those they served.

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<sup>45</sup> "A Conversation with the Relief Society General Presidency," *Ensign*, March 1982, 24.

<sup>46</sup> Barbara B. Smith, "Relief Society Today," *Ensign*, March 1980, 20.

Barbara Smith recognized that successful cooperative work between men and woman was dependent upon women of the Church understanding their role in Relief Society and the importance it played in providing a solid foundation for the Church welfare program. The following is a list of the talks she gave in welfare sessions of general conference:

1. October 1975: “Relief Society’s Role in Welfare Services”
2. April 1976: “Teaching LDS Women Self-Sufficiency”
3. October 1976: “She is Not Afraid of the Snow for Her Household”
4. April 1977: “A Call to Action”
5. October 1977: “She Stretcheth Out Her Hand to the Poor”
6. April 1978: “In the Time of Old Age”
7. October 1978: “Good Health—A Key to Joyous Living”
8. October 1979: “The Relief Society Role in Priesthood Councils”
9. October 1980: “Follow Joyously”
10. April 1981: “Reach for the Stars”
11. October 1981: “A Safe Place for Marriages and Families”
12. April 1982: “Her Children Arise Up, and Call Her Blessed”
13. October 1982: “Application of Welfare Principles in the Home: A Key to Many Family Problems”

Barbara Smith’s talks focused largely on educating women about the work of welfare within the organization of Relief Society. She also emphasized the need for Relief Society and priesthood quorums to work in harmony in administering general welfare programs. Topics addressed within the umbrella of welfare principles consisted of skills in self-reliance, work, and service by becoming more proficient in homemaking, finances, gardening and food storage, physical health, emergency preparedness, family relationships, councils, Church welfare, and Relief Society compassionate service and visiting teaching programs. For example, Barbara

Smith instructed, “If we are to succeed in carrying out the Welfare Services program of family preparedness, it is necessary for women to develop the qualities of industry, thrift, independence, work, and prudence—qualities which, if applied, will help to fortify individuals and families with a secure feeling of self-reliance against the day of need.”<sup>47</sup>

Keeping the family as the central focus for all auxiliary and Church programs, Relief Society sought ways to reinforce these basic skills through training provided by handbooks and training meetings. Stake Relief Society leaders offered LDS women trainings in areas such as finance, money, and time management. Likewise, ward and stake Relief Society presidencies received improved training directly from the Welfare Services Handbook. In regional Relief Society meetings, blocks of time were devoted to welfare ideas and successes. Additionally, great energy by ward Relief Society presidents was put into training visiting teachers on how to be more sensitive or alert to conditions of the homes they visited.<sup>48</sup> With great effort, Church leaders worked to instill within women’s hearts and minds a conviction that they would receive strength and an increased ability to care for welfare needs of every individual within the Church when they tended to their Relief Society duties.

The repeated request for Barbara Smith to speak in welfare sessions to outline and instruct men and women concerning the role of Relief Society carried a powerful message—the role and contribution made by women was paramount in the success of assisting families through the welfare system. Furthermore, the emphasis of having women participate implied that the ability for women to develop skills and confidence in counseling with priesthood leadership was a priority to the Brethren. Elder Packer testified to this great need by unequivocally declaring,

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<sup>47</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “Relief Society’s Role in Welfare Services,” *Ensign*, November 1975, 121.

<sup>48</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “Relief Society’s Role in Welfare Services,” *Ensign*, November 1975, 121.

“In an organized way Relief Society symbolizes the relationship between man and woman in the Church. . . . The Relief Society is so vital a link in our welfare services that save it be strong, we must surely fail.”<sup>49</sup>

## **Summary**

During President Kimball’s administration the Relief Society experienced many changes that increased women’s spheres of influence and elevated their roles within their families and Church. Such changes seemed to proceed from President Kimball’s strong emphasis that in marriage, family, and Church work there must be respectful and cooperative partnerships between men and women.

The Church-wide emphasis of simplification greatly influenced the curriculum of Relief Society in both the process of writing lessons and the content. Doctrines and principles of the gospel found in the scriptures became the source for all lessons and a shift in the approach for writing the lessons led to more emphasis on application questions rather than facts and information.

President Kimball encouraged increased efforts of LDS women and men working together as companions in their respective roles in several ways. First, he taught the importance of respecting womanhood and femininity. Second, he modified and adjusted some traditional Church procedures that allowed women to speak in general conferences, hold Relief Society general conferences, pray in sacrament meeting, and conduct meetings. Third, he provided greater perspective and opportunity for Relief Society women to fulfill their vital role in Church councils and the welfare program of the Church.

President Kimball’s hope for cooperative Church councils and welfare programs was visionary; however, to enhance cooperation of Relief Society with priesthood leadership,

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<sup>49</sup> Boyd K. Packer, “The Relief Society,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 7.

Barbara Smith understood the vital need to help each LDS woman understand the strength they could offer priesthood leadership in administering and ministering the welfare program when they tended to their duties of Relief Society.

## Chapter 5: Defining Womanhood

As a prophet of God, President Kimball declared, “The role of woman was fixed even before she was created, and God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”<sup>1</sup> Despite changes and challenges to womanhood, particularly since the 1960s, LDS Church leadership taught and reinforced truths concerning the eternal nature of woman to ensure that the divinity of womanhood endured.

The influence of the WLM caused many women to toss aside traditional roles to entertain new ideas and goals. As viable opportunities for higher education and occupations became available to women, the role of a woman became a sensitive topic for many LDS during President Kimball’s administration. While not all implications behind the WLM were viewed as evil, many of the ideas and attitudes from its supporters influenced LDS women in ways that distracted them from focusing on the divinity of womanhood and family.

Attesting to the social issues that prevailed at that time, President Kimball reiterated in the March 1976 *Ensign* that temptations of the time were great. Speaking of Satan’s lies, he encouraged LDS women to keep focused on basic gospel principles for assistance in discerning truth from error. Providing examples of issues women were dealing with, he stated:

You read the papers, you watch television, you hear the radio, you read books and magazines, and much that comes to your consciousness is designed to lead you astray. Much of what you read is scurrilous. It is to tempt you. . . .

Some of the things they are telling you these days are: it is not necessary to marry; it is not necessary to marry to have children; it is not necessary to have children; you may have all the worldly pleasures without these obligations and

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<sup>1</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood,” *Ensign*, March 1976, 70.



responsibilities. There is the pill. There is abortion. There are other ways to give you this loosely held, so-called freedom.

They are telling you that you are manacled to your homes, to your husbands, to your children, to your housework. They are talking and writing to you about a freedom they know nothing about.<sup>2</sup>

In hopes that women would evaluate their options with wisdom, general Church leaders during President Kimball's administration reinforced womanhood, marriage, and motherhood. One method of reinforcement unique to President Kimball's administration came in the form of bronze statues.

### **The Nauvoo Monuments**

Early in his administration, President Kimball observed that a previous marker memorializing the organization of Relief Society in Nauvoo had deteriorated. When President Kimball asked Barbara Smith if she and her presidency were interested in undertaking the project to construct a new monument to women, Barbara Smith became very interested. Together with her counselors—Janath R. Canon and Marion R. Boyer—they eagerly went to work as they asked themselves: “What would it look like?” “Where would it be placed?” “How would it be financed?” and “What purposes could it serve to represent?”<sup>3</sup>

Before returning to President Kimball for guidance, they contacted a sculptor named Florence Hansen for an idea about a possible statue. Hansen produced a lovely clay model of a woman with a child holding a violin. Feeling motivated by the model, Barbara Smith made an appointment with President Kimball.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara B. Smith, *A Fruitful Season* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 96-97.

During the appointment, President Kimball asked the general Relief Society presidency if they felt the clay model adequately conveyed what they wanted it to represent. This question generated a mutual response from Barbara Smith and her counselors that the model did represent a portion of what they wanted to portray about a woman's work, but that a woman nurturing a child's skills did not encompass their full vision of a woman's capacity and influence.

Determined to expand their vision, the Relief Society presidency arranged for a variety of sculptors to submit new ideas.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, they suggested that the women of the Church finance the project through voluntary contributions, and asked President Kimball if they could announce the project at the upcoming Relief Society general conference. The prophet approved the project.<sup>5</sup>

With full support from President Kimball and his encouragement for women to contribute for the construction of the monuments, the general Relief Society presidency announced in June 1975, "We propose that we, as women of the church today, erect a fitting monument that will be symbolic of women of the past, women today, and women of the future. We propose that it be a monument of heroic proportions that would stand as a symbol of womanhood as conceived from a Latter-day Saint point of view."<sup>6</sup> Church members readily accepted the project, as was evidenced by the fact that during the next three years, LDS women contributed sufficient funds to sculpt thirteen statues.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 97-98.

<sup>6</sup> Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 360.

<sup>7</sup> "Donations by members and families are made to their ward Relief Society secretary-treasurer, who keeps a list of donors. Lists of donors to the monument who contribute prior to 1 January 1978 will be bound in volumes and placed in the visitor's center in Nauvoo. Lists of donors making contributions after 1 January 1978 will be placed in a separate volume." "Nauvoo Woman's Monument Donations Still Needed," *Ensign*, December 1977, 67.

On February 9, 1978, four months before the dedication of the Nauvoo Monuments, Barbara Smith addressed students at Brigham Young University. She began her talk by explaining her concern and desire for Church members to grasp fully the significance of the divine role of womanhood. “One way,” she explained, “seemed to open up when we were given approval by the First Presidency to ask the women of the Church to contribute funds to build a monument in Nauvoo . . . Here such a statement about faith in God and faith in self could be made.”<sup>8</sup> From this statement, it was clear that Barbara Smith viewed the monuments as a simple and non-contentious method for outlining the role of womanhood for LDS members and the community at large.

By June of 1978, the designated women’s garden in Nauvoo, Illinois displayed the thirteen life-size monuments. Designed to show the many roles of a woman within society, the center monument displayed a confident looking woman, with the other twelve monuments surrounding her in a circular pattern. At the base of each statute was a plaque with a specific title and scripture inscription to clarify the role it symbolized. Provided below are the titles, descriptions, and scriptures on each statue.

- *Woman*. This central statue features a woman who is wearing an ankle length dress and has long flowing hair. She appears to be stepping forward confidently, ready to face the future; she holds her head high with her left hand reaching slightly forward. The scripture inscribed on the plaque is Proverbs 31:10, “Who can find a virtuous woman? . . . Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.”<sup>9</sup>
- *Woman in Prayer*. This statue depicts a woman in a long dress and ruffled sleeves with her hair pulled back in a bun. She is kneeling in prayer with her hands in her lap.

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<sup>8</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “Roots and Wings,” Brigham Young University Speeches, Provo, Utah, February 9, 1978, 2.

<sup>9</sup> “Waymarking: A Groundspeak Website,” accessed June 1, 2013, [http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFAGY\\_Proverbs\\_3110\\_25\\_Woman\\_Nauvoo\\_IL\\_USA](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFAGY_Proverbs_3110_25_Woman_Nauvoo_IL_USA).

The scripture attributed to this is Alma 17:37, “Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good.”<sup>10</sup>

- *Woman Learning.* This statue portrays a woman in a long skirt with a button up, collar blouse. She is sitting on a stone block, and is looking slightly to the right as though deep in thought. Her right hand rests in her lap holding an open book. The scripture is Doctrine & Covenants 88:110, “Yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.”<sup>11</sup>
- *Woman and her Talents.* This statue is of a woman wearing a dress and an apron. Her sleeves are rolled up and her hair is pulled back in a ponytail. Standing over an artist’s pedestal, she uses both hands to sculpt a person’s head. The inscription is the Thirteenth Article of Faith, “...If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report, or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.”<sup>12</sup>
- *Courtship for Eternity.* This statue displays a young man and woman engaged in conversation while sitting on a stone block. She is in a long dress, her body facing forward, with her head turned to the man. Wearing slacks and a dress shirt, the man sits with his right leg hanging from the block and his left ankle under his right leg; his body is turned fully toward the woman. The scripture chosen for this statue is 1 Corinthians 11:11, “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord.”<sup>13</sup>
- *Joyful Moment.* This statue displays a woman wearing a long dress that appears to be flowing from movement. She appears to be skipping in a circle, while holding hands with three children. The girls wear knee length dresses and the boy is wearing pants and a button up shirt. The scripture for this role is Psalms 127:3, “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord.”<sup>14</sup>
- *Preparing her Son.* This statue depicts a mother in a long dress and is standing behind her son with both hands on his shoulders while looking down at her son’s face. The boy is dressed in pants and a short sleeve, button up shirt, and stands in height about to his mother’s shoulders. He is looking up to meet his mother’s gaze. The scripture

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<sup>10</sup> “Woman in Prayer,” accessed June 1, 2013,  
[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFA9W\\_Woman\\_in\\_Prayer\\_Nauvoo\\_IL](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFA9W_Woman_in_Prayer_Nauvoo_IL).

<sup>11</sup> “Woman Learning,” accessed June 1, 2013,  
[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFABZ\\_Woman\\_Learning\\_Nauvoo\\_IL](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFABZ_Woman_Learning_Nauvoo_IL).

<sup>12</sup> “Woman and her Talents, accessed June 1, 2013,  
[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFA9X\\_Woman\\_and\\_Her\\_Talents\\_Nauvoo\\_IL](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFA9X_Woman_and_Her_Talents_Nauvoo_IL).

<sup>13</sup> “Courtship for Eternity,” accessed June 1, 2013,  
[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFAH4\\_1\\_Corinthians\\_1111\\_Courtship\\_for\\_Eternity\\_Nauvoo\\_IL\\_USA](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFAH4_1_Corinthians_1111_Courtship_for_Eternity_Nauvoo_IL_USA).

<sup>14</sup> “Joyful Moment,” accessed June 1, 2013,  
[http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFABC\\_Joyful\\_Moment\\_Nauvoo\\_IL](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFABC_Joyful_Moment_Nauvoo_IL).

chosen is Proverbs 6:20 “My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother.”<sup>15</sup>

- *Teaching with Love*. This statute is of a woman in a long dress. She appears to be sitting against a large rock. She is holding a book on her left knee and a pencil in her right hand. Her left hand is around a young girl who is leaning into the woman and looking up. The girl, in a knee length dress, is holding a violin bow in her left hand with the instrument at her side, resting under her left arm. The associated scripture is Doctrine and Covenants 46:8, “...Seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given.”<sup>16</sup>
- *In the Family Circle*. This statue portrays a young family consisting of a mother, father, and daughter. Both mother and father are crouching down, as the daughter appears to be taking her first steps. The daughter appears to have just left her mother’s arms as she steps into the arms of her father. The scripture on this statue is D&C 68:28, “And they shall also teach their children to pray, and walk uprightly before the Lord.”<sup>17</sup>
- *In her Mother’s Footsteps*. This statute displays a mother in a long dress who is carrying her young son over her left shoulder. Her daughter is wearing a knee length dress. She follows her mother’s footsteps while holding her hands behind her back and looking up at her brother. The scripture is Proverbs 22:6 “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it.”<sup>18</sup>
- *Joseph and Emma*. This statue depicts Emma and Joseph Smith. They are dressed in formal 1840s clothing, each with an overcoat, standing facing one another. Joseph is extending his left hand, holding Emma’s right hand. He appears to be dropping something into her hand. Emma is holding a large book in her left hand at her side. The inscription is from the Minutes of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo—March 17, 1842, “All I have to give to the poor I shall give to this Society.”<sup>19</sup>
- *Compassionate Woman*. This statue shows a woman in a long dress with her hair pulled into a bun. She is bending slightly forward, with her right hand extended as

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<sup>15</sup> “Preparing Her Son,” accessed June 1, 2013, [http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFABR\\_Preparing\\_Her\\_Son\\_Nauvoo\\_IL](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFABR_Preparing_Her_Son_Nauvoo_IL).

<sup>16</sup> “Violin Teaching with Love,” accessed June 1, 2013, [http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFACP\\_Violin\\_Teaching\\_with\\_Love\\_Nauvoo\\_IL](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFACP_Violin_Teaching_with_Love_Nauvoo_IL).

<sup>17</sup> “In the Family Circle,” accessed June 1, 2013, [http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFAA8\\_In\\_the\\_Family\\_Circle\\_Nauvoo\\_IL](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFAA8_In_the_Family_Circle_Nauvoo_IL).

<sup>18</sup> “In Her Mothers Footsteps,” accessed June 1, 2013, [http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFABE\\_In\\_Her\\_Mothers\\_Footsteps\\_Nauvoo\\_IL](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFABE_In_Her_Mothers_Footsteps_Nauvoo_IL).

<sup>19</sup> “Joseph and Emma Smith,” accessed June 1, 2013, [http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFAC9\\_Joseph\\_and\\_Emma\\_Smith\\_Nauvoo\\_IL](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFAC9_Joseph_and_Emma_Smith_Nauvoo_IL).

though inviting someone to come to her. The scripture is Proverbs 31:20, “She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.”<sup>20</sup>

- *Fulfillment.* This statue depicts an older woman who is sitting in a rocking chair. She is wearing a dress and has her hair pulled back into a bun. She focuses on stitching a large quilt that is flowing over her and covering the large block upon where she sits. The scripture is “Proverbs 31:28, “Her children rise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.”<sup>21</sup>

The dedication of the Nauvoo Monuments took place June 28-30, 1978. The *Ensign* reported, “Some 7,500 Relief Society members attended as guests and thousands of other visitors participated in dedication activities . . . [while] about 2,500 women attended each day’s dedicatory service.”<sup>22</sup> Over the three days of dedicatory events, President Kimball, Barbara Smith, and three members of the Quorum of the Twelve—L. Tom Perry, Bruce R. McConkie, and Ezra Taft Benson—addressed the visitors. Each message emphasized that the Nauvoo Monuments served as symbols for women and men to look to for guidance amidst the societal changes and pressures of the time.

President Kimball described the day of the dedication as “a day of fulfillment” and emphasized that “women [were] to take care of the family, [and in that role they would] find greater satisfaction, joy, and peace and make greater contributions to mankind.”<sup>23</sup> He also admonished women to magnify their callings by attending Relief Society meetings. He emphasized, “Attendance [in Relief Society] is important because if [women] are not there they can’t get the spirit of it.”<sup>24</sup> In addition, President Kimball reiterated the themes of family, service,

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<sup>20</sup> “Compassionate Woman,” accessed June 1, 2013, [http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFABW\\_Compassionate\\_Woman\\_Nauvoo\\_IL](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFABW_Compassionate_Woman_Nauvoo_IL).

<sup>21</sup> “Fulfillment,” accessed June 1, 2013, [http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFABP\\_Fulfillment\\_Nauvoo\\_IL](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMFABP_Fulfillment_Nauvoo_IL).

<sup>22</sup> Janet Brigham, “The Nauvoo Monument to Women,” *Ensign*, September 1978, 73.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

marriage, and motherhood. In the dedicatory prayer he said, “Bless the women of the Church that they may bless the Church and become the mothers of the posterity that will follow.”<sup>25</sup> From these words, it was evident President Kimball believed that through Relief Society, righteous women played a vital role in defending families and strengthening the Church.

Barbara Smith conveyed her thoughts concerning the purpose of the monuments, as follows: “It is a matter of deep concern that social and economic conditions today are enticing, if not forcing, woman out of the sphere in which she can find the most happiness and can render the greatest good to mankind. . . . The purpose of this monument is twofold. First, to honor the founding of Relief Society by the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, where he turned the key in behalf of women that knowledge and intelligence might flow down to them; and second, to make it possible to portray to the world the role of women in the gospel plan, as understood by the Latter-day Saints.”<sup>26</sup>

Barbara Smith expressed that the Nauvoo Monuments epitomized the roles of womanhood and served a purpose in conveying that perspective to the world. Rather than being contentious or pointing out where the media and negative publicity was in error, the Nauvoo Monuments enabled general Church leaders to emphasize womanhood as designed by the Lord in a positive, yet firm manner. Collectively, these monuments provided a framework to define and clarify the role of a woman, along with sending a message of respect and support from priesthood leadership of the Church.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> “News of the Church,” *Ensign*, March 1976, 77–80.

Shirley Thomas felt that the monuments were a way to say, “Look who we are! Look what we can do to blossom and bring out more for women.”<sup>27</sup> Of the dedication Thomas reflected, “...It was charming, but it was not just that it was *a* strength for women, it was done *in* strength and you could feel it.”<sup>28</sup> She continued by describing the connection and energy in the movement as evidenced by the great numbers of people drawn to the event and the force and strength they carried home with them. Thomas added, “So when one says President Kimball had a great deal to do with movement [for women within the Church], that was not an insignificant—I don’t know how many people saw the [Nauvoo] Monuments as big a movement as it really was and it started to be.”<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, Elaine Jack felt President Kimball’s role was vital to the success of the Nauvoo Monuments. She commented, “I think approving that whole project, that whole garden, was a matter of what he considered women should have—the visibility—and even though Relief Society had raised the money, it still had to be approved. I think he was very visionary in seeing that that happened.”<sup>30</sup>

One reporter at the dedication asked Barbara Smith this question: “Isn’t your monument to women old-fashioned and traditional?” She replied with confidence, “Yes, if life is old-fashioned and traditional; if personal development, self-esteem, and selflessness are old-fashioned and traditional. For it will be a statement in bronze about the essential, eternal worth of women as individuals in the family setting. We consider these figures and their messages as

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<sup>27</sup> Shirley Thomas, oral history, interview by Carrie Taylor Anguiano, January 14, 2012, Salt Lake City, in author’s possession.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Elaine L. Jack, oral history, interview by Carrie Taylor Anguiano, November 21, 2011, Salt Lake City, in author’s possession.



timeless. A woman is an essential part of that plan of life and salvation yesterday, today, and forever.”<sup>31</sup> It was evident that Barbara Smith regarded the Nauvoo Monuments project as revelation from the Lord and believed they served as a statement to all that the ‘traditional’ role of a woman was to be valued. Collectively, the monuments provided the multi-dimensional perspective of divine womanhood.

### **Womanhood**

In June 1977, Barbara Smith remarked, “It is necessary for women to know that they are different from men, with different responsibilities in life. Not less than men, just different.”<sup>32</sup> Because women carried within them inherent strengths and traits unique to their gender, the need to foster value for femininity among LDS women was a high priority for general Church leaders. Recognizing the problems associated with society’s push for a masculine and/or unisex society, Church leaders sought to deepen understanding of the value for both male and female attributes.

Diane F. Kravetz, a women’s studies researcher at the University of Wisconsin, performed a study that offered insight to how society was beginning to view femininity. One specific study sought to determine if women in the 1970s defined themselves according to society’s traditional stereotyped roles. She found that that they did not, but that given the influence of the WLM, women seemed to view themselves in terms that were more masculine. Kravetz’s study identified these masculine terms as “independent, objective, dominant, competitive, adventurous, ambitious, able to make decisions easily, and worldly.” Kravetz also

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<sup>31</sup> Barbara B. Smith, *A Fruitful Season* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 133.

<sup>32</sup> “The Exemplary Womanhood Award,” *Ensign*, June 1977, 94.

reported that women described feminine traits as “emotional, submissive, subjective, passive, feelings easily hurt, dependent, home oriented, tactful, and gentle.”<sup>33</sup>

These findings seemed to indicate that a portion of society viewed feminine traits as negative and undesirable. Likewise, individuals within society that advocated for the WLM appeared to focus on the inequality and oppression toward women based on the positive traits characterized by men and the weak attributes of women—largely ignoring the strengths of femininity. As Kravetz concluded, “Thus the role of femininity was labeled out-of-date and weak by women libbers who strove to redefine womanhood.”<sup>34</sup> While advocates for the proposed ERA and other feminist’s pursuits continued to disparage femininity, General Church leaders made great efforts to teach that the feminine nature of womanhood was crucial.

As the influence of the WLM permeated society, one disturbing trend general Church leaders observed was an increase of women wearing masculine clothing. Concerned about this behavior, President Kimball addressed the issue head on in October 1974 general conference. He said, “Some people are ignorant or vicious and apparently attempting to destroy the concept of masculinity and femininity. More and more girls dress, groom, and act like men. More and more men dress, groom, and act like women. The high purposes of life are damaged and destroyed by the growing unisex theory. God made man in his own image, male and female made he them. With relatively few accidents of nature, we are born male or female. The Lord knew best.”<sup>35</sup> President Kimball’s view on how women dressed underscored his desire for women to value their femininity.

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<sup>33</sup> Diane F. Kravetz, “Sex Role Concepts of Women,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 44, no. 3 (1976): 442.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “God Will Not Be Mocked,” *Ensign*, November 1974, 4.

Six years later, President Kimball again touched on the problem. He warned, “We are affected by our own outward appearances; if we dress like the opposite sex, we tend to lose our sexual identity or some of the characteristics that distinguish the eternal mission of our sex . . . There is a relationship between how we dress and groom ourselves and how we are inclined to feel and act.”<sup>36</sup> It appeared President Kimball was concerned that women who surrendered their feminine nature would also surrender the capacity to reach their full potential for influence on their families and in Church leadership.

A week after President Kimball set Barbara Smith apart as the General President of Relief Society (1974), he offered her some counsel. He invited Barbara Smith to “impress upon the women of this Church their femininity and their great privileges and honors to be the mothers of men; that they may be grateful for that privilege and not be affected by the ideals and ideologies of the world.”<sup>37</sup> Seeking to know how to help women comprehend the value and splendor of femininity, Barbara Smith sought direction from the Lord early in her presidency.

The guidance Barbara Smith received from the Lord directed her to help each women know of God’s love for them, to understand their importance of their place in the kingdom, and to know Jesus Christ.<sup>38</sup> An even stronger impression offered her deeper understanding of the purpose for Relief Society. She shared, “A major purpose for Relief Society was to help bring women to [a] spiritual understanding [of their role] and provide opportunities for them to continue developing it forever.”<sup>39</sup> Sensing what the Lord required of women, Barbara Smith directed her energies to ensure that Relief Society bolstered within women a living, growing

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<sup>36</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Give the Lord Your Loyalty,” *Ensign*, March 1980, 2.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

knowledge of who they are and where to turn for their source of strength. She declared, “Once one is humbly positioned towards Deity [a woman has] to be responsible to God who made her, no matter what the mortal consequences.”<sup>40</sup> Observably, Barbara Smith believed that the more women understood God’s love and the divinity in their femininity, the more they would turn to God with the desire to do his will.

Barbara Smith recognized that the success of generating a collectively strong Relief Society organization depended upon each woman accepting personal responsibility to understand her divine role. She shared with women in general conference, “[In our day] extreme viewpoints regarding women have become political and social issues. These conflicts make it important for *each* woman to understand her magnificent potential, her irreplaceable contributions, [and] her eternal destiny.”<sup>41</sup> Ultimately, general Church leaders taught the idea that women needed a personal conviction of their potential for influence in their divinely ordained role of womanhood. With this surety, women could confidently choose to avoid following the trends of the times.

Because the WLM advocated for greater liberties, an array of choices became available for women. In a gospel context, these opportunities provided a framework for general Church leaders to teach the importance of choice *and* accountability. Dean L. Larsen, a member of the quorum of the Seventy, taught, “When we understand what is right and what is wrong, we are in a position to exercise our freedom in making choices. In so doing, we must stand accountable for our decisions, and we cannot escape the inevitable consequences of these choices.”<sup>42</sup> General Church leaders seemed focused on the idea that for women to make wise choices they first needed an understanding and personal conviction of their eternal identity and purpose. As this

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<sup>40</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “Women for the Latter Day,” *Ensign*, November 1979, 107.

<sup>41</sup> Barbara B. Smith, *The Love that Never Fails* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984), 45.

<sup>42</sup> Dean L. Larsen, “Self-Accountability and Human Progress,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 76-77.

was established, women would likely become more prepared and confident to make choices congruent with gospel teachings because they recognized the consequences for the use or misuse of personal agency.

Another way President Kimball encouraged women to cultivate character was through his encouragement of female leadership. In 1976, President Kimball taught that leadership skills were another essential quality for achieving Godhood and that good leadership was the ability to encourage the best in others to accomplish their goals.<sup>43</sup> He added, “Who has more significant opportunities to lead than a mother who guides her children toward perfection, or the wife who daily counsels with her husband that they may grow together? The tremendous contribution in leadership made by women in the auxiliaries of the Church and in their communities is likewise beyond measure.”<sup>44</sup> As part of his vision for the strength of Relief Society working in tandem with priesthood leaders, President Kimball gave strong encouragement for women to guide others by having the courage to contribute their insights and opinions.

By identifying inappropriate cultural attitudes towards women, the WLM *was* beneficial in that it helped to Church members re-evaluate their perceptions of womanhood—specifically that leadership was not merely a role for men, and that it was important to recognize women’s opinions, perspectives, and contributions as valuable. The need for change then, went two ways. Women needed to be willing to assert themselves more frequently, and men needed to recognize that a woman’s ideas and thoughts were valuable and contributed greatly to effective leadership.

Confirming the need for this type of empowerment, Elaine Jack commented, “An observation I made was that often if women felt subservient, sometimes it was their own fault. I

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<sup>43</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Relief Society—Its Promise and Potential,” *Ensign*, March 1976, 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

think that women needed to assert themselves some. I know sometimes there is abuse, that needs to be considered; but I think women needed to recognize who they were, their strength, and how they could contribute.”<sup>45</sup> Women needed to talk, share, and teach more often based on their personal determination to be contributing partners within both marriage and Church leadership.

One particular way Church members needed to re-evaluate how they viewed womanhood regarded a women’s ability to receive personal revelation. As a method of clarifying any misconceptions within LDS culture, Bruce R. McConkie, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, spoke specifically of women’s ability to seek and receive revelation. Using examples of women from the scriptures, Elder McConkie provided insight into the greatness of women leaders who acted on their natures, faith, and revelation.

One particular example he cited was that of Rebekah, who received revelation for herself concerning her twin boys. Elder McConkie emphasized her right to receive personalized revelation by reading in scripture that “*she* went to inquire of the Lord,” and “the Lord said unto *her*” (Genesis 25:22-23). Elder McConkie applied this message to LDS women, “[You] are appointed to be Rebekah-like, to be guides and lights in the family unit and to engineer and arrange so that they lead in the way that will bring about salvation in the Father’s kingdom.”<sup>46</sup> Receiving personal revelation to guide a family or influence a decision within ward councils was another way President Kimball’s vision for women encouraged greater strength for families and Church leadership.

Because society taught women to develop their womanhood outside of the home, it was essential that general Church leaders conveyed the importance of women fostering their feminine

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<sup>45</sup> Elaine Jack, interview (emphasis added).

<sup>46</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, “Our Sisters from the Beginning,” *Ensign*, January 1979, 62. Address given at Nauvoo Monument dedication on June 29, 1978 (emphasis in original).

characteristics the Lord's way. Church leaders emphasized this by encouraging women to understand their divine role as women, use their agency wisely, and turn to the Lord for revelation through prayer and scripture study. In this way, women would have the confidence to and capacity to bless their families and those whom they served.

### **Summary**

President Kimball encouraged women to respect and appreciate their womanhood and femininity through study and application of revealed truth found in the scriptures, from modern prophets, and by participating in the organized Relief Society program. The Nauvoo Monuments provided a visual definition of the roles of womanhood and as given by the Lord. General Church leaders anticipated that LDS women who internalized and magnified these roles would develop strength through their femininity that would effectively provide needed strength to families and Church. As established by President Kimball, "Wherever women are true to their feminine natures and magnify their opportunities for loving service, they are learning to become more like God."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "Relief Society—Its Promise and Potential," *Ensign*, March 1976, 2.

## Chapter 6: Role of Women as Wives

Of marriage, Barbara Smith said, “Central to all relationships is the relationship between the man and the woman in the marriage covenant and the relationships which ensue in the family . . . it is our understanding that exaltation and ultimately godhood is not possible unless a man and a woman be united and come together as one before the Lord. It is understandable, because the great creative work for exaltation requires both the man and the woman.”<sup>1</sup> Seeing that society’s attempt to redefine womanhood would ultimately lead to a redefinition of marriage itself, Church leadership endeavored to uphold the sanctity of marriage.

Three months before becoming the prophet, Elder Spencer W. Kimball spoke at a BYU devotional on the topic of marriage. Outlining some of the cultural trends of the time influencing LDS men and women, he stated, “While some of our young people marry early, yet there seems to be a tendency toward delaying marriage. A gradual move toward ignoring and even rejecting this vital and basic program is noticeable in our culture . . . We are finding that many young people are obsessed with the idea of more and more education, even to the postponing of their marriages.”<sup>2</sup>

While it was disconcerting that LDS men and women were postponing marriage due to academics, the bigger issue was that many in society were attacking, belittling, and criticizing the general institution of marriage. An *Ensign* article in 1983 described the experience: “Assaults on the family, especially since 1960s, have made life-styles that used to be called deviant

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<sup>1</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “Roots and Wings,” Brigham Young University Speeches, Provo, Utah, February 9, 1978, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Marriage is Honorable,” Brigham Young University Speeches, Provo, Utah, September 30, 1973, 1.



acceptable to many . . . [while] marriage is pictured as a form of imprisonment, oppression, boredom, and chafing hindrance.”<sup>3</sup>

This new wave of thought, perpetuated by feminists like Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and Germaine Greer cunningly articulated the idea that a woman need not define herself merely as a wife or mother and need not submit herself to the superiority of her husband, but she could have her own life and no longer ignore her own identity.<sup>4</sup> Friedan described the changing times as a “crisis of women growing up—a turning point from an immaturity that has been called femininity to fulfill human identity.”<sup>5</sup> The power of Friedan’s words and other feminist reasoning produced a society that pressed for individual satisfaction—particularly women’s satisfaction—and the ideology was alluring enough to cause many LDS women to question their roles as wives. As anti-marriage sentiment promoted individual pursuits for satisfaction and fulfillment, Relief Society and general Church leaders continued to provide reinforcement concerning the sacred roles of husband and wife and the divinity of those eternal relationships.

### **Marriage**

Those who assaulted marriage targeted women, particularly by disparaging the idea of women conforming to what they termed as the subjection and servitude of marriage; they insinuated that cooking, cleaning and living for men was degrading to females.<sup>6</sup> During President Kimball’s administration, increasing numbers of women were shirking marriage responsibilities by seeking fulfillment and individual pursuits outside of the home. Many LDS women were also enticed away from contentment and happiness in their marriage relationships.

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<sup>3</sup> “News of the Church,” *Ensign*, November 1983, 93.

<sup>4</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1963), 79.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

In defense of marriage, the Prophet addressed what he considered the root problem regarding the societal trend of denigrating marriage. In 1973, he stated, “*Selfishness* is the element that breaks and corrodes and destroys marriages, as it destroys lives and all that is good.”<sup>7</sup> While Church leaders did not discourage opportunities for education and occupation offered to women, President Kimball warned that women needed to evaluate their reasons for leaving the home to ensure that selfishness was not the motivator; family needed to remain the priority.

As arguments against the family continued, President Kimball again warned in April 1974 general conference, “To those who might decry marriage or postpone [marriage] or forbid it, Paul spoke, condemning them. It is generally selfishness, cold and self-centered, which leads people to shun marriage responsibility. There are many who talk and write against marriage. Even some of our own delay marriage and argue against it. To all who are deceived by these ‘doctrines of devils,’ we urge the return to normalcy. We call upon all people to accept normal marriage as a basis for true happiness.”<sup>8</sup> Without mincing words, President Kimball re-emphasized the plague of selfishness and warned that the influence of the adversary was working to divide and weaken marriages. He made it clear that marriage should be a normal desire. Marriage was God’s plan for happiness.

As an indication that the issue regarding marriage was serious, six months later the Prophet again cautioned against those who were pushing to do away with marriage, and restated that it was normal for people to desire marriage and family.<sup>9</sup> Prophetically, he declared,

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<sup>7</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Marriage is Honorable,” Brigham Young University Speeches, Provo, Utah, September 30, 1973, 5 (emphasis added).

<sup>8</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Guidelines to Carry Forth the Work of God in Cleanliness,” *Ensign*, May 1974, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “God Will Not Be Mocked,” *Ensign*, November 1974, 4.

“Remember, God is in his heavens. He knew what he was doing when he organized the earth. He knows what he is doing now. Those of us who break his commandments will regret and suffer in remorse and pain. God will not be mocked. Man has his free agency, it is sure, but remember, GOD WILL NOT BE MOCKED. Our counsel then to you is to live strictly the laws of your Heavenly Father.”<sup>10</sup> President Kimball clarified that the doctrine of marriage was not of man, but of God, and God would hold each accountable for their actions.

The shift in delaying, rejecting, and assaulting marriage, as observed by President Kimball and other Church leaders, would only continue. In many ways, the thinking and phraseology used to uphold marriage during President Kimball’s administration served as a precursor to President Gordon B. Hinckley’s 1995 announcement of *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*. Much of what the Kimball administration discussed and articulated perhaps laid the foundation for defining the family with clarity and power amidst the continued attack on marriage.

Rather than the worldly idea of happiness and fulfillment in life, President Kimball’s administration sought to help individuals understand how applying gospel principles brought lasting joy and fulfillment. Marriage was a way for individuals to apply the gospel and learn the joy of real love, which came only from a life of selfless giving. Aligned with the prophet’s vision, Barbara Smith explained, “The principles of welfare—love, consecration, work, service, stewardship or accountability, and self-reliance—are not only important to us as individuals working out our own salvation, but if applied in our homes, can strengthen our marriages and our families.... Many do not realize the selflessness required in a good marriage. Both husband and

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., (emphasis in original).

wife are committed to helping the other achieve the fullest possible development.”<sup>11</sup> The principles that drove the WLM were quite the opposite of the principles of welfare.

President Kimball conveyed clearly that, while marriage *was* difficult at times and *did* require development of character traits such as patience, forgiveness, compromise, and selflessness, nothing could compare with the joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment found in marriage.

President Kimball said:

While marriage is difficult, and discordant and frustrated marriages are common, yet real, lasting happiness is possible, and marriage can be, more an exultant ecstasy than the human mind can conceive. This is within the reach of every couple, every person. ‘Soul mates’ are fiction and an illusion; and while every young man and young woman will seek with all diligence and prayerfulness to find a mate with whom life can be most compatible and beautiful, yet it is certain that almost any good man and any good woman can have happiness and a successful marriage if both are willing to pay the price.<sup>12</sup>

Discipleship and strength of character were essential elements necessary for marriage. In an effort to help each woman be prepared to offer her best self to a marriage, Barbara Smith directed efforts of Relief Society to support a woman’s preparation for marriage. She taught, “Relief Society is to help each of us, married or single, prepare through our faithfulness to rule and reign forever as an eternal companion with a husband, and not choose to serve merely as a ministering angel.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, it was important for a woman to understand that the cultivation of her character—femininity, leadership skills, and spiritual strength—also prepared her to function as a fully contributing marriage partner because she viewed her unique and feminine role as equal to that of her spouse.

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<sup>11</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “A Safe Place for Marriages and Families,” *Ensign*, November 1981, 83.

<sup>12</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Marriage and Divorce,” Brigham Young University Speeches, Provo, Utah, September 7, 1976, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “The Bond of Charity,” *Ensign*, November 1980, 103.

## Full Partnership

In the 1981 general Relief Society meeting, Elder Benson instructed, “You are partners with [your husband]. A woman’s role in a man’s life is to lift him, to help him uphold lofty standards, and to prepare through righteous living to be his queen for all eternity.”<sup>14</sup> Considering the insistent pressure from the WLM in their fight for ‘equality’ between the sexes, the idea of a woman focusing on the success of her husband rather than her own personal fulfillment, as insinuated by Elder Benson’s quote, was controversial. Thus, the question of ‘How can a woman give herself to a man and still consider herself an equal?’ seemed to linger.

As advocates of the WLM brought areas of concern to the surface, it provided President Kimball opportunity to stress or highlight certain understated aspects of Church doctrines that needed clarification. For example, President Kimball addressed a woman’s role in marriage at the September 1978 women’s conference by inviting LDS women to understand their privilege within marriage. He taught, “When we speak of marriage as a partnership, let us speak of marriage as a *full* partnership. We do not want our LDS women to be *silent* partners or *limited* partners in that eternal assignment! Please be a *contributing* and *full* partner.”<sup>15</sup> Here President Kimball specifically invited women to recognize that part of developing equality in marriage was dependent upon how a woman viewed her responsibility and privilege to contribute and give of herself. When LDS women understood marriage as a partnership and took responsibility for their portion of the work, they would become powerful influences for good upon their families and within the Church.

The concern over men dominating women was one concern felt by proponents of the WLM and ERA. As their efforts to do away with this type of behavior began to have greater

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<sup>14</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, “The Honored Place of Woman,” *Ensign*, November 1981, 104 (emphasis in original).

<sup>15</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 101.

influence upon the public, general Church leadership recognized and cautioned concerning the potential imbalance and danger of women dominating men. President Kimball explained, “We are sometimes shocked to see the wife take over the leadership, naming the one to pray, the place to be, the things to do.”<sup>16</sup> The key to preventing this pendulum swing was for women to understand and respect the strengths within femininity and have confidence in the role of womanhood. In this process, women would discover the innate boundaries of each divine role and be naturally propelled forward to discover their ability to respect and assist men in magnifying their divinely ordained responsibilities and privileges. Elder Packer provided women profound instruction on this topic,

It is interesting to know how man is put together—how incomplete he is. His whole physical and emotional, and for that matter, spiritual nature, is formed in such a way that it depends upon a source of encouragement and power that is found in a woman. When man has found his wife and companion, he has in a sense found the other half of himself. He will return to her again and again for that regeneration that exalts his manhood and strengthens him for the testing that life will give him.

A woman has the privilege and influence to transform a man into an able and effective LDS priesthood leader. However, for this there are two prerequisites. First, she must want to, and second, she must know how. Part of knowing how includes the genius of encouraging him in his role, without presiding over him.<sup>17</sup>

Elder Packer’s instruction implied that differences that inherently existed between men and women necessitated a great need for one another. Specifically, the strengths and differences that women possessed were sufficient that when understood, had the capacity draw out of a man his greatest potential. Elder Benson, president of the Quorum of the Twelve at that time, similarly taught, “It is not good for man to be alone, because a righteous woman complements

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<sup>16</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Home: The Place to Save Society,” *Ensign*, January 1975, 3.

<sup>17</sup> “Church Relief Society Conference,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, October 2, 1971.

what may be lacking in a man's natural personality and disposition."<sup>18</sup> Thus, a woman had great opportunity to bless the life of her husband and find deep fulfillment in her own life as she sought direction from the Lord in how to give herself to her husband.

General Church leaders taught the idea of a woman living with her priorities set on elevating her husband during a time when WLM and ERA advocates actively rejected such notions. Likewise, many LDS women struggled to understand how a presiding husband did not translate into them being the inferior wife. Of this concern President Kimball remarked, "This is often misunderstood, both by husbands and by wives. Consider it well, and do not contend nor argue with your Heavenly Father. When a man gives leadership in his home as Christ gives leadership in his church, little else can be desired."<sup>19</sup> In President Kimball's view, both roles gained respect when a husband righteously strove to love his wife like Christ loved the Church, and a woman saw the wisdom of supporting his righteous endeavors and submitted to the Lord's pattern of womanhood. This led to an opportunity for true equality to develop within the marriage.

## **Summary**

As society worked to re-define family life, the Prophet and his administration offered counsel concerning marriage—that it was a central doctrine to life on earth. Essential for LDS women to understand was how Relief Society could prepare women for marriage by strengthening their understanding of how, through their feminine traits, they were capable of elevating and supporting their husbands in their God-ordained roles. President Kimball and other Church leaders urged LDS women to strengthen their marriages by magnifying their role of womanhood to be full and contributing partners by. In spite of the world's radical opinions,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "Guidelines to Carry Forth the Work of God in Cleanliness," *Ensign*, May 1974, 4.

President Kimball's administration managed to curb the appealing lie that life was better outside of marriage and taught LDS women magnificence in their role of creating a strong marriage.



## Chapter 7: Role of Women as Mothers

On December 31, 1973, Spencer W. Kimball's first press conference as prophet concluded with a question and answer session for media representatives. When asked his view concerning the role of women, he responded, "We believe that the place of women is in the home, as a general rule. We realize that some women may need to be employed when their children are grown, or when there have been problems in their home and the breadwinner has been taken from them. The most sacred privileges that a woman could have are in the home, to be a partner with God in the creation of children."<sup>1</sup> President Kimball emphasized this was the direction he intended to take during his administration. This chapter discusses how motherhood was under attack and how President Kimball's administration reinforced the importance of a mother's influence in the home.

### Attack on Motherhood

During President Kimball's era, the subject of motherhood had become a collision point between society and the Church largely because societal messages bombarding women inferred that to spend a life focused on home and family was to have done nothing.<sup>2</sup> Feminist sentiment asserted ideas that being a full-time mother was archaic, that it caused emotional instability for both the mother and child, and that in the quest for success, children got in the way.<sup>3</sup> As WLM advocates attempted to make women "equal" to men through secular education and worldly

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<sup>1</sup> David Mitchell, "President Spencer W. Kimball Ordained Twelfth President of the Church," *Ensign*, February 1974, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara B. Smith, "Roots and Wings," Brigham Young University Speeches, Provo, Utah, February 9, 1978, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Maurine Ward, *From Adam's Rib, to Women's Lib* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1981), 91-94.

acclaim associated with career advancement, the once highly revered title of “mother” was diminished to lowly “housewife.”<sup>4</sup> Much to the concern of general Church leadership, these trends had influence on LDS women.

WLM philosophies influenced the growing trend of women leaving home for the workplace. Almost overnight, there seemed to be a concerted, mass exit of women from the home to the realms of educational and occupational pursuits. As stated in *A History of Women in the West*, “Women [at this time] sought schooling and work in record numbers, and although the educational system favored boys and many jobs were reserved for men, the effects of these changes were nevertheless considerable, . . . and witnessed a sharp increase in the percentage of married working women.”<sup>5</sup> Much of the new ideology could be traced to Betty Friedan’s book, *The Feminine Mystique*, where she insisted that women living as “trapped housewives” were forced to spend their time and energy in marriage and family, and had no choice to reach their full potential.<sup>6</sup>

In the chapter entitled “Progressive Dehumanization: The Comfortable Concentration Camp,” Freidan compared the physical and mental health and behavior of soldiers deteriorating in prison camps to that of a stagnating housewife. She insisted that the social constraints forced upon them left women incapable of reaching their full potential. Ultimately, the comparison asserted that both ‘prisoners’ lost their sense of identity; that they “no longer lived with the zest, the enjoyment, [or] the sense of purpose that is characteristic of true human health.”<sup>7</sup> Her

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<sup>4</sup> Ward, *Adam’s Rib*, 18-20.

<sup>5</sup> Georges Duby, Michelle Perrot, and Françoise Thebaud, ed. *A History of Women in the West: Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), 10, 438.

<sup>6</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1963), xvii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

analysis concluded that like prisoners of war, millions of American housewives found themselves dealing with a frightening disease that, given time, would thoroughly dehumanize society. She asserted:

It is urgent to understand how the very condition of being a housewife can create a sense of emptiness, non-existence, nothingness, in women. There are aspects of the housewife role that make it almost impossible for a woman of adult intelligence to retain a sense of human identity . . .

For women of ability, in America today, I am convinced there is something about the housewife state itself that is dangerous. In a sense that is not as far-fetched as it sounds, the women who “adjust” as housewives, who grow up wanting to be “just a housewife,” are in as much danger as the millions who walked to their own death in the concentration camps—and the millions more who refused to believe that the concentration camps existed.<sup>8</sup>

Friedan and other feminists argued motherhood was merely *one* choice amidst a plethora of other choices lying before women, and a path they should pursue *only* if it is what women chose. Friedan wrote, “The fight for equality . . . is for women to be able to affirm their own personhood, and in the fullest sense of choice, motherhood. The movement to equality and the personhood of women isn’t finished until motherhood is a fully free choice.”<sup>9</sup>

Views even more extreme existed that not only denigrated motherhood, but also directly opposed the institution of the family. Friedan said, “Many feminists insist[ed] that the family was, and is, the enemy, the prime obstacle to woman’s self-realization.”<sup>10</sup> Shulamith Firestone, a radical feminist, who deplored any division of male and female, and viewed family as the worst offender for inequality, suggested, “Feminism will only be complete when the ultimate

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 305.

<sup>9</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Second Sex* (New York: Summit Books, 1981), 87.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 95.

revolution becomes a reality—the revolt against the biological family.”<sup>11</sup> Firestone also applauded freeing women from the “tyranny of their reproductive biology by every means available, and the diffusion of the childbearing and childrearing role to the society as a whole, men as well as women.”<sup>12</sup> A frightful attack on motherhood and the family was underway.

Of necessity, President Kimball and other general Church leaders spoke more often, more clearly, and perhaps more urgently regarding the role of motherhood than any previous administration. Barbara Smith shared the prophet’s conviction of upholding the doctrine of motherhood, stating, “We are in a time when the swift changes of our social structure are thrusting enormous challenges upon us. We must remember that the work of women is important and still must be done. The spirit children of God must have the experience of mortality, and that means babies must be wanted, nurtured, loved, and cared for. The Lord has given women a primary responsibility in the establishment of good homes and well-cared-for families.”<sup>13</sup>

Amidst such moral ambivalence, general Church leaders fearlessly continued to declare the Lord’s establishment of the role women and her divine motherhood. Their intent was to clarify the Church’s support and encouragement for women to take advantage of opportunities of education and job training, but when considering options, women needed to remember that their first priority was to their families.

### **Protecting Motherhood**

Speaking to women, President Kimball shared, “This divine service of motherhood can be rendered only by mothers. It may not be passed to others. Nurses cannot do it; public

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<sup>11</sup> Ward, *Adam’s Rib*, 2-3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Barbara B. Smith, “A Season for Strength,” *Ensign*, November 1983, 84.

nurseries cannot do it. Hired help cannot do it; kind relatives cannot do it. Only by mother, aided as much as may be by a loving father, brothers and sisters, and other relatives, can the full needed measure of watchful care be given.”<sup>14</sup> As the worldly notion of motherhood seemed to be moving in an opposite direction of the Church’s doctrinal viewpoint, Church leaders focused on teaching basic doctrines regarding the sacred role of bearing and raising children.

In 1978, President Kimball confirmed the responsibility women had to bear children when he said, “It is important for you Latter-day Saint women to understand that the Lord holds motherhood and mothers sacred, and in the highest esteem. He has entrusted to his daughters the great responsibility of bearing and nurturing children. This is the great, irreplaceable work of women. Life cannot go on if women cease to bear children. Mortal life is a privilege and a necessary step in eternal progression. Mother Eve understood that. You must also understand it.”<sup>15</sup> Motherhood was fixed and eternal and of greatest consequence.

In stark contrast, the WLM placed heavy emphasis upon education and careers as *the path* for fulfillment and achievement. As previously mentioned, the WLM fostered selfishness in the name of ‘self-fulfillment’ and ‘equal opportunity,’ but actually led to greater discontentment among women, heightened impatience and dissatisfaction with home life, and decreased value in bearing and raising children. Addressing this movement of selfishness, President Kimball endeavored to instill within LDS women an understanding of character traits that empowered them as mothers. He taught, “Selflessness is a key to happiness and effectiveness; it is precious and must be preserved as a virtue which guarantees so many other virtues. There are so many things in the world which reinforce our natural selfishness, and neither our men nor women

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 101.

should be partakers thereof. We have grown strong as a people because our mothers and our women have been so selfless. That ennobling quality must not be lost, even though some of the people of the world may try to persuade otherwise.”<sup>16</sup>

Seeking to explain the social phenomenon of selfishness, Maurine Ward explained in her book *From Adam’s Rib, to Women’s Lib*, “Many feminists worry they will lose themselves, that personality will be dissipated in a mound of daily chores. They seek to have control over their lives, and believe that children will demand that they relinquish it. They do not acknowledge, apparently, the kind of growth that comes in service. It’s a philosophy, instead, centered on self.”<sup>17</sup> Ward continued, “The women’s movement is dangerous, not because it opens new doors to women, but because it slams others.”<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, society offered little honor or praise of motherhood, but conferred honor and praise towards education and work opportunities.

In 1976, the First Presidency released an official statement that encouraged women to exercise their mental capacities and talents so the world could feel of their influence, yet issued this caution: “Regardless of what women may accomplish, Latter-day Saint women know that their highest priority is within the family, that their highest calling is that of marriage partner and nurturer.”<sup>19</sup> LDS women were indeed aware of the standard and expectation the Church had regarding motherhood, yet with such varied opportunities open to them, many struggled.

As the subject of working mothers continued to be a divisive topic, particularly within the Church, general Church leaders offered their continued counsel. Near the end of her service as general Relief Society President (1974), an *Ensign* representative interviewed Belle S. Spafford.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>18</sup> Ward, *Adam’s Rib*, 105.

<sup>19</sup> Ann S. Reese, “Being a Wife,” *Ensign*, September 1984, 58.

When asked what she would share with women who were struggling with the issues of abortion, birth control, women's liberation, and working outside of the home, she answered, "Women have the guidelines from the Church that they need. The challenge is to bring women to the point where they see the wisdom of those guidelines and will be obedient to them."<sup>20</sup> Clearly, general leadership expected that Church guidelines should be used by women to protect motherhood and hoped LDS women be prayerful their decisions that influenced families.

As each woman's situation was unique, Barbara Smith provided guidance in regards to the question of working mothers and protecting motherhood. She counseled, "The decision of a mother to go to work outside her home is an individual matter. Some widowed and divorced mothers may find they have to work to support themselves and their children. For some women working is a right decision at a certain time; for others it is not. It is not a simple choice. This is an area in which a woman must be most thoughtful and prayerful . . . President Kimball has given counsel on this matter in his two talks at the women's fireside broadcasts from the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City in 1978 and 1979."<sup>21</sup> Again, the guideline was that women maintain motherhood and families as their priority.

Barbara Smith encouraged LDS women to consider opportunities offered to them, but repeatedly counseled that they use prayerful consideration and wisdom in their decisions. In 1982, she said,

Each mother will have to determine how she can bless her children. Because of the many options from which a woman might choose it becomes extremely important that she select carefully. She will need unerring sources for direction—the scriptures, the teachings of Church leaders, and personal affirmation to her prayers of supplication. . .

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<sup>20</sup> Belle S. Spafford, "Reaching Every Facet of a Woman's Life: A Conversation with Belle S. Spafford, Relief Society General President," *Ensign*, June 1974, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Barbara B. Smith, "Relief Society Today," *Ensign*, March 1980, 20.

The ideal for a family is, and always has been, to have a mother in the home to be with the children, to care for them and to help them grow, to coordinate and correlate the family's activities, and to be a stay against intrusions of unrighteousness . . . . A woman can find solutions as she recognizes the needs that only she can fill and the part that she must play in the Christ-like development of her children. As she lives close to the Spirit, that way will be made clear for her.<sup>22</sup>

As more women and mothers shifted their energies to the workplace, a new concern began to emerge; that of child care. Because the growing trend in society supported women in having an 'equal opportunity' in society, great impetus was placed on creating various forms of childcare programs. At face value, this meant that strangers were replacing a mother's care and nurturing. President Kimball gave a direct warning, first by reviewing the fact that more and more mothers were going off to work and leaving their children in the care of employed babysitters. President Kimball then gave his warning, prefacing it with a letter written by an employed babysitter to a mother who voluntarily chose to leave her children as she went to work. It read as follows,

Dear Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_,

While you work outside your home, I have been caring for your two small children. They are sweet, but rather trying at times, displaying the same jealousies and hostilities found in most siblings.

I am well paid, but this is just a job with me, and I cannot give your children the same affection I gave my own children when they were small. I am hired help—not their mother.

Your children resent the fact that you leave them all day. They seem to sense that you are gone from them because you want to be, not because you have to be. It is obvious that your husband has provided you with all the material things your heart desires, but you prefer to 'work' because your 'job' offers more excitement than your role as a mother.

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<sup>22</sup> Barbara B. Smith, "Her Children Arise Up, and Call Her Blessed," *Ensign*, May 1982, 79.



One day you may become bored with the ‘business world’ and decide to return home and raise your children. And if you do, I hope it won’t be too late.

(signed)  
Substitute Mother<sup>23</sup>

The prophet used this letter to warn of the crucial need for women to evaluate carefully the choices they made in regards to the care and upbringing of their children. Likewise, it strongly encouraged women to think through the long term consequences of their decisions, because ultimately, time with their children was short. Four years later, President Kimball spoke on this same topic. He warned, “Some women, because of circumstances beyond their control, must work. We understand that. We understand further that as families are raised, the talents God has given you and blessed you with can often be put to effective use in additional service to mankind. Do not, however, make the mistake of being drawn off into secondary tasks which will cause the neglect of your eternal assignments such as giving birth to and rearing the spirit children of our Father in Heaven. Pray carefully over all your decisions.”<sup>24</sup> Being a mother was not the only way to raise children, but it was the way that LDS women could protect motherhood as a normal institution. It was their way of voting on how society should be. It was their example of protecting motherhood and nurturing their families.

Desiring to emphasize the crucial role women played in rearing children, Elder Benson supported President Kimball by stating, “It is a fundamental truth that the responsibilities of motherhood cannot be successfully delegated. No, not to day-care centers, not to schools, not to nurseries, not to babysitters. We become enamored with men’s theories such as the idea of

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<sup>23</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Home: The Place to Save Society,” *Ensign*, January 1975, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, November 1979, 102 (emphasis added).

preschool training outside the home for young children. Not only does this put added pressure on the budget, but it places young children in an environment away from mother's influence."<sup>25</sup>

Making the point that home was where women have the opportunity to teach children honesty, self-control, life skills, education, and work, Elder Benson added, "Now can you see why Satan wants to destroy the home through having the mother leave the care of her children to others? And he is succeeding in too many homes."<sup>26</sup> As a thirst for recognition and success in spheres other than family intensified, society placed less value on the importance of a mother training and teaching her children. More and more frequently, childcare shifted to public entities.

In seeking to protect motherhood, President Kimball was greatly concerned over the onslaught of evils that directly attacked the mother and the family as a whole—the evils within society such as divorce, abuse, and broken families. He said, "Such evils are very real and very threatening. . . Perhaps I sound like an alarmist. If so, it is because I *am* alarmed. I am greatly concerned, and so are my Brethren in the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles and others of the General Authorities."<sup>27</sup> Church leaders viewed these changing conditions as a breach of family security and continued to urge women to understand their crucial responsibility of being a defender of the home.

### **Reaffirming Motherhood**

President Kimball's administration reinforced the joy and fulfillment found in motherhood. They also sought to help LDS women maintain dedication to their role of motherhood by focusing on the long-term benefits children received by having their mother in

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<sup>25</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, "The Honored Place of Woman," *Ensign*, November 1981, 104.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "Fortify Your Homes Against Evil," *Ensign*, May 1979, 4 (emphasis in original).

the home. Honoring a woman's position as mother, President Kimball affirmed, "No greater honor could be given to a woman than to assist in this divine plan. I wish to say without equivocation that a woman will find no greater satisfaction and joy and peace and make no greater contribution to mankind than in being a wise and worthy woman and raising good children."<sup>28</sup>

Using mother Eve as an example of seeing joy in mothering, President Kimball shared with women in 1976 that even though Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit she had rejoiced and was happy because she recognized she now could bear and raise children. "So our beloved mother Eve began the human race with gladness, wanting children, glad for the joy that they would bring to her, willing to assume the problems connected with a family, but also the joys," President Kimball said.<sup>29</sup> Keeping the perspective of joy and gladness in the idea of having children greatly contrasted the doom-and-gloom sentiment feminists insinuated towards the idea of child raising.

General Church leadership taught that fulfillment in this world was more than receiving outward recognitions and immediate praise for well-completed tasks. The day in and day out dedication to service and love a woman offered children and family carried a depth of fulfillment other pursuits would have difficulty replicating. Similarly, general Church leaders taught that a mother who dedicated time and energies to her children, offered protection to the family and society.

Calling upon women to accept their position as a defender of the home, President Kimball maintained, "[Woman] has been placed here to help to enrich, to protect, and to guard

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<sup>28</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "Sisters, Seek Everything That Is Good," *Ensign*, March 1979, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood," *Ensign*, March 1976, 70.

the home—which is society’s basic and most noble institution. Other institutions in society may falter and even fail, but the righteous woman can help to save the home, which may be the last and only sanctuary some mortals know in the midst of storm and strife.”<sup>30</sup> If individual families failed, societies failed, and thus the world as a whole suffered. Women who understood their role in the family were capable of defending motherhood and family.

In 1979, using the words of President N. Eldon Tanner, President Kimball spoke of how a mother was so influential. He said, “The applause and homage of the world fades into insignificance when compared with the approbation of God and the expressions of love and appreciation which come from the hearts and lips of those who are nearest and dearest. A mother has far greater influence on her children than anyone else, and she must realize that every word she speaks, every act, every response, her attitude, even her appearance and manner of dress has an effect on the young people who grow up under her watch care.”<sup>31</sup> If women focused on developing their feminine character and channeled their energies into motherhood, the potential effect upon their families would be the most ideal.

In 1978, Elder Maxwell explained the potential influence upon children from dedicated mothering. With praise, he offered, “We salute you, sisters, for the joy that is yours as you rejoice in a baby’s first smile and as you listen with eager ear to a child’s first day at school which bespeaks a special selflessness. Women, more quickly than others, will understand the possible dangers when the word *self* is militantly placed before other words like *fulfillment*. You rock a sobbing child without wondering if today’s world is passing you by, because you know

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<sup>30</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters,” *Ensign*, November 1978, 101.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

you hold tomorrow tightly in your arms.”<sup>32</sup> Assuredly, this type of fulfillment was something the world’s definition could never imitate or create. Likewise, this type of nurture and attention from a mother to growing children had unmeasured benefits, very different from being in a Nazi concentration camp.

A model of enthusiasm for motherhood was found in the wife of President Kimball—Camilla. In the March 1977 *Ensign*, she explained her perspective of effective mothering. She said,

First and foremost, a woman must learn to do intelligent mothering. This is more than highly emotionalized mothering, which showers love and affection upon the child and which might lead her to uphold him in wrongdoing. She must realize that the child’s future, to a large extent, is measured in the mother’s ability to influence and direct him wisely.

In the home must be taught faith, self-control, honesty, and loyalty. The gospel of work must be a part of the child’s training. There must be provided the environment for the development of the child physically, morally, emotionally, and spiritually. We should constantly hold up the child to his very best efforts . . . In the home in which there is an intelligent and spiritually strong mother dwells the greatest single influence on the spiritual and moral strength of the family nurtured there.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to WLM sentiment and Friedan’s assertions that mothering was brainless and dehumanizing, Camilla Kimball described motherhood as an active and creative pursuit. Women who strengthened and improved themselves not only found personal fulfillment, but also had lasting influence on their children. While well-rounded development was encouraged, perhaps the most essential influence general Church leaders felt a woman had on her children was spiritual development. Elder Benson prophetically proclaimed, “Since the beginning, a woman’s

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<sup>32</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, “The Women of God,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Camilla Kimball, “A Woman’s Preparation,” *Ensign*, March 1977, 58.

first and most important role has been ushering into mortality spirit sons and daughters of our Father in Heaven. Since the beginning, her role has been to teach her children eternal gospel principles. She is to provide for her children a haven of security and love—regardless of how modest her circumstances might be.”<sup>34</sup> The Kimball administration repeatedly reaffirmed the sanctity and honor of motherhood.

While general Church leaders understood exceptions existed for women with unique circumstances, the standard they reaffirmed and reiterated was clear—the most important work a woman would do was within her home. Elder Benson concluded, “In the beginning, Adam was instructed to earn the bread by the sweat of his brow—not Eve. Contrary to conventional wisdom, *a mother’s place is in the home!*”<sup>35</sup> Assisting women to recognize the blessing and privilege of this statement, President Kimball affirmed, “Mothers have a sacred role. They are partners with God, as well as with their own husbands, first in giving birth to the Lord’s spirit children and then in rearing those children so they will serve the Lord and keep his commandments. Could there be a more sacred trust than to be a trustee for honorable, well-born, well-developed children?”<sup>36</sup>

The role Relief Society endeavored to play in the lives of women was to guide each to understand the spiritual strength they possessed to generate power for good within their homes. General Church leaders encouraged women to magnify their abilities to create feelings of love, security, peace, belonging, and goodness within their homes. Elder Benson promised LDS women that as they strived to maintain this type of home life and kept close to Relief Society,

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<sup>34</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, “The Honored Place of Woman,” *Ensign*, November 1981, 104.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, (emphasis in original).

<sup>36</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood,” *Ensign*, March 1976, 70.

many of the problems within society that were affecting both youth and parents would pass them by.<sup>37</sup>

Acknowledging Relief Society's ultimate responsibility, Elder Benson quoted President Kimball, posing these questions, "Relief Society leaders and teachers should ask, how can we help the wife and mother understand the dignity and worth of her role in the divine process of motherhood? How can we help her make her home a place of love and learning, a place of refuge and refinement?"<sup>38</sup> In answer to these questions, the repeated messages taught by President Kimball and other Church leaders of the time focused on diligently reminding women that their eternal role as designated by the Lord was to desire the blessings associated with motherhood.

### **Summary**

With greater urgency and repetition than heard in previous general conferences, general Church leaders offered caution to worldly ideology associated with womanhood. They accentuated the doctrines, blessings, and the influence mothers had upon their children. More than ever before, women were hearing messages through President Kimball, general priesthood leaders, and the general Relief Society presidency directed specifically to women about their crucial role in strengthening and defending the family.

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<sup>37</sup> Ezra Taft Benson, "The Honored Place of Woman," *Ensign*, November 1981, 104.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion**

The support given to Relief Society during President Kimball's administration was vital in preserving the traditional roles of women and their influence upon families. The purpose of this thesis is to show, first, that President Kimball's administration viewed Relief Society as a means for strengthening women's commitment to family, and second, that the counsel and guidance President Kimball's administration offered Relief Society women increased the capacity for cooperative efforts between men and women in strengthening families and the Church.

### **Overview**

During President Kimball's administration, the Women's Liberation Movement created controversy within society over women's roles. General Church leaders recognized that the new philosophies caused many LDS women to question the significance and value of traditionally defined roles for women. In response, President Kimball, Barbara Smith, and other general Church leaders worked to ensure that Relief Society offered a place of refuge for LDS women through its leadership and programs.

As society clamored to redefine the traditional roles of womanhood, President Kimball's administration encouraged LDS women to participate in Relief Society and worked to instill within women a conviction of their divine roles associated with womanhood, marriage, and motherhood. General Church leaders also focused on strengthening LDS women by modifying Church procedures and reinforcing programs such as homemaking, visiting teaching, and compassionate service. Through these methods, general Church leaders supported LDS women in their roles by providing opportunities for them to improve skills to nurture their families, teach



one another doctrines of the gospel, and care for the temporal needs of other women and families.

President Kimball observed a need for LDS women to become more scripturally educated. Through Relief Society, he encouraged women to improve their programs of scripture study to enable their doctrinal development to be “parallel to the men.”<sup>1</sup> His push for greater doctrinal understanding carried over into the development of curriculum, as the scriptures became the chief resource for Relief Society education. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell observed, “for too long in the Church, the men have been the theologians while the women have been the Christians.”<sup>2</sup> With greater confidence in understanding the scriptures, women could become more effective as teachers and leaders at home and Church.

In light of the society’s barrage of criticism against the institution of marriage, President Kimball firmly declared that the doctrine of marriage was ordained of God. He invited women to see past society’s definition of equality by encouraging them to recognize how the strengths and gifts associated with femininity and masculinity were complimentary. General Church leaders taught women of their potential to elevate both themselves and their husbands by drawing upon and applying their feminine virtues. The effect Church leaders appeared to anticipate was for women to be confident in their femininity and to assert themselves as leaders, while simultaneously respecting their husband’s role to preside. This type of understanding and behavior in LDS women could create strong marriage relationships and empower husbands and wives in their eternal roles.

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<sup>1</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, “The Role of Righteous Women,” *Ensign*, November 1979, 102.

<sup>2</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, *See Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1977), 127.

As advocates of the WLM worked to undermine the family, President Kimball and Barbara Smith recognized that through Relief Society, a woman could find support for her role as a mother. LDS women were encouraged to protect motherhood by recognizing it as a privilege to bear and nurture children. Church leaders emphasized that to the extent women focused on the joy and fulfillment motherhood offered them, the more likely they were to fulfill their roles in the home. General Church leaders expected that as women magnified their roles as mothers, both father and mother would be empowered to work cooperatively in their divinely ordained roles.

For the Church to operate effectively, President Kimball and other Church leaders encouraged women to recognize Relief Society as a duty equal to men's duty in the priesthood. Efforts to correct or adjust Church procedures enabled women to have greater influence through their gospel teaching and participation in Church councils and the welfare program. As respect for womanhood increased, both men and women could cooperatively work together with one purpose in mind—strengthening families.

### **Summary of Contributions**

The roles of women continue to be an important discussion within society and the LDS Church. In 2010, President Julie B. Beck directed LDS women to strengthen their understanding of their roles by inviting them to study the history of Relief Society. In connection with this invitation, the First Presidency published *Daughters in My Kingdom* as a way of summarizing the influence of women and Relief Society upon families and the Church. While not comprehensive, this thesis becomes another resource on the history of Relief Society that provides LDS men and women perspective on how the Lord fortified Church members for challenges, both then and now, through inspired counsel and direction from the prophet.

The content of this thesis can enhance how contemporary LDS men and women perceive the importance of Relief Society. Individuals who lived during President Kimball's administration can draw upon their own experiences and hindsight to recognize that the decisions or emphases implemented during President Kimball's administration prepared the Church for the challenges now at hand. For LDS men and women born after President Kimball's administration—particularly those unfamiliar with the Women's Liberation Movement—this thesis has the potential to enhance their vision and appreciation of Relief Society by understanding the effect the Women's Liberation Movement had upon society. This thesis also contributes to LDS men and women as it expands on the idea of how cooperative leadership between Relief Society and priesthood assists the Church in strengthening families and the Church.

### **Future Research**

This thesis provides a beginning for understanding how President Kimball's administration influenced LDS women and Relief Society. The intent of this thesis was to show that President Kimball's administration was unique in its focus on LDS women and Relief Society. While many changes and emphases during President Kimball's administration provided LDS women greater opportunities and respect within the Church, the conclusions were drawn from research limited to *Ensign* articles from 1973-1985. Many other areas of research await exploration that could strengthen and expand our understanding how general Church leaders reinforced Relief Society to protect LDS women.

One important area of research to show the increased emphasis on Relief Society and roles of women would be an analysis of the general conference archives prior to 1973. Examples of questions worth exploring are as follows: Prior to 1973, what challenges did LDS women

face? How often did Church leaders speak of the roles women played in mothering and in marriage? What venues did general authorities most often direct their talks to women?

Another area to explore is the structure and use of Relief Society. Who participated in Relief Society? What objectives did Relief Society leaders emphasize? What areas did Relief Society women give greater focus and energy? How did Church leaders encourage and motivate women to read and understand the scriptures? What changes occurred in Relief Society programs and curriculum? A systematic study that focused on segments of Church history could reveal much about how Church leadership used Relief Society to strengthen LDS women.

To strengthen conclusions drawn in this thesis, it may be worthwhile to expand the research into meeting minutes, diaries, letters, and other correspondence from general Church leaders during President Kimball's administration. Interviews with LDS men and women who served on general boards or in other general positions during President Kimball's administration, could offer unique insights and perspectives to deepen and expand the conclusions drawn in this thesis. Likewise, interviews with LDS women who are old enough to remember President Kimball's administration might offer perspective on President Kimball's efforts influenced women at the general membership level.

While it is possible that many of the changes and emphases regarding women resulted from President Kimball being prophet at the right time, a study of his background could reveal unique preparation for his leadership. A study of President Kimball's childhood, family life, occupation, education, and marriage may provide further insights into how he viewed the role of a woman and the importance of Relief Society.

The purpose of this thesis was to show that President Kimball possessed a vision for how Relief Society would influence families and the Church, particularly during the last days. Some

additional questions include: What is happening now because of what President Kimball's administration did? Have women improved in their doctrinal understanding of the scriptures? Have women further defended the family because of their increased doctrinal knowledge? How has cooperative leadership between men and women improved within Church councils and the welfare program? How have the challenges of President Kimball's time shifted into contemporary society? Are men and women catching the vision of Relief Society and its role within Church leadership? How did the discussions and challenges of President Kimball's administration prepare President Hinckley's administration to produce *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*?

Additionally, further research could explore how men have coped with the change in women's roles, within both society and the Church. This study could look at how the trend of women moving into the workforce has influenced the dynamics between men and women in the home and Church. Research could include a look at how Church leaders have reinforced the roles of men in a time when women are more aggressive and assertive in leadership positions. In addition, a look at how the challenges associated with President Kimball's time has influenced the preparation of future generations could provide great insights for LDS men and women to build upon. Further research on the themes and direction given by both previous and subsequent general Church leaders could reveal how President Kimball's administration laid the groundwork for increasing the influence of women within the Church.

## **Conclusion**

The influence of the Women's Liberation Movement played a large part in shaping the changes and emphases during President Kimball's administration. This thesis shows that President Kimball reinforced Relief Society and basic Church doctrines such as womanhood,

marriage, and motherhood as he recognized the danger of new philosophies threatening the safety of families.

As identified in conference talks and *Ensign* articles from 1973-1985, one way President Kimball determined to fortify families was by strengthening women through Relief Society. General Church leaders emphasized that participation in Relief Society was not only a privilege for LDS women, but also a duty. Explaining to women that they had a duty to serve God heightened the importance of women's work within Relief Society. As women focused on service, maintaining programs of personal development, and coming to a spiritual understanding of their eternal roles, Relief Society women could develop strong characters and become temporally and spiritually self-reliant. President Kimball believed that through participation in Relief Society, women could gain greater confidence in their femininity and testimony. General Church leaders anticipated that women who understood their femininity, were doctrinally confident, and understood their role as a woman, would naturally set their family as a priority.

As outlined in this thesis, President Kimball's vision for Relief Society included women possessing conviction of their roles as wives and mothers. With this sureness, women's ability to be 'full and contributing partners' within their homes would increase and then carry over into leadership positions within the Church. Furthermore, the procedural changes and emphases made by President Kimball helped LDS women have greater influence in Church councils, more involvement in welfare assistance, and increased abilities in leadership. Ultimately, the direction President Kimball seemed to recognize was that women who felt empowered, respected, and listened to were more likely to contribute

Both men and women need to view womanhood as a source of power and influence for good that is essential for the Lord's work to progress. This thesis provides understanding of how

the Lord directed his prophet to use Relief Society as a method of increasing women's abilities to magnify their eternal roles of womanhood. President Kimball's insistence on helping men and women catch the vision Relief Society would play in the latter-days provides vital direction for LDS men and women in preparation for the coming of the Lord. As the continuing attack upon families and marriages intensifies, President Kimball's vision of using Relief Society to help deepen women's conviction regarding their roles as women, wives, and mothers can continue to guide women in effectively strengthening their families and building the kingdom of God.

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