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**Women's Roles, the "Deseret News" and LDS Women in Utah:
1852-1870**

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WOMEN'S ROLES
THE DESERET NEWS AND LDS WOMEN IN UTAH:
1852-1870

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of History

and the Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Kami Wilson

April 2001

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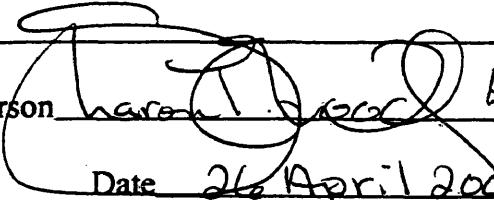
THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,
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requirements for the degree Master of Arts,
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Committee

Mary Ann Lemenko, Sociology /

Jerald Simons, History / Anthropology

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WOMEN'S ROLES
THE DESERET NEWS AND LDS WOMEN IN UTAH
1852-1870

Kami Wilson, MA

University of Nebraska, 2001

The first two decades of settlement of the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Utah Territory stood as years of adjustment in terms of women's roles. A territory that outwardly opposed women's rights in 1852 became the second in the country to adopt women's suffrage in 1870. The *Deseret News*, the first newspaper printed in the newly organized Territory of Utah, reflected the interest and change in women's roles throughout the rest of the country. It sought to channel these ideas so that they both benefitted the community and coincided with Church doctrine.

The *News* abounded with prescriptive literature targeted at women during the period under study. Categorized into three broad, inter-related categories, the *News* urged women to further the financial well-being of the territory by employing habits of industry and economy in activities both in and out of the home. Second, the *News* strongly counselled women to uphold their domestic roles of mother, wife, and homemaker and to shun superficial, less significant roles. Finally, the *News* addressed the woman question prevalent in the rest of the country as it pertained to Utah. To Latter-day Saint women who professed and practiced the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ, counsel from Church leaders, such as that contained in the *News*, comprised an important body of literature that influenced their lives.

A study of the literature in the *News* suggests that although significant changes occurred between 1852 and 1870 (most notably the granting of women's suffrage), the core, basic perceptions of women's roles remained constant throughout the period.

Unceasingly, the *News* reiterated the importance of the roles of mother, wife, and homemaker to the temporal and spiritual well-being of the territory.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

In January of 1852, a poem written by prominent Latter-day Saint Eliza R. Snow hailed the dawning of a new year in Utah Territory. Published in the first issue of the *Deseret News* that year, the poem had wide readership among the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints dwelling in Utah since the *News* served as the major newspaper at the time.¹ The poem “1852,” one of Snow’s many pieces published in the *News*, pointedly expressed Snow’s views about woman’s sphere and her role in society. As a stalwart Latter-day Saint with close ties to LDS leadership (including marriage to both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young), Eliza R. Snow’s views coincided with those of LDS leaders.

Snow clearly wrote the poem in response to waves of discontent concerning prescribed roles for women brewing in other parts of the United States. This concern about woman’s sphere worked its way westward, eventually reaching the secluded Great Basin, gathering place of the Saints. Approximately four years before the publication of Snow’s poem, women’s rights activists held a significant meeting in Seneca Falls, New York. At this convention and other women’s rights conventions that followed, women (and a few men) voiced their frustration with women’s lot and put their thoughts to paper. Women’s rights advocates claimed that women currently occupied a subservient position in society because of the inappropriate actions of men. They believed that women could be rescued from this low status with the granting of certain rights. Women’s advocates called for equal access to education, employment, professions, and especially the franchise.

¹The official name of the “Mormon” Church is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Eliza R. Snow took eastern activists sharply to task. Her response to reform movements is simple. Reform will occur according to God's will. Of the slavery issue she asserted, "In His own time--by His Own means, not ours that curse will be remov'd." She gives a similar response to the woman question. "And woman, too, aspires for something, and She knows not what, which, if attain'd, would prove Her very wishes not to be her wish." Women, she explained, have a place set for them by God. "Sun, moon, and stars, and vagrant comets too," may just as well try to reassign themselves roles. The laws that govern the galaxy, Snow asserted, are as fixed as the divine laws which prescribe woman's place.

Snow explained that woman occupies a subservient sphere because of Eve's transgression in the Garden of Eden. This common interpretation of the Creation story of Genesis has found application in many religions.² According to Snow, "she led in the transgression, and was plac'd, By Eloheim's unchangeable decree, In a subservient and dependent sphere." However, Snow assured, "if virtuous, faithful, and submissive there [in her sphere], She's lovely, loving, and she is belov'd." Somehow this assurance would probably not have assuaged women's rights advocates.

Then Snow makes what can be interpreted to be an allowance for change of woman's sphere if certain conditions exist. She asks, "can ships at sea be guided without helm, boats without oars, steam-engines without steam, . . .? . . . Just as well as men reform and regulate society without the Holy Priesthood's power." The eastern men and women agitating for change, she implied, "have not the right" to "describe The heavenly

²Jolene Edmunds Rockwood discusses the issue of Eve's transgression and its implications for Mormon women in "The Redemption of Eve" in Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 3-36.

order.” Utah, however, does house those with that right. “Here are men, Cloth’d with the everlasting Priesthood. . . authoriz’d . . . to restore again A perfect form of government to earth.”

Snow did not explore the possibility of attaining women’s rights with priesthood power. Judging from the flavor of the poem, she did not think the question needed exploring. The excellent nature of LDS men, she believed, precluded any need for further rights for Utah women. “If elsewhere men are so degenerate That women dare compete with them, and stand In bold comparison, . . . Let those fair champions of ‘female rights,’ female conventionists, come here.” In Utah, Snow adulated, live men “whom woman may be proud t’acknowledge for Her own superior, and feel no need Of female Congressmen.”

Snow concluded her poem with an invitation and challenge:

“‘Knowledge is power,’ Ye Saints of Latter-day,
 You hold the keys of knowledge. ‘Tis for you
 To act the most conspicuous and the most
 Important part connected with the scenes
 Of this New Year, in planting on the earth
 The principles of Justice, Equity--
 Of righteousness and everlasting peace.”³

Whether the justice and equity to which Snow referred included equal rights for women, she did not say. Snow’s poem, however, clearly declared that woman’s rights did not have a welcome place in Utah.

Less than two decades later, however, in the same secluded valley, the same prominent LDS woman uttered a statement that seemed to contrast sharply with the

³Deseret News, 10 January 1852. All Deseret News entries will hereinafter be designated as “DN.” This quote and all following quotes are printed as they appeared in the original documents, without adjustments to spelling or punctuation.

views expressed in “1852.” In January of 1870 in response to the impending passage of the Cullom Bill which threatened to disband polygamy, women throughout Utah held “mass indignation meetings” to protest. Several days later, women throughout Salt Lake City met to discuss the bill and the events and responsibilities surrounding it. Eliza R. Snow presided over the meeting. The women voiced their feelings about their newly acquired right to vote and women’s rights in general. Prominent LDS woman Sarah M. Kimball made one of the strongest statements. She said, “she had waited patiently a long time, and now that we were granted the right of suffrage, she would openly declare herself a woman’s rights woman.” Upon asking others to support her statement, many women reportedly gave their approval. Prescindia Kimball expressed, “I am glad to see our daughters elevated with man, and the time come when our votes will assist our leaders, and redeem ourselves.” M. T. Smoot admitted that “I have never had any desire for more rights than I have. I have considered politics aside from the sphere of woman; but as things progress, I feel it is right that we should vote.” Wilmarth East expressed her disagreement with Sister Smoot. She felt that women had always been deprived of privileges. “I always wanted a voice in the politics of the nation, as well as to rear a family.”⁴

Although women expressed delight and gratitude at receiving the franchise, caution ran throughout their remarks. Many warned that they should not move too fast. Phoebe Woodruff said, “Now that God has moved upon our brethren to grant us the right of female suffrage, let us lay it by, and wait till the time comes to use it, and not run headlong and abuse the privilege.” Many acknowledged the requirement that they be humble. Several suggested they move with wisdom, hearkening back to Snow’s ending

⁴Edward W. Tullidge, The Women of Mormondon (New York: 1877), 500-506.

challenge in her poem. Bathsheba W. Smith said that “in view of the greater responsibilities” which the women held, she never “felt so much the necessity of wisdom and light.” The meeting closed with President Snow commissioning Bathsheba Smith to go on a mission throughout Utah Territory. She was instructed to preach retrenchment (a reduction of excess in all areas of life, including dress), “and woman’s rights, if she wished.”⁵

Although in his commentary of this meeting contemporary historian Edward W. Tullidge insisted that the meeting was not a woman’s suffrage meeting, the gathering definitely reflected the nervous, anticipatory excitement of these women who had just been given a great privilege and responsibility. Snow’s feelings, the Church of Jesus Christ’s stand, and the views of the LDS women stood in stark contrast to the anti-woman’s rights flavor of “1852.” A significant shift in thought had occurred in Utah territory in the space of eighteen years.

A knowledge of LDS doctrine is necessary for appreciating the history of Utah Territory and for understanding the beliefs of Snow and other Latter-day Saint women. Basic to LDS doctrine is the concept of Priesthood. Latter-day Saints believe that the Holy Priesthood, the authority to act in God’s place, constitutes the process by which God is able to organize and administrate His earthly kingdom. In LDS practice, only men are ordained to offices in the priesthood, although women partake of priesthood blessings, and even administer in priesthood ordinances on a very limited basis.⁶ Members of the

⁵Tullidge, 500-506.

⁶Women participate in the administration of priesthood ordinances in LDS temples. LDS women’s historians have noted women’s practice of washing and anointing for healing and comfort sanctioned by Joseph Smith in the early days of the Church as a time when women came closest to functioning in priesthood ordinances similar to men. After Joseph Smith’s death and especially after the turn of the century women were discouraged and then expressly forbidden from such practices. Other than this example,

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe that not long after the death of Jesus Christ and the establishment of his true Church in Palestine, the priesthood was taken from the earth because of the unrighteousness of the people. Centuries later, following a period of spiritual preparation manifested by the Protestant reformation and the spiritual enlightenment that followed, the time was right for God to restore his priesthood to the earth again. In upstate New York during the Second Great Awakening, fourteen-year-old Joseph Smith, Jr., confused as to which of the various churches in his community he should join, prayed for help. In answer, Latter-day Saints believe that God the Father and his son Jesus Christ appeared to the boy in a grove of trees near his home. After several years of spiritual preparation and repeated heavenly visitations, Joseph Smith received the gold plates which contained a record of God's dealings with people in the Americas between the years 600 BC and 400 AD. Through divine help Smith translated these plates into the Book of Mormon. Smith and a close friend, Oliver Cowdrey, also received the Priesthood via heavenly messengers and shortly thereafter, on April 6, 1830, Smith and others, including women, formed what they believed to be God's true Church. Those individuals who employed faithful obedience to God's commands and repentance through the atonement of Jesus Christ could live eternally in the presence of God and, indeed, become gods themselves.

Latter-day Saints believe in the concept of continuing revelation through living prophets. After Joseph Smith's death in 1844 Brigham Young became president and prophet of the Church.⁷ Other prophets succeeded in like fashion. All members of the

women's activities in association with priesthood ordinances have remained constant throughout Church history. See Linda King Newell, "A Gift Given, A Gift Taken: Washing, Anointing, and Blessing the Sick Among Mormon Women, A Mormon Historian Traces Changes in the Practice," *Sunstone* 6 (Sep/Oct 1981): 16-25.

⁷Following the death of Joseph Smith in mid-1844, responsibilities of the Church,

First Presidency (which consists of the president of the Church and his counselors) and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles are believed to be prophets. Thus, to professing Latter-day Saint women, counsel from such men constituted not simply suggestions but, indeed, commandments from God. This fact illuminates why women of Utah, including Eliza R. Snow took LDS leaders' counsel so seriously and strove to live in accordance with it.

Who is this woman whose ideas mattered so greatly in the LDS community? By the time Eliza R. Snow became acquainted with Latter-day Saints, the Church had moved from its point of origin in western New York to northeastern Ohio. There in April 1835 Snow was baptized. She and her family moved with the Church as mobs drove them from Ohio to Missouri and then to Nauvoo, Illinois. In Nauvoo Snow became experienced, knowledgeable, and well-known through her extensive poetry, by serving as secretary to the Female Relief Society, by becoming a plural wife of Joseph Smith and later Brigham Young, and by officiating in the ordinances of the Nauvoo Temple. Though married to two prophets of a Church that consistently extolled motherhood, for unknown reasons Snow did not bear children during her lifetime.

Eliza Snow traveled with the Saints to Winter Quarters, Nebraska, and finally to the Great Basin. In Utah she published extensively in the *Deseret News*, and in the late 1860s began organizing Relief Societies throughout Utah. She served as general president of the Relief Society, continued to officiate in temple ordinances, and held the designations of "Priestess," "Presidentess," "Zion's Poetess," and "Head of the Female Portion of the Human Race." She exerted great influence among the women of Utah.

according to revelation, transferred immediately to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, with Brigham Young as president of that group. He was not formally sustained as President of the Church until December 1847. (Church Educational System, Church History in the Fulness of Times, 295, 335.)

Finally nestled at the base of the Wasatch Mountains, the Church of Jesus Christ sought to enjoy peace and prosperity. In 1850 Utah Territory was formed with approximately 8,000 people residing in the Salt Lake Valley.⁸ During the summer of that same year the first newspaper of the area, the *Deseret News* began publication. Serving as one of the main mediums for communication from Church leaders to the people of Utah Territory and beyond, the *News* encouraged all things necessary for the successful building of the Kingdom of God. Church leaders aimed at controlling not only the economic and political climate, but the moral climate as well. Interestingly, during the two decades covered in this study, the *News* abounded with articles targeted at women. This fact alone establishes the reality that Church leaders saw women's role in Utah Territory as vital. The subject matter of the articles underscores this fact, revealing leaders who desperately wanted and needed women's support in the economical and spiritual well-being of the community. As one of its primary objectives, the *Deseret News* sought to channel the practices and changing ideas about women.

The *Deseret News* during the 1850s and 1860s portrays a time of questioning and adjusting of the concept of woman's sphere. Indeed the expectations of women's roles in society underwent shifts and evolutions throughout the nineteenth century. The pious, soft-tempered guardian of the domestic hearth of the first half of the century became the active, often progressive social reformer of the early Progressive era. Those women living mid-century met with a barrage of advice and opinions from those who either

⁸See Leonard J. Arrington, Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 66. By 1852 the population of members of the Church in the Great Basin reached 20,000 (*Ibid.*, 97). By near the end of the period under study Utah population reached 80,000 (*Ibid.*, 206). President Millard Fillmore signed the bill creating Utah Territory on 9 September 1850. Because of delays in communication, a territorial government was not in place until February of the next year. See Church Educational System, 353-4.

welcomed or decried the changing of women's roles. LDS women, especially, living in a society that sought to mold its followers, received heavy counsel as to how to personally receive women's changing role.

Publications, lecturers, and religious leaders of the early nineteenth century promoted the concept of woman's sphere. With the rapid industrialization and urbanization occurring in America, the middle-class home assumed a distinct role as a haven from the competitive, secular, sinful world. Authors of prescriptive literature expected women to occupy the vital role of guardians of the domestic hearth. Seen as more pious, pure, and sweet-tempered than their male counterparts, early nineteenth-century literature expected women to use their influence to positively affect their families. The later nineteenth century woman held much the same responsibility. Throughout the century, the importance of the home and woman's place in it remained a common theme. However, as the century progressed, woman's sphere expanded, causing several differences between the women at each end of the century.

First, early in the century, women were expected to devote themselves entirely to homelife, whereas as time progressed, women often saw the world and the larger society as an expanded home that needed their influence and pious values. Thus, a woman of the late nineteenth century was much more likely to be involved in activities outside the home. Second, education and occupational opportunities increased dramatically for women throughout the century. Third, women's time became freer as family size shrunk and children were increasingly likely to be away at school for longer periods.

The increased opportunities and positive gains for middle class women did not come without concern, however. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century America struggled with "the woman question." Thoughtful individuals worried about the adverse effect an expanded woman's sphere would have on home and family life.

Archaic thoughts on woman's health, furthermore, warned that excessive amounts of study and strenuous mental exercise would be damaging to the health of the fairer sex. Thus some authors of prescriptive literature questioned the wisdom of educating women beyond domestic and ornamental fields.⁹

The prescriptive literature that abounded in the *News* certainly indicates Utah's concern over the shifting of female roles and other female-related topics. The fact that many of the articles, especially those in the first part of the period, came from exchanges from other papers, further portrays editors and citizens in the rest of the country sharing the same concerns. Despite Utah's claim to and desire for isolation from the rest of the United States, the *Deseret News* stands as an example of a setting in which Utah shared an ongoing dialogue with the broader society. The articles read and copied by *News* editors funneled eastern ideas into the Great Basin. Presumably, Utah editors then carefully picked and chose between these as to which would be most appropriate for inclusion in the *News*. The articles in the *News* during the period portray a people aware of events in the rest of the country, including activities of woman's rights activists. Obviously, the ongoing flow of immigrants from other sections of the United States as well as from Europe transmitted ideas as well. Perhaps because they realized Utah women could not stay completely isolated from polluting ideas, Utah leaders felt the necessity of addressing outside viewpoints and clearly specifying either their approval or disapproval of such.

The counsel women received from their leaders, including that in the *Deseret News*, constituted a body of doctrine toward which women tried, succeeded, or failed to mold their lives. This "divine" prescriptive literature also stood as a measuring stick

⁹Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), chapters 6, 8, 10, and 12.

against which women could personally gauge their level of righteousness in the kingdom. For historians, then, the importance of the literature lies in an understanding of the pressures, motivations, and expectations under which professing Latter-day Saint women functioned on a daily basis, regardless of the preciseness to which they adhered to the counsel. Women's writings during this period, with certainly some exceptions, portray individuals who generally strove to live according to Church counsel and who willingly, yet humbly, and in some cases tentatively, accepted new opportunities to function outside the home.

As evidenced by the vast number of articles addressing these concerns in the *Deseret News*, LDS leaders felt strongly about women's issues. A study of the female-targeted prescriptive literature that flows from the *News* shows that certain issues, especially, caused great concern among LDS leaders. These can be categorized into three main groups that heavily overlap and intertwine. First, leaders sought women's support in the financial well-being of the community by encouraging women in habits of industry and economy. Second, Church leaders sought women's help in the moral and spiritual well-being of Utah, emphasizing women's roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers. Finally, Church leaders debated the woman question as it pertained to Utah.

Chapter 2
Women's Economic Role:
Industry and Economy versus Idleness and Extravagance

Finally safe in their mountain home, the Latter-day Saints sought to build the kingdom of God on earth. They believed that under the direction of their living prophet (at this time, Brigham Young) they had the responsibility to build a society established completely according to God's will. This included all temporal matters as well as spiritual concerns. Combinations of harsh winters, late frosts, and cricket infestations characterized the Saints' first two years in the Salt Lake Valley, causing Church leaders great concern about the financial well-being of the community. The gold rush provided some relief during the early 1850s and relative prosperity ensued. In 1855 and 1856, however, harvests suffered due to drought and grasshopper damage. All of these circumstances, combined with distance from urban centers, necessitated the economic cooperation of the entire community. The Saints also wanted their settlements to be as self-sufficient as possible, thus lessening their ties with the "gentile" world, a goal that Church leaders re-emphasized following the Utah War of 1858.¹ This high ambition required every citizen's contribution. Church leaders placed great emphasis upon men as farmers, laborers, and primary wage earners, to contribute to the economic well-being of the community. However, they also bestowed much energy into instructing and encouraging women to increase economic stability for the territory. Industry and Economy stood as the two great female economic prescriptive pillars, their twin evils, idleness and extravagance. The editors of the *Deseret News* lectured long and hard on

¹For more on the Utah War see Leonard J. Arrington. Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 169-194.

this topic through every literary medium at their disposal. They used poems, stories, anecdotes, history, and flat-out sermons to convince women to be thrifty and industrious.

First, the *News* urged women, along with their husbands and sons, to be industrious. Indeed, the name of the LDS community reflected the Saints' commitment to this principle. "Deseret," a name of a honeybee in the Book of Mormon, referenced the industry and cooperative enterprise of a beehive. Idleness was a sin not to be tolerated in the state of Deseret. "True women," according to frequent descriptions, constantly employed themselves in useful activities.² One article incredulously asked, "Idle! how can women be idle? With perishing thousands around her, . . . with resources on every side, how can she be idle?"³ These themes figured heavily into the early issues of the *Deseret News*. In the "Governor's Message to the Council and House of Representatives of the Legislature of Utah," Brigham Young avowed, "deplorable indeed must be the situation of that People, whose sons are not trained in the practice of every useful avocation, and whose daughters mingle not in the hum of industry."⁴ Hoping to set good examples before the women of Utah, the *News* praised women whose industrious habits came to their attention. For example, in 1857 the *News* hailed an 84-year-old woman who three years previously "gleaned 20 bushels of wheat and raised 20 bushels of potatoes; and last fall she donated a yoke of cattle to the P[erpetual]. E[migrating]. Fund for gathering the poor."⁵

²see DN 30 November 1854. Fictional pieces include "Idle Patty, or the Lost Day," December 1857, p. 320 and 23 September 1864.

³DN 15 August 1855.

⁴DN 24 January 1852.

⁵DN 24 June 1857. Brigham Young organized the Perpetual Emigrating Fund to finance immigrations to Utah through contributions of Church members and repayments from immigrants who utilized the funds. Church leaders struggled to keep cash flowing into the much-used fund. See Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*.

The *Deseret News* emphasized the importance of being *constantly* employed in useful work, regardless of the nature of the task itself. The particular tasks to which a woman devoted her attention mattered little, as long as she kept herself consistently busy doing *something*. For example, several times the *News* exhorted women to continue their tasks, even when participating in the female practice of visiting. Visiting, a common form of sociality among women in the nineteenth century, represented an important part of their daily life. Latter-day Saint Patty Sessions, for example, mentioned in her diary approximately ten visits per month, some of them overnight. Visiting had certain guidelines. Women did not visit on Mondays since it was wash day. On Tuesdays, a woman would accept visitors and continue to work while she chatted with her guests. On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, a woman in her second best clothing (with an apron), a clean house, and refreshments prepared, stood ready to welcome any visitors.⁶ The *Deseret News* suggested that women stay actively employed even during social visits (not just on Tuesdays) by taking work with them and staying busy as they talked. Editors lamented the decline of this practice. “The time was when the ladies went a visiting and took their work with them. This is the reason why we have such excellent mothers. How singular would a gay woman look in a fashionable circle, darning her father’s stockings, or carding wool to spin? Would not her companions laugh at her? And yet such a woman would be a prize for somebody.”⁷

Early on the *News* published a story referenced several times later about Lady Washington, wife of General George Washington. In this story several women decided to visit Lady Washington. They wore their “most elegant ruffles” in preparation for the

⁶Juanita Brooks, ed., *Not By Bread Alone: The Journal of Martha Spence Heywood, 1850-56* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah State Historical Society, 1978), p. 52 fn 22.

⁷DN 25 April 1860 and 15 February 1855

visit, but, humbled and ashamed, they found Mrs. Washington with a “speckled apron on.” After receiving her guests, Lady Washington resumed her knitting. The woman sharing the story reportedly said, “there we were, without a stitch of work, and setting in state, but General Washington’s lady, with her own hands, was knitting stockings for her husband and herself.” Lady Washington also gently reprimanded her visitors, saying, “while our husbands and brothers are examples of patriotism, we should be patterns of industry.” The *News* editors concluded feverishly, “What do the Ladies of Deseret say to lady Washington’s precept and example? Good! GOOD!! GOOD!!! . . . spinning wheels, looms and knitting needles are the music and dancing of Deseret, among the elite.”⁸ On the same page, the *News* placed a notice of a loom in Brigham Young’s house upon which his family had woven more than 500 yards of cloth during the season. Reportedly, Brigham Young’s wife would provide her loom for anyone’s use. The *News* exulted, “If all follow this example, we shall not need to write much longer about home manufacture, or Lady Washington. Lady Young is the example of the day for Deseret.”⁹

Many times the *News* referred to the revolutionary era as a golden era of industry, frugality, and even true womanhood. In a typical example, Church leader Thomas Bullock exhorted the women in a Fourth of July address, “and you my fair hearers, may you imitate the virtues of those good sisters who labored night and day to clothe the soldiers as they lay in their winter camp in Valley Forge. . .”¹⁰ Indeed, nostalgic references to pre-industrial life pepper the pages of the *News*, indicating a degree of anti-modern tendencies present in Church leader’s views at the time.

⁸DN 6 March 1852, p. 34.

⁹DN 6 March 1852, p. 34.

¹⁰DN 10 July 1852.

The *News* observed that idle women destined themselves for future unhappiness because their lazy habits would cause them to be poor wives, mothers, and homemakers. The *News* warned young men to avoid such women at all costs. In an 1864 article entitled “Idle Girls,” an editor from an exchange worried, “the number of idle, useless girls, in all of our cities seems to be steadily increasing.” These girls, the editor described, lounge about in the morning and spend their afternoons and evenings in idle social gatherings. These women have no domestic skills nor habits of industry. The editor asked, “What will they be as wives and mothers? . . . What a store of unhappiness for themselves and others are they laying up for the coming time, when real duties and responsibilities shall be thoroughly assumed!”¹¹ The belief that women’s true roles lay in their positions as wife, mother, and homemaker stood as an underlying understanding in most exhortations to industry. Certainly, throughout the period, the home stood as the prime location for female work. This fact, coupled with the LDS belief in the vital importance of home and family to the well-being of individuals and societies, contributed to the great attention given to women’s home-based roles in the *News* during the 1850s and 1860s. Strong homes, Utah leaders believed, would both contribute to a strong and economically successful society in Utah and advance the spiritual well-being of the community.¹²

Housekeepers held primary responsibility for effective and efficient homes. Thus, the *News* spent many pages of print prescribing to women how their households could be industrious. In a particularly detailed fictional piece, a successfully industrious, happy, organized housekeeper shared her insights with a struggling friend who sought her

¹¹DN 8 March 1864, p. 183, repeated 22 February 1865, p. 166.

¹²Maureen Ursenbach Beecher discusses Utah women’s work in and out of their homes in “Women’s Work on the Mormon Frontier,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 49 (1981): 276-290.

advice. She summed up her counsel in four rules. Housekeepers should have a specific time for every duty. They should have a place for everything and everything in its place. They should always be engaged in doing some task, and they should employ ways to sustain themselves in the midst of busy housework by refreshing themselves with naps and other enjoyments when needed.¹³

Through the articles they printed, the editors of the *News* displayed great respect for the immensity of the homemaker's job. In 1857 the *News* ran an article entitled "Rules of Health for Married Ladies," in which the writer presented an exhausting, exaggerated list of duties which housekeepers performed from the crack of dawn to night. Included are food preparation, marketing, childcare, clothing production and care, cleaning, and dealing with a lazy, half-sober husband. The only time for herself came when she finally got a chance to eat. She was required, of course, to eat with baby-in-arms, since, as the author sarcastically explained, "you like your breakfast cold." The final line of the article assured, "women in delicate health will find that the above practice will either kill them or cure them."¹⁴ Articles such as these clearly originated from other newspapers, possibly serving to underscore the common LDS idea that the moral character of Utah men far exceeded that of men in other parts of the country. Such articles may also have been intended to reinforce the opinion that LDS women held preferred positions as participants in plural marriage. Studies of polygamous families indicate that in some instances plural marriage resulted in a lessening of daily burdens as sister-wives assisted one another with child-rearing and other housekeeping tasks.¹⁵

¹³DN 24 December 1862.

¹⁴DN 18 November 1857. See also 19 May 1858 and 1 May 1867.

¹⁵See Joan Iverson, "Feminist Implications of Mormon Polygamy," *Feminist Studies* 10 (Fall 1984): 515-522 and Jessie L. Embry and Martha S. Bradley, "Mothers and Daughters in Polygamy," *Dialogue* 18 (no. 3): 99-107.

Many articles also instructed men to appreciate women's tasks. A one-liner in one issue instructed, "never go to bed at 10, leaving your wife up till two, with a sick baby, and look pitchforks at her at the breakfast table because the meal is half an hour too late."¹⁶ Several fictional pieces shared the stories of men who came to understand and appreciate their wives. In one story, a young wife's visiting aunt asks the young, reluctant husband to serve her so that the wife could, first, be allowed to sleep for awhile since she was up all night with the baby, and, second, so that the wife could visit the library and art exhibits to allow some cultivation of the mind. In the end the husband regarded his wife with an increase of gratitude and respect.¹⁷

Several articles also encouraged men to do what they could to provide their wives some relief from their daily tasks. One article asserted that many homes are "woman-killing institutions." The author explained the statement with this description:

after filling up the live long day in the performance of their incessant routine of domestic labors, the poor woman . . . fatigued and careworn, having had no precious moments of leisure to devote to reading or other means of storing her mind with information so requisite to the development of the intellectual faculties, whereby many are doomed to a mortifying ignorance of the most common-place matters who, had opportunity been offered, might have qualified themselves, as angels of truth, to impart, in their sphere, the counsels of wisdom and prove an ornament to their sex, she retired to her couch with the consoling thought that, after all, her "work is never done."

The article provided several remedies. First, the woman could be instructed in efficient household techniques like making sure everything has a place and is kept in that place. This instruction becomes difficult when coupled with frequent assurances in the *News* that houses need not be large to be neat and comely. Certainly in the small homes of nineteenth century Utah women, finding a place for everything constituted a challenging,

¹⁶DN 4 March 1857, p. 415.

¹⁷DN 6 September 1865. See also 24 August 1854 and 25 June 1856.

even impossible, task. Second, the housekeeper could be provided with labor-saving machinery. The author asked, “Why not provide the sewer and the washer, as well as the mower and thrasher? Is woman more able to use the needle and washboard, than man to apply the scythe and flail?” Finally, the article, which is largely aimed at farmers, suggested that men hire fewer hands so women’s work (cooking and washing) could be decreased.¹⁸

As expected, however, men were not the sole recipients of advice. As in other areas of women’s lives, the *Deseret News* abounds with advice intended to help women with their tasks. Much of this advice comes in the form of practical housekeeping tips and instructions for common household tasks such as cooking and cleaning. Others pertain to the type of housekeeper women should be. Many prescriptive articles focused on housekeeping styles to be avoided. For example, the bad housekeeper received little mercy in the pages of the *News*. An article entitled “The Half-Housekeeper” berated a fictional woman for her “unpalatable” cooking, her table that “was never rightly laid for a meal,” her meals that “were never properly cared for after dinner,” her children’s clothes that “came to pieces the second day,” and the fact that she never received company without apology due to her unorganized state.¹⁹

Latter-day Saint Patty Sessions stood as a positive example of the industrious woman. Her diaries constitute an exhausting list of one woman’s household chores. Patty’s various duties included sewing, carding, weaving, spinning, mending, coloring clothes, crocheting, quilting, soap-making, molding candles, washing, ironing, cleaning, churning, baking, food preparation, and gardening. Admittedly, Patty appears to be a particularly ambitious and zealous woman in all aspects of her life. But undoubtedly

¹⁸DN 11 January 1860.

¹⁹DN 11 May 1854.

other Utah homemakers completed the same types of tasks. Patty, however, tried very hard to avoid doing “men’s work.” Family or Church members often came and cut wood, built fences, plowed, and performed other heavy work for her.²⁰ After she became more financially secure she hired men to do such work. Marriage provided an immediate relief to this problem. In 1851 she wrote, “I was married to John Parry and I feel to thank the Lord that I have someone to cut my wood for me.”²¹ As historian Maureen Ursenbach Beecher explained, “in those cases where a woman performed what is traditionally men’s work, it was under duress and eagerly relinquished as soon as a man was free to carry on.”²² Patty also had the financial means to hire female help in her home.²³ Throughout her life Patty strove tirelessly to fulfill her household duties and beautify her home.

The home of Mary Fielding Smith, another Latter-day Saint, was described as “a place of industry.” She had a spinning wheel, carding rack, and weaving frame in the living room. She acquired wool from her sheep, washed and combed the wool to remove impurities and spent hours refining the wool into yarn on her spinning wheel. Using indigenous plants, she made dyes for the wool. She then wove the yarn into cloth. Mary, who was very independent, also kept livestock and farmed. She prepared food and other household items at home. The items she could not manufacture at home she acquired by barter.²⁴

²⁰See Donna Toland Smart, Mormon Midwife: The 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1997), 164.

²¹Smart, 170.

²²Beecher, “Women’s Work,” 278.

²³Smart, 317.

²⁴Don Cecil Corbett, Mary Fielding Smith: Daughter of Britain, Portrait of Courage (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1970), 260.

A less positive view of housekeeping comes from a letter to a friend written by Latter-day Saint Martha Spence Heywood who both converted to the Church and married later in her life. She lamented, “since I’ve become a wife & mother all sentiment has died away in the realities of life, such as, cooking, washing, waiting on babies, &c.” She referred to “the dull tedium of domestic affairs,” but later confessed, “I love my home, I dearly love the first & only home I’ve had, since I first left my father’s house.” Boarding with others and working as a school teacher during her adult life previous to her marriage, she did not develop many housekeeping skills. She admitted, “I want to be a good housekeeper and I just mean to be one, in due time, I feel my awkwardness so keenly, that I make blunders often from that very feeling.” She smilingly tells her friend, “if I was a good housekeeper . . . I would prefer making you a good Christmas Cake all dotted over under & through the middle with little black spots & larger brown ones, well ‘to want to, & can’t is hell’ so says Bro Brigham.”²⁵

Church members believed that by striving to make homes industrious, women like Patty, Mary, and Martha contributed in a very important way to the well-being of husbands, families, and therefore, to the society at large. Several articles proclaimed that women, because of their place in the home and family stood as head of society. LDS leaders obviously felt that women should understand this idea perfectly. The importance LDS leaders placed on seemingly unimportant household duties can be seen in remarks from Daniel H. Wells in 1862,

That sister who seeks diligently to order her own conduct and her household; who seeks to bring forth from the elements for her own support, commences in the right way to obtain exaltation; she exalts herself in the sight of her husband and in the sight of all good men. She can be economical with that which she handles for the use of her household, whereas before she has perhaps been wasteful and

²⁵Brooks, 133-5.

prodigal of the rich blessings of God bestowed upon her. In making this reformation she has taken an important step in the way of exaltation in this world for the exaltation in the world to come.²⁶

Although unpaid housework unquestionably served as the primary type of women's work, often, especially in later issues, the *News* encouraged women's activity in other avocations as well. As early as 1856, James Brown ran an advertisement in the *News* offering to employ women as seamstresses. According to the advertisement, they would work at home and earn money for their labors. In 1857 an article from another paper advertised the services of striking female factory workers from Maine. The workers reportedly desired almost any form of female labor, stating they did not like to be idle. The *News* exuberantly encouraged them to come to Utah where they would make fine wives.²⁷ Women appeared to be encouraged to do anything useful in building economic security. In an address at the Tabernacle, Brigham Young promised the women that they would be blessed if they helped the men with the harvest.²⁸ He also encouraged women to become telegraph operators, store clerks, and typesetters, and to invest in stock in the cooperative stores which emerged in the late 1860s.²⁹

Patty Sessions, an active Latter-day Saint, undertook several money-making ventures. Most prominently she worked as a midwife throughout the greater portion of her life. Although she never received formal training, Patty learned from friends, a doctor in her hometown in Maine, and medical literature. She found great use for her skills among the Latter-day Saint community, purportedly delivering just under 4,000 babies. Although Patty used her skills most frequently in births and deliveries, she also

²⁶DN 24 September 1862.

²⁷DN 16 September 1857.

²⁸DN 15 October 1853.

²⁹See Beecher, "Women's Work," 283 and *Deseret News Semi-weekly*, 22 May 1869. For a report on women's work on the telegraph lines see *Deseret News Semi-Weekly*, 19 May 1868.

cared for ill individuals.³⁰ Patty also taught courses in midwifery and medicine. As common in the Latter-day Saint tradition, Patty's occupation took on spiritual significance. In Nauvoo, before reaching the Great Basin, Patty received a special blessing from Church leaders Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball wherein she was "set apart . . . as a doctor for women."³¹ Utah women were encouraged to occupy the medical field. An entry in Patty's diary alludes to a "diatribe" by Brigham Young against male doctors.³² An extremely productive woman, Patty also frequently took in boarders, sold produce she had grown, and did other work in the home for income.³³ Sometimes her boarders did not pay as she would have liked. In one entry, Patty bitingly stated, "Dixon staid here last night left live vermin in the bed but did not so much as thank us for his loging supper and breakfast I do not know but he left lice enough to pay me for my trouble had they all been coppers and cents."³⁴ Later in her life she also invested in real estate, growing several orchards thereon.³⁵ A Church leader who paid her a visit "said he never saw such a beautiful sight in his life so many trees so full of fruit so says every one that has seen them."³⁶ One of the best indications of Patty's financial success as well as her obedience to her religion is the consistent manner in which she settled and paid her tithing every year (often paying it in currency of peaches and peas).³⁷

LDS leaders had a tradition of encouraging women to undertake employment. The *News* positively reported of women who undertook traditionally male professions.³⁸

³⁰Smart, 182.

³¹Smart, 3-8.

³²Smart, 159.

³³For examples see Smart, 159, 164, 165, 261, 274, 320.

³⁴Smart, 188.

³⁵Smart, 316-318.

³⁶Smart, 256.

³⁷There are many examples of this. See Smart, 171, 197.

³⁸The *News* reports of a female attorney 26 January 1854, female farmer 22 October

Editors also encouraged women in traditionally female professions such as midwifery.³⁹ Several women in Utah throughout the period owned millinery businesses and at least one advertised that she would take ironing.⁴⁰ Martha Spence Heywood, like other Latter-day Saint women, worked as a teacher for a period of time.⁴¹ One article from an exchange during the 1860s, written by a woman, bemoaned the fact that working women were underpaid. She asserted, “they will never be better paid until women of rank begin to work for money, and so create a respect for women’s labor.”⁴² Probably propelled by the fact that LDS women were often alone due to polygamy or husbands’ proselyting missions in the eastern United States and Europe, and by the fact that LDS leaders wanted to do everything possible to ensure the financial success of the community, the tone of the *News* regarding women’s employment remained positive throughout the period.⁴³

An 1867 article boasted of women’s involvement in Utah industry and encouraged this trend to continue. The article positively stated, “the interest which is now being felt in the education and training of young ladies is very pleasing. It speaks well for the future.” Furthermore, the article promised, if women take advantage of their

1856 and 18 November 1863, female historian 14 November 1860, female clerk 6 May 1863.

³⁹DN 30 June 1858.

⁴⁰DN 18 May 1864.

⁴¹Brooks, 81. See also Jill C. Mulvay, “Zion’s Schoolmarms,” in Claudia L. Bushman, ed., Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997), 67-88.

⁴²DN 31 July 1867.

⁴³Leonard Arrington explains that because their husbands were often away from home, Utah women often took on heavy responsibilities including running family farms, securing food and clothing for families, and even building family homes. See Leonard Arrington, “Women as a Force in the History of Utah,” Utah Historical Quarterly 38 (Winter 1970): 4.

opportunities, “we will soon have women who will prove worthy co-labourers of their fathers, brothers and husbands in the great work which lies before us, and become the mothers of the race of heroes.”⁴⁴ In whatever occupation women chose to employ themselves, Church leaders instructed them in no uncertain terms to be industrious. This was a mark of a true woman and a key for the economic and spiritual success of the territory.

The *News*' avowals of the economic importance of women's work contrast with rhetoric about women's activities in the home in the rest of the country. In Utah, Church leaders acknowledged women's work as directly related to the economic well-being of the community. Her daily tasks, whether inside the home or out, were perceived as work, in contrast with other literature which portrayed women's activities in the home as a state of being. Women's activities in the home, according to literature outside of Utah, was perceived “less as purposeful activities required and ordered by the welfare of their individual families than as emanations of an abstract but shared Womanhood.” Such prescriptive literature often worried that women's involvement in tasks relating to the economy would interfere with the more lofty mothering responsibilities. The *Deseret News*, however, emphasized and encouraged women's participation in activities that correlated to the economy.⁴⁵

Daniel H. Wells summed up the Church of Jesus Christ's feelings about women's industriousness in an anniversary celebration of the arrival of the Saints in the Salt Lake Valley. He instructed, “make yourselves useful in the drama of life; qualify yourselves

⁴⁴DN 10 December 1867.

⁴⁵Jeanne Boydston, Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 145

also for the part which may be allotted you to perform in the Kingdom of God. . . Let your time be fully occupied in some useful employment.”⁴⁶

Hand-in-hand with the vice of idleness stood the evil of extravagance. The extravagant woman posed a threat to the financial well-being of the society. Furthermore, a woman who so selfishly spent carelessly on unnecessary adornments for herself also posed a threat to true womanhood. As the *Deseret News* proclaimed, “an extravagant wife is worse than a pestilence. She eats a man up with as little remorse as she would devour an omelet.”⁴⁷

Early in their sojourn in the Valley, Church leaders preached on this topic. In an address printed in the *News*, Brigham Young said,

We heard of a sister, who, last week sold a good cow to a merchant, for \$25, and took her pay in ribbons and nick-nacks, which she might as well have dispensed with as not, and which cost in market about \$2.50; now when this woman’s children cry for milk, who will pity her; and when she goes to her neighbors to beg for her little ones, who will give?⁴⁸

An extravagant female placed the well-being of her family in jeopardy. Editors of the *News* instructed its readers that the thrifty habits of women made more difference in the family’s economic well-being than did her husband’s income. One issue purported, “a man’s wealth depends more on his wife than his income . . . If married men are poor, in nine cases out of ten it is their wives’ fault.”⁴⁹ Another article said, “Teach the Women to Save.: There’s the secret. A saving woman at the head of a family is the very best savings bank ever yet established.”⁵⁰ Still another asserted, “it matters not whether

⁴⁶DN 3 August 1854.

⁴⁷DN 30 November 1854.

⁴⁸DN 7 February 1852.

⁴⁹DN 1 December 1853.

⁵⁰DN 5 January 1854.

a man furnishes little or much for his family, if there is a continual leakage in his kitchen or in the parlor, it runs away he knows not how.”⁵¹

Just a few articles portrayed women as the frugal half to the marriage partnership, influencing and teaching husbands how to live economically.⁵² One such article strongly urged farmers to consult with their wives in the affairs of the farm. It explained, “However judiciously and economically the plans for the operations of the farm may be laid, if a man and his wife do not harmonize, most completely, in prosecuting their labors, he had better at once dispose of his farm” The article explained that although women should only be required to superintend the indoor work, “it must be acknowledged, that many women are far more capable of planning judiciously, and carrying on more economically the operations of the farm, than their husbands.” The article assured that men should not feel it beneath them to consult their wives on the financial and administrative issues of the farm and household, “but it is a matter of doubt whether there ever was an instance in which a man habitually consulted his wife, when, as a consequence, it proved detrimental, or a disparagement to him in any respect.”⁵³

Not only do extravagant women adversely affect families and communities, one article asserted, “[extravagant] women. . . are more than half the cause of our national misfortunes,” owing to the heavy imports and labor that must be undergone to dress them.⁵⁴ The editors of the *News*, and evidently editors elsewhere, worried about the future. Another exchange proclaimed, “While the business men of America proverbially live poorer, dress shabbier, work harder, and many more hours, than in any other country

⁵¹DN 13 April 1854. See also 25 May 1854 and 22 October 1856.

⁵²See DN 31 October 1855, p. 270 and 5 December 1855, p. 308.

⁵³DN 10 October 1860.

⁵⁴DN 15 August 1855, p. 182.

in the world, their wives and daughters are ten times more idle, more extravagant, and more useless.”⁵⁵

Extravagance, it was believed, could be blamed for sociological misfortunes as well as economic problems. One editor blamed extravagance for the lack of marriages in the United States. It asserted that women should not view their husbands as money bags to furnish their extravagant ways. Men, furthermore, wanted more than a “painted doll” as so many women had become. “Depend upon it, that, while amusements and extravagance are regarded by women as the chief objects of life, they will find men who will gratify them—but not for marriage.”⁵⁶ In 1868 an American editor named extravagance the “grand foe of wedlock.” Extravagant eastern habits made it so young people could not afford to marry because, in their love of pleasure and vanity, they felt they needed all material comforts at the beginning of married life instead of starting off simply.⁵⁷

In 1868, the *News* scolded Utah bachelors for refraining from marriage for financial reasons. It stated, “we have too high an opinion of our young ladies, and the training their mothers have given them, to think that any of them would reject the addresses of an honorable, industrious young man, because he happened to be poor.” According to Church leaders, absolutely nothing should be allowed to weaken the important institution of marriage.⁵⁸ One editor, concerned about the problem of extravagance in America, theorized that women were not entirely at fault. This editor felt that extravagance existed in both sexes. “But we maintain that if husbands, instead of swearing at their wives bills, would show the example of economy by reducing their

⁵⁵DN 2 April 1856, p. 29.

⁵⁶DN 24 August 1859, p. 195.

⁵⁷DN 31 March 1868.

⁵⁸DN 15 February 1868.

own selfish expenses, the female sex would not be long in being shamed into retrenchment.”⁵⁹ Another article told of a convention held in New York where six thousand single men promised to not marry until women changed their idle, extravagant, coquettish ways. This article placed blame upon men for making women extravagant.⁶⁰

Although the problem of extravagance was most pronounced in the East, an 1868 *Deseret News* article acknowledged that “the reign of extravagance, which for the past few years has held high carnival in the Eastern States, has not been without its influence here,” citing as evidence the attempts of Utahns to purchase the latest fashions. The article admitted that home manufactured articles would probably never be popular, but hopefully suggested that Utahns could find their own fashions through their home manufactures.⁶¹ With the advent of Utah’s silk industry, Church leaders hoped to “enable our ladies, young and old, to legitimately gratify that love of elegant attire that seems so natural to every female heart.”⁶²

Editors also did their best to convince women that beauty does not lie in extravagant apparel. In an article entitled “Simplicity of Dress,” the author assured, “female loveliness never appears to so good advantage as when set off with simplicity of dress.” “Our dear human angels,” the author said, “would carefully avoid ornaments which properly belong to Indian squaws and African princes.” Furthermore, dress reflected character, the author believed. “A modest woman will dress modestly; a really refined and intelligent woman will bear the marks of careful selection and faultless

⁵⁹DN 19 November 1856, p. 294.

⁶⁰DN 14 December 1865, p. 76.

⁶¹DN 25 April 1868.

⁶²DN 29 August 1868. Chris Rigby Arrington explores women’s participation in Utah’s silk industry in “The Finest of Fabrics: Mormon Women and the Silk Industry in Early Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 46 (1978): 376-396.

taste.”⁶³ Many articles poked fun at women’s fashions, comparing women to feathered birds or other absurd animals. One article assured that excessive adornments do not make handsome women any prettier, and make homely women worse. It stated, “Gentlemen do not court your faces and jewelry, but your own dear selves.”⁶⁴

LDS leaders encouraged women to form their own fashion that was not only simple, but healthy. The *News* expressed great concern about the unhealthy nature of popular fashions. A short quip expressed it well, “A witty doctor once said that tight lacing was a public benefit, inasmuch as it killed all the foolish girls and left the wise ones to grow up to be women.”⁶⁵ Many times the *News* touted the “bloomer” costume as a positive option for women. In the first months of its organization, the Female Council of Health discussed alternatives for female clothing. As Patty Sessions recounted, “I went to Sister Smiths to help form a fashion for the females that will be more conducive to health than the long tight waisted dresses filled with whale bone and hickery that they ware now.”⁶⁶ Indeed, women of Utah did design a “Deseret costume” similar to the Bloomer costume which did not interest Utah women enough to actually wear it.⁶⁷

Teachings on economy extended to the home, itself, as the *News* encouraged women to practice economy in their housekeeping tasks. Women were told repeatedly that homes did not need to be fancy or abundant in goods and material items to be neat and orderly.⁶⁸ They were also assured that they could and should still be ladies and that economy and industry constitute true ladylike qualities. One article listed prominent

⁶³DN 30 March 1854.

⁶⁴DN 18 April 1855, p. 45.

⁶⁵DN 13 February 1856, p. 390.

⁶⁶Smart, 175.

⁶⁷Beecher, “Women’s Work,” 286.

⁶⁸DN 9 July 1856, 17 March 1858 (repeat), 11 January 1860, and 18 November 1863.

women of the world who employed high social stations and who still practiced housekeeping duties.⁶⁹

The Church's answer to extravagance in clothing was Home Industry. Church leaders encouraged home industry from the beginning of their settlement in the Great Basin. Brigham Young desired to cut ties to the rest of the United States, partially because of mistrust for a country that had dealt unkindly with Latter-day Saints. He stated, "home manufacture and production have been part of domestic economy, and should be practised by every Saint. It is the only path in which we can walk with any assurance of securing our freedom, and of perpetuating that liberty which we inherit, as a rich legacy, from our ancestors and our God."⁷⁰

The first few issues of the *Deseret News* provided information about specific individuals and their efforts at home industry. After about 1855, this practice sharply declined. For example, under the title "Newest Fashion," the *News* reported that an unnamed Utah woman attended Sunday meetings in a buckskin sack, "beautifully ornamented. . . the exhibition we have every where heard spoken of in the highest praise, and we only wish that it had been our wife who had set this noble example." The *News* promised, "her name will be registered in the archives of Utah, as a pattern worthy of imitation by all. Ladies of Deseret go to; with you might, and do likewise, and your husbands will bless you."⁷¹ Furthermore, David Evans, a member of the Utah House of Representatives, attended a House meeting dressed in clothes made entirely by his

⁶⁹DN 11 May 1864.

⁷⁰James R. Clark, ed., Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1833-1964, Vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 162. Leonard Arrington explores the doctrine behind Home Industry in Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 112-113.

⁷¹DN 10 January 1852, p. 19.

family. His wife spun and wove the cloth as well as making the garments. The *News* exulted, “Mrs Evans is worthy to stand by the side of the lady in the buckskin sack”⁷²

Huldah Duncan wove, in about six months time, 680 yards of various types of cloth. The correspondent wrote that Mrs. Duncan wanted to receive the *Deseret News* to which the editors replied, “Mrs. Duncan shall have the News.” Also, Myra Henrie in the same time wove about 50 yards.⁷³ Sarah Byington reported to the *News* that she had woven 375 yards of cloth, including lindsey, plaid cotton, and carpeting.⁷⁴ In 1864, in one of the few articles of its kind this late in the period, a correspondence told of several spinning matches held in Provo City. Not only were they able to work speedily and with large output, their yarn was “pronounced No. 1, by . . . competent judges.”⁷⁵

In Brigham Young’s Governor’s Message, he stated, “a large amount of clothing has been made, principally by the hands of the ‘good housewife,’ who thereby adds dignity to her station, and reflects credit, and honor upon household.”⁷⁶ At the Fourth of July Celebration in 1855, William W. Phelps toasted, “The Territory of Utah--the hub of the great wheel of creation; ‘spin away gals,’ and clothe the heralds of holiness in home spun!”⁷⁷ In 1857 the *News* noted that imported fabrics were being replaced by “home made straw bonnets, calicoes and home spun” in Sunday meetings. This, the editors assured, aided Utah’s prosperity and encouraged marriage and “the increase of a pure principled offspring.” Church leaders considered the pride and expense involved with extravagant dress and living detrimental to noble lives. The *News* reiterated that “it is

⁷²DN 10 January 1852, p. 19.

⁷³DN 6 March 1852, p. 34.

⁷⁴DN 1 May 1852.

⁷⁵DN 31 August 1864, p. 385.

⁷⁶DN 25 December 1852.

⁷⁷DN 18 July 1855, p. 147.

poor policy to depend upon our enemies for a single article beyond what rigid necessity and strict economy require” and promised that “there are few divorces called for by those who keep out of the stores and aid and stand fast by home productions.”⁷⁸

Utah’s public works projects begun early in the territorial period encouraged home manufactured goods. The year 1863 heralded the opening of a new woolen factory with 240 spindles.⁷⁹ A cotton factory also existed. Here women could card and spin their yarn into cloth. Another Utah man, James McGhie ran several ads advertising that he would weave cloth made in the territory. He concluded his ad, “The people who would be independent must be self-sustaining. If we would be self-sustaining we must encourage the development of Home-Manufacture.”⁸⁰ Another ad placed by Brigham Young offered his carding machine to anyone who would like to use it.⁸¹

During the midst of the Civil War, the *News* published a rather lengthy report of Eastern women pledging to wear homespun clothing throughout the remainder of the war rather than buy expensive imported fabrics and other items. The *News* clearly approved and urged Utah women to take notice.⁸² The reports of the Deseret State Fairs described exhibits of home manufacture by women, including various kinds of fabrics, cloaks, shawls, scarves, and carpet. In 1858 the report read, “We hope that ere long every lady who has any interest in this Territory will be adorned with garments of our own workmanship, and display more rivalry in showing native cloth and raiments than in encouraging the sale of gaudy and poor materials from other and distant places.”⁸³

⁷⁸DN 24 June 1857, p. 125.

⁷⁹DN 9 September 1863. See also advertisement in 23 September 1863, p. 74 and Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 121.

⁸⁰DN 25 May 1864, p. 274.

⁸¹DN 23 August 1866.

⁸²DN 25 May 1864.

⁸³DN 13 October 1858, p. 139.

Later issues of the *News* indicated that home manufactured clothing did not catch fire with Utah women. In 1868 Brigham Young censured the women of Utah for not wearing home manufactured articles more frequently. Young explained the importance of women accepting home manufactures for two reasons. First, evidently the ladies were slow to do his will in this matter. He stated, “the ladies wish to have their own way in everything. If we can succeed in guiding their ideas correctly it will be an advantage to the whole community.” Second, “[ladies] can do much more towards moulding and controlling the habits and fashions of our community than the men can.”⁸⁴ As one historian observed, “as each new item, ‘the fashion of Babylon,’ was successfully imported and sold in Utah, the cry went out over the pulpit. And each time, the women were seen as the culprits, their demands for eastern goods decried, their extravagance blamed for their husbands’ financial failures and the community’s empty coffers.”⁸⁵ By 1852 the Latter-day Saints had spent around \$300,000 on goods imported from the States, a fact that frustrated Brigham Young. Similarly, over the course of the 1850s, Latter-day Saints in Utah spent five million dollars on imported goods. The struggle between Church leaders’ pleadings to manufacture goods at home and the enticing goods of eastern merchants who sold their products in Utah continued throughout the period.⁸⁶

Hortatory articles about female extravagance and idleness took center stage in the pages of the *News*. A thin, blurry line existed between the economic importance of these virtues and the spiritual importance. For Latter-day Saints, the two existed hand-in-hand. As one of their scriptures stated, all things, both temporal and spiritual, are spiritual unto the Lord.⁸⁷ Explained adeptly by historian Leonard Arrington, “the Mormons

⁸⁴*Deseret News Semi-Weekly*, 10 August 1869.

⁸⁵Beecher, “Women's Work,” 283.

⁸⁶Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 113, 137.

⁸⁷Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 29:31-35.

demonstrated the intimate relationship between economics and religion. Nothing was above the dictation of religion--nothing too trivial for its watchful care."⁸⁸ LDS leader W. W. Phelps illustrated the spiritual importance of economy in a poem submitted to the *News* that compared two women, "Miss Wealth," and "Miss Poverty." Miss Poverty envied her wealthy friend, but Phelps assured in the closing stanza,

Miss Poverty then turns to God,
 And learns the gospel, clever;
 The Rich enjoy "the dust" a while.
 A passing, quick forever.
 But thou, by faith and works, canst have
 The best of treasures given;--
 Enough to satisfy on earth,
 And then, the whole of heaven.⁸⁹

LDS leaders were extremely concerned with female extravagance. As evidenced in Phelps' poem, they wanted to assure women that there was more to life than physical adornments.

⁸⁸Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 39.

⁸⁹DN 11 May 1859, p. 75.

Chapter 3 Striving for Significance over Superficiality in Women's Roles

Concerns with idleness and extravagance were economic components of a much larger problem that concerned editors of the *Deseret News*. Along with literature in other parts of the country, the articles in the *News* worried endlessly over the superficiality that seemed to be creeping up on women, especially young women, causing them to forsake or at least diminish their most basic and important roles of mother, wife, and homemaker. This, in turn, threatened to place the well-being of society in jeopardy. This basic idea of women's domestic roles functioning as the key components for healthy and happy societies lies at the heart of the concern. Latter-day Saint beliefs enforced these ideas, adding a doctrinal urgency to Utah rhetoric.

LDS doctrine, then and now, regards the institutions of home and family as the most basic and most important in society. "The Family, A Proclamation to the World," recently issued by the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ states, "the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children." The proclamation urges "responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society."¹ LDS doctrine teaches that couples and families that have been sealed together in holy temples will maintain their family unity throughout eternity. This, of course, is conditioned upon each family member's righteousness throughout their mortal life. Indeed the family unit, according to LDS belief, is the basic organizational unit of the heavens. Each member of the human race is a literal spirit child of heavenly parents and

¹The First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "The Family, A Proclamation to the World," first read at a General Relief Society Meeting of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in October 1995.

celestial marriage (or marriage within temples) is a prerequisite for admittance into the highest heavenly level of eternal existence. Furthermore, the LDS Bible Dictionary asserts that the home is the most sacred place on earth, even moreso than Latter-day Saints' beloved temples.² LDS doctrine regards women's role in the strengthening of the home and family as essential. The mother, as creator of children and homes, holds great responsibility to insure the well-being of individuals, and therefore societies, by maintaining the sacred nature of home and family. Nineteenth century LDS rhetoric reflected these same fundamental beliefs. Any weakening of women's roles as mothers, wives, and homemakers caused great alarm to individuals, male and female, inside and outside Utah.

Paramount among these concerns was the worry that women were becoming too selfish and superficial, more concerned with outward appearances and social functions than with the basic, humble, yet vital duties associated with home and family. The prototypical superficial woman against whom the *News* preached definitely exhibited the vices of idleness and extravagance discussed in the previous chapter. But they manifested other negative characteristics as well. Articles in the *News* trumpeted warnings against the superficiality that seemed to be creeping into young women's lives. The prototypical superficial woman had certain characteristics. The following typical tirades effectively illustrate the prototypical superficial woman. The *News* commonly dubbed her, "the modern woman." One article asked,

what has become of all the modest, quiet, home-loving young ladies we used to see in old times, and read of now occasionally? The sweet, kind sister, and respectful daughter, who shared her mother's cares and duties and was at once the pride and ornament of the family circle? Always dressed according to her position

²LDS Bible Dictionary s.v. temple in *The Holy Bible* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989).

and occupation, conscious of being beloved and useful, she was calm, self-possessed, graceful, and could receive her friends without flurry, or apologies, or blushes, because she was found engaged in some useful employment.³

Alas, such young women were rare, according to these concerned writers. They worried about the fate of the institution of marriage. These superficial women, they assured, would drive sensible men away. Furthermore, such women were not being true to themselves and the most significant roles of wife and mother. “Do young women ever seriously think about their destiny and position in the world; for what purpose they were created and designed? Do they . . . endeavor to render themselves capable to adorn the most beautiful and holy office on earth—that of wife and mother? Then do not consider yourselves mere waxen dolls, or parti-colored butterflies, or walking show cases any longer.”⁴

Another article complained that the modern woman had too much fashionable restraint and not enough liberty. She had too much parlor and not enough kitchen; too much mock modesty and not enough frankness. The stereotypical superficial woman should be more of a “buxom, bright-eyed, rosy cheeked, full breasted bouncing lass, who can darn stockings, make her own frocks, mend trousers, command a regiment of pots and kettles, milk the cows, feed the pigs, chop the wood, and shoot a wild duck as well as the Dutchess of Marleborough, or the Queen of Spain; and be a lady withal in the drawing room.”⁵ In short, the true woman should be healthy, happy, industrious, and a lady.

Still another article bemoaned the lack of “nice girls” and the excess of “fine girls.” Nice girls were willing to help, kind, sweet, and took far less time to physically

³DN 17 June 1857, p. 119.

⁴DN 17 June 1857, p. 119.

⁵DN 25 April 1855, p. 51.

adorn themselves, yet they looked neat, plain, and charming. The “nice girl” was always cheerful. The “fine girl,” on the other hand, was generally miserable unless gossiping with social circles. She spent her time with frivolous novels, operas, thought it below her to help with household work, tired herself with social affairs and spent full days reclining on the sofa. Her concern centered on her physical appearance which was gaudy and immodestly revealing.⁶ Under the title “Who Should Not Be a Wife,” the author defined the stereotypical superficial woman as one who “thinks more of her silk dress than her children.” She strains her husband’s pocketbook with her extravagant needs, she cares more about frivolous things than her husband’s love, and she doesn’t keep herself neat and tidy.⁷

Much of the concern centered on the rising generation of young girls. One article gave the recipe for spoiling girls. The steps were, inflate her vanity by telling her how pretty she is, dress her in fashionable clothes, let her engage in social visiting to the extent that she becomes discontented with home life, give her a smattering of useless, non-practical education, do not teach her housekeeping, and marry her to a useless, unproductive man.⁸

As with the economic roles of women discussed in the previous chapter, several articles warned of the risk to the institution of marriage that loomed unless women improved to become better wives, mothers, and homemakers. One man, writing to an exchange, posed the query of why unmarried individuals existed to such a greater degree than in recent times past, again invoking the Revolutionary-era nostalgia. He decided, “Our position is that the reasons ‘why they don’t marry’ are traceable, all, to the women,

⁶DN 11 July 1860, p. 146.

⁷DN 3 May 1865, p. 242.

⁸DN 14 June 1866, p. 222.

to their pernicious bringing up, to the extravagant habits they have formed, and to their general incapacity to attend to household duties or to take upon themselves the responsibilities of maternity and family government.”⁹ Furthermore, the *News* assured that although superficial young women sought for men’s affections, they actually repelled good men. Articles warned young men to not marry such girls.

The superficiality of the type of woman to be avoided manifested itself in all aspects of women’s lives. A superficial woman adorned her outer body, but cared little for her inner character, hidden from others’ eyes. A superficial woman “puts on airs” and carried herself charmingly in public, but treated her family poorly. A superficial woman appeared happy, but inwardly felt miserable. She took excessive cares to have a finely ornamented home. But those places not seen by company were dirty and unkempt, especially for her family who were often confined to the nursery so as not to mess the parlor. She most certainly acted differently at home than in public. For a superficial woman church was a place to show off one’s finery, not a place for worship. Though superficial women thought themselves better than others, in reality they were sickly and miserable.

This common worry in the *News* echoes the same concern voiced by writers in other parts of the country. Louisa May Alcott, for example, addressed the desire for women to be more than fashion plates in her novel *Little Women*. In one of the most obvious examples of this, young Meg allowed herself to be dolled up and to play the part of a fashionable, frivolous young lady at a party. Back home, after a tearful confession and a gentle reprimand, her mother expressed her desire to raise daughters who are not

⁹DN 24 August 1859, p. 195.

only beautiful, but “accomplished, and good.” She counseled, “make this home happy, so that you may be fit for homes of your own.”¹⁰

The *News* wasted no time in pinpointing a very definite culprit for this problem of female superficiality. The culprit, female education, they believed, needed serious evaluation and alteration. Specifically and most importantly, mothers needed to take more serious responsibility for the proper training of their daughters. One major aspect of education reform that concerned Utahns centered in the lack of educated housekeepers. Repeatedly throughout the period the *News* warned of the impending problem of the lack of well-educated housekeepers, especially among the upcoming generation of young women. An 1862 article effectively summed up the concern expressed throughout the period.

The greatest danger to our daughters in the present time is the neglect of domestic education. Not only to themselves, but to husbands, families, and the community at large; does the evil extend. By far the greatest amount of happiness in civilized life is found in the domestic relations, and most of these depend on the domestic culture and habits of the wife and mother. Let our daughters be intellectually educated as highly as possible; let their moral and social nature receive the highest race of vigor and refinement; but along with these, let the domestic virtues find a prominent place.¹¹

An earlier article asserted, “the experience of every-day life, especially among civilized people, shows us that housework, is a part of the sphere of woman's duty. We would not confine her to this particular form of labor, but a knowledge of housewifery should form the basis of every woman's education, which education can never be complete without it.”¹²

¹⁰Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Watermill, 1983), 108.

¹¹DN 27 August 1862, p. 66.

¹²DN 29 April 1857, p. 60.

Scarcely a month passed that an article or two in the *Deseret News* didn't bewail the abhorrent educational system for females. Girls, authors around the country insisted, were being taught useless, impractical skills. One writer dubbed them "accomplished babies." They learned French and how to play the piano, but possessed no knowledge about useful skills, especially housekeeping. Ornamental education was definitely under attack. Most articles poked fun at this useless education. A few articles acknowledged that it was good in moderate doses. Women's education, the editors widely agreed, should prepare them for marriage. Far too many young women seriously lacked in this area because they had never been taught.

Although articles on female education predominately dealt with lack of sufficient domestic education, several articles encouraged women to cultivate other branches of education (as long as it did not overshadow the former). A lengthy article which illustrated the impossible task of finding a girl skilled in housework, concluded with, "Washing, baking, and sweeping need not prevent your daughters from becoming expert musicians, finished painters, profound mathematicians, or even good wives."¹³ An article devoted to instructing women in handling servants properly, concluded that a woman might appropriately hire servants to help with housework because "she has various duties to perform besides those in the kitchen. She is to be the companion of her husband, and the educator of her children, and she must not neglect to cultivate her own mind by reading and writing."¹⁴ The *News*, therefore did not advocate against female intellectual education. However, it strongly warned against forsaking proper domestic education.

¹³DN 30 May 1855, p. 95.

¹⁴DN 31 October 1855, p. 270.

Along with domestic education, the *News* urged women to become skilled and knowledgeable so they could be marketable and independent.¹⁵ Above all, the *News* stressed the practicality that should characterize women's education. Practical education should first and foremost allow the woman to perform her domestic duties excellently. The definition of domestic duties ranged from the basic cooking and housekeeping to duties of a "lady" such as being able to converse well. Second, the practical education could allow her to be proficient in a marketable skill. Judging solely by the number of articles in support of it, editors of the *News* deemed the first function of a practical education the more important.

In 1867 an original article for the *News* took the idea of practical education a step further. It stated, "the question of women's rights is an exciting one in the east at the present time. But, leaving the discussion of this fruitful theme to others who delight in theories, it is our policy to deal with the subject practically. Care should be taken to throw around woman every safeguard that will shield her purity and preserve her from contamination. No people can ever attain unto any pitch of greatness who neglect the cultivation and education of their women."¹⁶

The Church of Jesus Christ placed high priority upon education, including education for women. The first school in the Great Basin operated in a tent in 1847 under the direction of a woman, Mary Jane Dilworth. The first physical schools were built in the wards of the Church in 1850. Buildings were used for church meetings and social events as well as for school.¹⁷ Additionally, in 1850, the University of Deseret

¹⁵DN 29 January 1858.

¹⁶DN 10 December 1867.

¹⁷Donna Toland Smart, Mormon Midwife: The 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1997), 161 f.n. 9.

opened its doors to women as well as to men.¹⁸ In 1868 Martha T. Cannon advertised the opening of a “Ladies’ Select School” in which women would be taught grammar, composition, geography, elocution, and could be trained to become teachers.¹⁹ The diaries of Patty Sessions mention several instances of women actively participating in educational activities. For instance, she mentioned an evening writing school which women attended.²⁰

However, the emphasis placed on formal education should not, in the opinion of the *News*, overshadow the importance of a young woman’s tutelage by her mother. Throughout the period the *News* placed blame upon mothers for not doing a sufficient job in raising and educating their daughters properly. One quip read, “It was a judicious resolution of a father, when being asked what he intended to do with his girls, he answered, ‘I intend to apprentice them to their excellent mother, that they may learn the art of improving time, and be fitted to become like her, wives, mothers, and heads of families, and useful and ornamental members of society.’”²¹ Too many mothers, according to the *News*, fell too far short of this ideal.

In 1852 Brigham Young delivered a strong discourse on education to mothers. He stated, “education commences with the mother, and the child in connection.” Furthermore, “the character of a person is formed through life, to a greater or less degree, by the teachings of the mother. The traits of early impressions that she gives the child, will be characteristic points in his character through every avenue of his mortal existence.” Young plead with women to live true to their callings as mothers.

¹⁸See Lawrence Foster, “Polygamy and the Frontier: Mormon Women in Early Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 50 (1982): 282.

¹⁹*Deseret News Semi-Weekly*, 24 March 1868

²⁰Smart, January 1851.

²¹DN 1 July 1857, p. 134.

It depends in a great degree upon the mother, as to what children receive, in early age, of principle of every description, pertaining to all that can be learned by the human family. When will mothers understand this? Knowing that this is the case, I am perplexed with grief when I see such a wanton diversion from the real design of life, it causes me to mourn for my poor, ignorant, fellow mortals, and sometimes almost goads me to anger. I can see mothers pay attention to everything under heaven, *but* the training up of their children in the way they should go.”

President Young instructed mothers and future mothers to develop themselves spiritually so they could more effectively teach their children.²²

Church leaders further instructed mothers to train their daughters to “pursue some useful avocation for a sustenance” so that they would be able to support themselves while their husbands served missions. The mother should also teach their daughters in domestic work, “to work in the kitchen, as well as in the parlor.”²³ Latter-day Saint Mary Fielding Smith’s biographer described her home as “a practical training ground for the girls which prepared them well for the day they would become wives and mothers.”²⁴

Mothers, according to many articles, overburdened themselves with drudgery to allow their girls to lounge in the parlor and attend social functions. These mothers, though attempting to do their children favors, actually did them a great disservice, by not fully preparing them for life. The *News* asked, “what can the mother mean, who fails to instruct her daughter in these things? . . . Away with this flagrant outrage upon common sense. Let girls be taught the practical duties of their sphere.”²⁵ One article stated, “Mothers who encourage their daughters in superficial accomplishments and bodily

²²G. D. Watt, ed., Journal of Discourses by President Brigham Young and Other Church Leaders, Vol. 1 (Liechtenstein: Gastera Trust, Schaan, 1955), 66-68.

²³James R. Clark, ed., Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1833-1964, Vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 208.

²⁴Don Cecil Corbett, Mary Fielding Smith: Daughter of Britain, Portrait of Courage (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 258.

²⁵DN 16 February 1854.

display, are often preparing for them a life of chagrin and misery. On the other hand, when they are trained at home, by precept and example, in retiring, industrious, studious, virtuous habits, they are prepared to be useful and happy throughout life.”²⁶ Patty Sessions reflected this idea when she wrote, “I also feel thankful that I had a mother that put me to work when I was young and learned me how.”²⁷ A *Deseret News* statement summed it up with, “Too great care cannot be taken in educating our young ladies. Great responsibilities will devolve upon them. To their hands will be mainly committed the formation of the moral and intellectual character of the young.”²⁸

Female education, specifically mothers’ roles in female education, unquestionably stood as the answer to helping women rise to their truly significant roles, according to the *News*. Articles sought to convince women that they were designed for more than waxen dolls and ornamental figures. A lengthy article in the *News* placed women at the head of society by expressing,

she forms, moulds, colors, and directs everything. The young character is in her hands altogether. She is the head and front of the family, whether by an assumed or conceded authority. She is the heart of the household always, even if she does not happen to be the head as well. She not only bakes and brews, but she trains boys and girls in those simple, and temperate, and almost Spartan habits, that afterward project themselves with the force of new individual powers upon the destinies of the outside world. This is the province of the wife of the farmer--no more and no less. It is not her lot to do nothing but make butter and cheese, or knit stockings and spin wool, away in the country solitudes; but all around her she is every scattering the seed of a choice grain whose fruits are not for a day, but are immortal.²⁹

The article asserted that if a wife could but understand the importance of her role, “what a difference would it not work in her tasks and in her lot! How fresh would be her

²⁶DN 24 February 1858, p. 405.

²⁷Smart, 308.

²⁸DN 9 May 1868.

²⁹DN 19 May 1858.

resolution, how invigorating would her purposes become!”³⁰ As Church leaders said, “the females are the ones by whom the nations are ruled. It is certain that the females have necessarily great influence upon the whole community, and especially upon the rising generation.”³¹ The *News*’ rhetoric about the vital nature of women’s roles to the community at large closely resembles the place of women in revolutionary America as described by Linda Kerber. Women’s place as mother stood as preeminent, for it was her instruction, example, and influence that produced patriotic, virtuous sons and daughters.³² The *Deseret News* certainly served as a platform for encouraging the strengthening of women’s roles. The three basic domestic roles were addressed in the *News*. Women were to properly fulfill their roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers.

First, women held, as their responsibility, the task to make homes. The homemaker’s charge encompassed the emotional and spiritual well-being of her family as well as the material necessities and comforts of life. Hand-in-hand with maintaining an industrious and economical household as discussed in the previous chapter, a housekeeper should make her home a haven. One article successfully illustrated what a home should and should not be. The author described three different homes. In one example, the housekeeper failed to do her duties properly and therefore kept a constantly unkempt, unorganized, and unpleasant place for the family to live. The second home, headed by a housekeeper who paid attention to outward appearances only, was painfully clean (at least in the rooms seen by company). The housekeeper confined her husband

³⁰DN 19 May 1858.

³¹Watt, 319.

³²See Linda K. Kerber, “The Republican Mother,” in Linda K. Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, eds., U.S. History as Women’s History: new Feminist Essays (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). See also Jan Lewis, “Republican Wifehood: Virtue and Secution in the Early Republic,” William and Mary Quarterly 44 (October 1987): 689-721.

and children to back rooms in order to keep front rooms in order for company. This house was also very uncomfortable. The third house, in contrast, was a true haven. The cheerful, loving homemaker kept it neat, orderly, and beautiful. The children and husband loved to be in the home, for it was kept with their interests in mind. This home stood as the example to which women should aspire.³³ The article successfully summarized this housekeeping theme that appeared frequently throughout the pages of the *News*.

The *News* emphasized that the homemakers' attentions should be for her husband. Numerous articles asserted that housekeeping affected marital happiness and the level of prosperity of the family. Furthermore, the *News* frequently warned women that, should she fail to keep a proper home, she should not be surprised if her husband went elsewhere to find happiness and comfort. As an 1868 article read, "We will give to intellect, to immortality, to religion and to all virtues, the honor that belongs to them. And still it may be boldly affirmed that economy, taste skill and neatness in the kitchen have a great deal to do in making life happy and prosperous. . . . A dirty kitchen and bad cooking have driven many a one from home to seek for comfort and happiness somewhere else."³⁴ Several articles discussed the phenomenon of men who did not desire to be at home, or worse yet, wanted to rid themselves of their wives. In these dilemmas, the fault invariably rested upon the woman for not providing a happy environment for her spouse.³⁵ However, Church leaders taught LDS men that the happiness in their home was not solely dependent on their wives and children. They too should work to make their homes a heaven on earth.³⁶

³³DN 5 December 1855.

³⁴DN 17 March 1858.

³⁵See DN 25 January 1865, p. 134.

³⁶Watt, 356.

Second, the pages of the *News* extolled women's role as wife. Throughout the period under study the *News* portrayed many different patterns of spousal relationships, from the henpecked husband and dominant wife to the overly-demonstrative husband and the oppressed wife. Of course, the analogy used commonly in the nineteenth century of the vine and the oak provided the ultimate idealized representation of the woman's role in relationship to her husband.

As the vine which has long twisted its graceful foliage about the oak, and been lifted by it into sunshine, will, when the hardy plant is razed by the thunder-bolt, cling round it with caressing tendrils, and hired up its shattered boughs; so it is beautifully ordered by Providence, that woman, who is the dependent and ornament of man in his happier hours, should be his stay and solace, when smitten with sudden calamity; winding herself into the rugged recesses of his nature, tenderly supporting the drooping head, and binding up the broken heart.³⁷

In 1866 the *News* reprinted an address delivered to graduates from an eastern female school. In this article Bishop Duane scolded the female portion of humanity and blamed them for the vice rampant in the world, including corruption, licentiousness, and infidelity. "For these things," he says, "your sex is greatly answerable." As a reason, he asserted that women neglected being true to themselves. "If women were but true to God, true to their position, true to themselves, they would have strength from [God] to hold the world in check." Men, the bishop asserted, looked to women for strength, and if women allowed themselves to be fallen, the men would fall, too. Instead of focusing on important things, he said, women occupied themselves with fashion, dress, flattery, and social amusements. They displayed a lack of interest in domestic activities and allowed the opposite sex inappropriate access in terms of physical propriety. Furthermore, they neglected their religious devotions. Then, recalling the vine/oak analogy, he said, "the

³⁷DN 16 January 1856.

woman is no longer what she was made to be-- 'a helpmeet' of the man. And man ceases to be what God designed him for—her partner, her prop and her protector.”³⁸

Prescriptive literature expected women to have uplifting effects upon men, specifically their husbands. One particular story, reprinted numerous times in the pages of the *News*, told of a perpetually cheerful man. When asked how he could manage to maintain such consistent happiness, he replied simply. His wife, in making life so pleasing for him, made it impossible for him to be otherwise than happy. The *News* asserted,

the power of a wife for good or evil is irresistible. Home must be the seat of happiness, or it must be forever unknown. A good wife is to a man wisdom and courage, and strength and endurance. A bad one is confusion, weakness, discomfiture and despair. . . No spirit can long endure bad domestic influence. Man is strong, but his heart is not adamant. He delights in enterprise and action; but to sustain him he needs a tranquil mind and whole heart. He needs his moral force in the conflict with the world. To recover his equanimity and composure, home must be to him a place of repose, of peace, of cheerfulness, of comfort; and his soul renews its strength again and goes forth with fresh vigor to encounter the labor and troubles of life. But if at home he finds no rest, and is there met with bad temper, sullenness or gloom, or is assailed by discontent or complaint, hope vanishes, and he sinks into despair.³⁹

Marriage stood as a vital part of LDS society and the *News* urged its practice, often scolding bachelors. Absolutely nothing should be allowed to weaken the institutions of marriage and family.

The question of obedience of women to their husbands received attention in addresses by Church leaders. In one instance, Brigham Young explained, “It is not my general practice to counsel the sisters to disobey their husbands, but my counsel is—*obey your husband*; and I am sanguine and most emphatic on that subject. But I never

³⁸DN 15 March 1866.

³⁹DN 1 July 1863.

counselled a woman to follow her husband to the devil. If a man is determined to expose the lives of his friends, let that man go to the devil and to destruction alone.”⁴⁰

Prescriptive literature often spoke of women’s influence. A term used often and infused with meaning, the *News* defined influence well. “The course of a true woman is like that of the gentle stream, which without cataracts or noise, come softly down from their secret fountains in the hills, and judicate their presence only by the deeper verdure of the meadows they water and the sweet flowers that fringe their borders.”⁴¹ Women were expected to form and mold those they had contact with. However, a true woman would not do it loudly, only by quiet, subtle influence. Such should be the influence of a wife.

The influence of a wife coupled with the influence of a mother. Mothers, like wives, according to rhetoric, stood as the molders of societies. In an address to the Saints, Brigham Young, in speaking of the important role of both parents, asserted, “impressions and habits formed in the cradle, in the mother’s arms, and under the father’s eye, are vivid, strong, and lasting; and will sustain their influence for good or evil, throughout life; and the nation in which they live will partake of that influence.”⁴² Just two weeks after, in a similar address, mothers were encouraged, “the destiny of individuals and nations are in the hands of mothers, to a very great extent.”⁴³ In a Relief Society meeting in 1868 Brigham Young exhorted that “if [nations] could only inspire the feeling and gain the aid of mothers they could always raise armies.”⁴⁴ In 1868 the

⁴⁰Watt, 77.

⁴¹DN 24 June 1863, p. 414.

⁴²DN 6 March 1852, p. 34.

⁴³DN 20 March 1852, p. 38.

⁴⁴Fifteenth Ward, Salt Lake Stake Relief Society Minutes. March 1868 - May 1869.

News described Utah, “here virtue is fostered, matrimony is honored, the name of mother is prized as one of the holiest in the vocabulary of our language, and children abound.”⁴⁵

A speech given in Utah in association with the Council of Health urged women to take care of their health in order to allow themselves to fill their important role as mother. “Ladies, take care of yourselves! Now has the hour of light come; improve it; pour out the true knowledge of heaven to your children.”⁴⁶ Patty Sessions also related one of the first meetings of the Female Council of Health in which “we. . . spoke much on the subject of taking care of our health to avoid tight lacing cold or wet feet to take care of our infants and how to train up our children that they may be prepared to be saints and fill the measure of their creation in ritcheousness.”⁴⁷

Contrary to one historian’s interpretation of mothering views in this period in Utah history, the *Deseret News* echoed the Victorian theme of the ideal mother trumpeted throughout the rest of the country. This historian asserted,

In the early years of the Mormon church—in fact, even later in the nineteenth century—sermons and rhetoric about motherhood as an institution are relatively uncommon. Motherhood seems to have been taken for granted, requiring little comment. . . Nor was there much idealization of motherhood or romanticizing of the mother’s role. The frontier societies of Missouri, Nauvoo, and the Great Basin had little room for the Victorian image of the pure, gentle, ever-patient mother. Because of geographical distance and cultural lag, this image would not reach Utah until the turn of the century.⁴⁸

The *Deseret News* certainly did urge women in the Victorian concept of the ideal mother. Indeed, most of the female-targeted rhetoric in the *Deseret News* centered upon

⁴⁵DN 31 March 1868.

⁴⁶DN 24 July 1852.

⁴⁷Smart, 174.

⁴⁸Linda P. Wilcox, “Mormon Motherhood: Official Images” in Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, eds., Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective (Urbana: U of Illinois Press, 1987), 209.

the realization of motherhood as an institution to be guarded and protected. In the Victorian tradition, the *News* asserted that a mother should be, above all, ever-gentle, patient, and self-sacrificing.⁴⁹ As one article put it, the father is the hour hand in children's lives, but the mother is the minute hand, always there.⁵⁰ "There is no tear which a mother's gentle hand cannot wipe away, no wound that a mother's kiss cannot heal, no anguish which the sweet murmuring of her soft, low voice cannot soothe."⁵¹ Articles scolding women for not being proper mothers reflected the same characteristics of superficiality preached to young upcoming mothers. Several articles, written by fictional children or infants, complained of their neglectful, frivolous, unthoughtful mothers.⁵² One article strongly asserted, "wealth, fashion, display, and a false gentility have murdered many an innocent babe, have deprived it of its natural, life-sustaining nutriment, or converted that nutriment into poison. Not till mothers cease to be ashamed to nurse and assist in the taking care of their own children can we expect a healthy people, or a generation of children trained up in the way they should go."⁵³

The articles about motherhood in the *Deseret News* often viewed women as individuals striving to *become* that ideal Victorian mother. Fewer assumed that women had reached the ideal already. The *News* encouraged them in three main areas. First, several articles in the *News* during this period instructed women to be more patient. "There may be hours when, perplexed with care and worn out with undue labor, the mother may feel the risings of impatience in her heart; but let her not give way to this baneful emotion, but nip it in the bud before its fruits become visible in acts of which she

⁴⁹See DN 12 October 1854 and 16 November 1854.

⁵⁰DN 6 February 1856, p. 379.

⁵¹DN 6 May 1857, p. 87.

⁵²See DN 8 June 1854; 16 April 1856, p. 47; and 17 February 1858, p. 395.

⁵³DN 3 September 1856, p. 208 and 14 January 1857, p. 358.

may afterwards bitterly repent.”⁵⁴ In one story, a husband quizzed his wife on the important work she accomplished in a day. The wife, embarrassed, admitted that she did not have physical proof of work completed in the form of yards of stitching or such. Instead, she explained to her husband, she had worked very hard that day on being consistently patient despite a trying day, and had succeeded. The husband humbly and feelingly responded, “mine was work, yours a battle—mine success, yours conquest—mine easy toil, yours heroism! Jenny, dear, since you have been talking, I have thought thus: My good work has soiled my garments, while yours are without a stain, and white as angel robes. Loving monitor! may your lesson of to-night make me a better man.”⁵⁵

Second, the *News* instructed mothers to be firm. They should be consistent in their discipline, not giving in to childhood whims. One article scolded “easy” mothers who do their children disservice by giving them everything and anything they wanted.⁵⁶ In an article entitled “Be Firm with your Children,” a mother reluctantly gave in to her child’s relentless demands for a piece of cake. When the child’s sister desired a piece also, the child remarked, “Well, you bawl, and mother’ll give you a piece. I did.”⁵⁷ The *News* exhorted women to not let their children control them, but to consistently and firmly mold the children.

Finally, a mother should always exhibit love and never degrade her children. “But let a mother approve of her child’s conduct whenever she can. Let her show that his good behavior makes her sincerely happy. Let her reward him for his efforts to please, by smiles and affection. In this way she will cherish in her child’s heart some of the noblest

⁵⁴DN 2 April 1856, p. 31. See also 30 April 1856, p. 62.

⁵⁵DN 7 July 1858, p. 84.

⁵⁶DN 14 March 1860, p. 11. See also 9 January 1861, p. 354.

⁵⁷DN 15 April 1857, p. 46

and most desirable feelings of our nature.”⁵⁸ So, the ideal Utah Victorian mother was one who was patient, firm, and loving. As one article succinctly explained, “The Duties of a Mother.--She should be firm--gentle--kind--always ready to attend to her child.”⁵⁹

As members of the Church, leaders felt LDS mothers had special duties, even above those of other mothers to properly train members of God’s kingdom. They were specifically instructed to not devote all their energies on the physical care of children to the exclusion of spiritual well-being.⁶⁰ Sirius, a pseudonym for possibly an LDS leader counseled, “Mothers, whatever else you do or do not give to your children--impart to them by your teachings and example, a supreme, abiding faith in God. It is the richest legacy you can leave them. It is the foundation of all real greatness and goodness. It will develop all that is noble and generous in the character--all that is pure and exalted in the soul.”⁶¹ Church leaders emphasized the importance of women’s duties in the home by encouraging mothers in their responsibilities. Brigham Young said, “Mothers, I wish you would wake up and act in your office and calling, as well as the brethren. It is *their* calling to go and preach the Gospel, build up the kingdom of God, and establish righteousness, and it is for you to be stewards at home, and attend to the things that they leave behind, and to get wisdom and knowledge in all these things pertaining to your duty.”⁶²

A Relief Society meeting held in July of 1868 in the Tabernacle included a question and answer period that sheds light on women’s roles in the LDS community. Church leader George A. Smith provided the answers to the following questions. First,

⁵⁸DN 15 June 1859, p. 115.

⁵⁹DN 23 April 1856, p. 54.

⁶⁰DN 22 July 1857, p. 157.

⁶¹DN18 January 1860, p. 363.

⁶²Watt, 205.

the group queried as to when a young lady was qualified to marry. The answer was, when she is a good housekeeper, can mend her husband's clothes, and when the right person presents himself. Second, the women wondered to whom a child owed its first duty. Elder Smith answered that first a child owes duty to parents and second to God. Finally, the question was asked to whom a married lady owes her first duty. Interestingly, the minutes indicate that this question was discussed but not decided upon.⁶³

Although Patty Sessions was beyond her child-bearing years at the beginning of the period under study, reflections about motherhood still found their way into her entries, even though motherhood did not constitute a significant portion of her daily duties. At a "female meeting" held in March of 1852, Patty reported that the women talked about how to care for infants and "how to train up our children that they may be prepared to be saints and fill the measure of thier creation in ritcheosness."⁶⁴ Raising children constituted the topics of several of the Female Council of Health meetings evidently attended by Patty.⁶⁵ Her son, Peregrine, occupied her thoughts often. When he left Utah to serve a mission for the Church she expressed her desire to pray for him day and night and worried for his safety. But she found comfort in her belief that if she and her son remained righteous, they would be assured of meeting again in the next life.⁶⁶ Since she was between the ages of 55 and 75 during the period, Patty experienced not only motherhood, but grand- and great-grand-motherhood during this part of her life. She announced the birth of her first great-grandchild in her diary.⁶⁷ In February of 1865 after

⁶³Fifteenth Ward, Salt Lake Stake Relief Society Minutes, 1868 March - 1869 May.

⁶⁴Smart, 173.

⁶⁵see Smart, 212.

⁶⁶Smart, 181.

⁶⁷Smart, 264.

attending a family party, Patty feelingly wrote, "I feel to thank the Lord that I have lived to see and enjoy what I enjoy that I enjoy health and activity can go and associate with my children and their children and thier children's children and can dance with them with as much ease as when I was young. And the Lord be thanked for all his blessings to me."⁶⁸

Even her advanced age did not keep Patty from mothering responsibilities, however. In January of 1859, a former plural wife of her husband (now married to another man) gave Patty her daughter, Alzinia, to raise as Patty's own. Patty recorded the sewing and educating she performed for this adopted daughter. It appeared to be an important part of her life. In February she remarked proudly, "made Alzinia a white peticoat and pantalets I am learning her to read and knit she learns fast"⁶⁹ However, perhaps the feelings toward this adopted daughter didn't run as deep as those for her own children. In September of 1861 Patty noted that Alzinia had left. "I have clothed her up well. . . I have kept her almost three years she is now almost nine years old now but I do not want her any longer."⁷⁰

Martha Spence Heywood expressed her feelings towards wifhood and motherhood after years as a single woman. "The value of belonging to somebody by the years experience of belonging to nobody, and gaining through that Somebody whom we call *Lord*, the rich blessing of children to give tone & exercise to the long treasured up woman's feelings, that many times seemed to burst the vessel that contained them."⁷¹ In her diary, Martha expressed, "This night completed one year of my becoming a married woman, the result of which is my coming into possession of my precious boy who lacks

⁶⁸Smart, 323.

⁶⁹Smart, 265.

⁷⁰Smart, 289.

⁷¹Juanita Brooks, ed., Not By Bread Alone: The Journal of Martha Spence Heywood, 1850-1856 (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1978), 134.

two days of being two months old and having a husband to care and watch over me that I feel reverence, love and esteem [for] and connected with a family that I am proud to be a member of, and realize that I am much happier now than I was a year ago. My child is the consummation of all my earthly wishes.”⁷²

Indisputably, the *Deseret News* and Latter-day Saints honored motherhood.⁷³ A telling statement from the *News* read, “it may be that the women of Utah, in every instance, do not possess the most ladylike manners, but in their capacity as wives and mothers we maintain that they are above reproach, in fact unexceptionable.”⁷⁴ And that was what was important! The highest honor to be bestowed upon a Latter-day Saint woman was to be a true “mother in Israel.”⁷⁵

A contrast exists between female rhetoric in the *News* and certain literature in other parts of the country that portrayed women’s activities in the home as “a new form of leisure.” This literature, as described by historian Jeanne Boydston, portrayed women’s domestic tasks in abstract terms that did not recognize the drudgery and sweat involved in running a household. In these portrayals, angel women flitted around, unruffled, in a house that seemed to miraculously and spontaneously produce its own food, light, heat, and clothing.⁷⁶ Fictional articles in the *News* from other exchanges definitely portray this type of homemaking. However, the constant reiterations of the *News* to be constantly employed in industrious tasks, the frequent articles addressing

⁷²Brooks, 77.

⁷³A poem written by Utahn S. E. Carmichael illustrates this in two poems. See DN 2 November 1859 and 4 July 1860, p. 142. See also a piece written by “Orion” for the *News*, 3 December 1862, p. 178.

⁷⁴DN 19 September 1868.

⁷⁵See Corbett, 267.

⁷⁶Jeanne Boydston, Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 146.

specific homemaking tasks, the observations of the difficulty and drudgery of women's work, and indeed the general flavor of articles in the *News* acknowledged women's activities as labor directly related to the economic well-being of the society. In fact, women's lack of understanding in this matter directly led to useless, superficial young ladies.

Women's literature concerning domestic roles in the *Deseret News* continued to exhibit anti-modernist themes. Nostalgic references to the Revolutionary Era portrayed a time when women diligently fulfilled their home-based duties. Many articles represented recent past generations of women as those to whom younger generations should look for quality examples. The frequent label of the superficial young woman as "a modern woman," illustrates the *News*' anti-modern tendencies. In the same vein, articles in the *News* often yearned for a previous classless society. Although exceptions to this existed (several times in the *News*, articles instructed women to function according to their appropriate station in society), often articles in the *News* portrayed the ideal woman as one who could effectively and unashamedly run all components of the household and still exhibit ladylike characteristics. A true lady, according to the *News*, honorably fulfilled her domestic roles and could move freely and easily between the kitchen and the parlor. The *News*' concern with a classless society also indicated the desire of Church leaders to unify the wide range of classes that lived and worked together in the Great Basin.

A main purpose of the female-targeted literature in the *Deseret News* was to urge women to cling to their roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers, and to disengage themselves from superficial practices. This rhetoric echoed similar concerns in the rest of the country and incorporated LDS doctrine of the central importance of family to societies and to eternal salvation. It furthermore portrayed Church leaders' preoccupation, not only with women's importance in the economic well-being of Utah

Territory, but with women's necessary role in the spiritual well-being and general health and happiness of Utah.

Chapter 4

The Woman Question: Asked and Answered

Throughout the 1850s and 1860s, the *Deseret News* unceasingly reiterated women's proper roles. This prescriptive literature changed little between 1852 and 1870. On the eve of Utah women receiving voting rights, LDS Church leaders voiced many of the same concerns and advice they voiced during the dawn of the territorial period in Utah. However, during the mid-1860s the prescribers of women's roles hit a snag. As opportunities for formal education and employment outside of the home became more accessible in the United States, and eastern women began to agitate for political rights, concerned individuals worried over "the Woman Question." Prescriptive literature early in the period advised women to educate their minds and become trained in a marketable skill. However, they never intended to suggest that women forsake home and family to any degree in favor of outside pursuits. How far should women go in pursuing ventures outside the home? How would this affect families, and, therefore, societies? Of course the political issue took center stage. Could suffrage be appropriately included within the prescribed sphere of women?

The pages of the *Deseret News* indicate that a change of opinion concerning women's rights occurred towards the middle and end of the 1860s. By 1852 women had been working for women's rights for several years. These early efforts created no small stir, even in the far reaches of the Great Basin. Initially, the *News* echoed other skeptical eastern papers and generally ridiculed the concept of women's rights. By mid-1860 several articles admitted that women's rights arguments were understandable and even compelling. By 1870 the *News* openly advocated rights for Utah women and Utah women received suffrage.

Initially, LDS leaders responded to the turmoil over women's rights in the States by asserting Utah women's moral superiority over women's rights agitators. Furthermore, Utahns believed their social system far excelled that in the East and therefore precluded any need for increased rights for women. These sentiments find expression in Eliza R. Snow's poem written in 1852 wherein she asserted that because of Utah men's righteous and noble characters, Utah women were comfortable acknowledging Utah men as their superiors. Toasts given at Utah celebrations such as those for the Fourth and Twenty-fourth of July (celebrating the arrival of the LDS pioneers in Salt Lake Valley) gave some indication of Utah's opinion. At the fourth of July celebration in 1852, the two toasts for women proclaimed, "The LADIES of Deseret - A pattern of virtue and integrity to all civilized female society; may they never lack for a "Lord" or protector, to wield a sword, or spend a ball in defence of their virtue and innocence." Second, "The Ladies of Utah - The paragon of their sex - happy in the true exercise of 'woman's rights.'"¹ At the Anniversary party of the Typographical Society of Deseret, the toast read, "Zion's Daughters - Beautiful and glorious - not to reign over us, but by a noble submission, exhibit to mankind the most exalted character and dignity of woman."²

However, despite the avowals of confidence in Utah women and their righteous male counterparts, the *Deseret News* made their views clearly known, lest any confusion should arise. In the early years of the *News*, editors coupled reports of women's rights conventions with either statements of ridicule or assertions of the Utah system's supremacy over the system suggested by women's rights advocates.³ As early as the

¹DN 10 July 1852.

²DN 16 March 1854.

³Some reports of woman's rights conventions are listed without comment during this early period (See DN 21 August 1852 and 27 November 1852.)

spring of 1851, the *News* printed a *New York Herald* report of a woman's rights convention held in Massachusetts in the fall of 1850. After listing what appear to be the actual resolutions passed at the convention (calling for equal rights without regard to sex and color), the ridiculing article listed what appeared to the editor to be the goals of the convention. These included abolishing the Bible and the Constitution, establishing an equal social platform for all, regardless of color, electing Abby Kelly President of the United States and Lucretia Mott Commander-in Chief of the Army, and "to cut throats AD LIBITUM." The article declared, "what a happy state of society we shall have, when all these things shall have taken place, and every thing is brought to one grand level. There will be no Gods in heaven, in hell no devils, and on earth women, for as the ladies preached at the convention, 'THEY WOULD ALL WEAR THE BREECHES.' Surely the end must be nigh."⁴ Although not speaking specifically of women, Brigham Young told the Saints, "Some would tell you that you are deprived of the free exercise of your rights by 'Mormon' interference. . . . They consider that they are curtailed in the free exercise of their rights, because they . . . cannot change our domestic and social system to the lowest standard of this depraved age."⁵

In a fictional article, clearly ridiculing women's rights, a man played the part of the girl, taking on girlish habits, speech, and tendencies in a love scene while the girl played the part of the man. The whole story illustrated the ridiculous nature of men and women changing places in society.⁶ An LDS writer painted the fearful picture that granting women's rights would burden women with more duties in addition to her

⁴DN 22 March 1851.

⁵DN 14 October 1863, p. 961.

⁶DN 5 March 1856.

already heavy domestic tasks. It would also usher in a state of strong women and weak men, a common fear.⁷

In another article echoing this fear of female rule, the *News* presented the analogy of a king who allowed his queen to rule for a day. The consequences of this unfortunate decision, the article reported, included the queen's orders for the king's death so she could rule in his place from that point forward. The editor's comments at the end of the story counseled men to not allow their love for women to trick them into allowing women more power than they should have. "Men may gain kingdoms, and place the crown on woman, if they choose. He who has wisdom enough to win a crown, ought to have wisdom enough to wear it on his own head, in righteousness."⁸ The phrase, "in righteousness" is significant. Much LDS rhetoric referred to men's responsibility to govern with love. It echoes the sentiments of Eliza R. Snow's poem, extolling the virtues of Utah men.

As evidenced by the extensive prescriptive literature already discussed, Utah leaders felt that traditional roles of mother, wife, and homemaker stood as women's primary responsibility and the greatest roles they could ever play in the success of society. An article by Brigham Young in the *News* illustrated it well. The article asserted that the "Gentile" world would place schoolteachers at the head of society, thus: the teacher governs the children, the children govern the mothers, the mothers govern the husbands. The article asserted the incorrect nature of this scenario. Instead, individuals should realize their truly important roles. Men should stop spending their time, "quibbling about little, party, politics, too small for human notice." Women, especially, however, should take their proper place by governing well their children. While women

⁷DN 12 October 1859, p. 250.

⁸DN 27 November 1852.

held their conventions and connived how they might control government, their neglected children at home devised how they could take control of their mother and get their own wishes. The article asserted that “when man descends below his native dignity and stoops to spend his life in things beneath him, he may reasonably expect that those whom nature and providence designed for his inferiors in the scale of intelligence, will rise to become his superiors; and hence the saying of an ancient prophet, ‘women shall rule over them.’” Both women and men should occupy their proper place.⁹

In 1856, the *News* printed a fable that illustrated the futility of women’s rights using the vine/oak analogy. In this fable the vine requested that she and the oak switch places. The oak replied that this was not how nature intended it to be. On the contrary, the oak, was “too large and too solid to bend.” Instead, the oak instructed the vine to prettily ornament him with her green leaves and red berries while he manfully supported her. The vine then requested that she grow independently of the oak. Again, the oak assured her that that was not what nature intended and painted a frightful picture of what would happen if the vine tried to grow independently. The vine concluded, “‘Ah, me! . . .let me escape from such a destiny;’ and with this she entwined herself around the oak, and both grew and flourished happily together.”¹⁰

Many articles opposing female suffrage draw upon the idea of Republican Motherhood wherein the woman influenced society through her children. As the *News* explained, via another exchange, “Cradles are the ballot boxes for women—in which they should deposit not votes, but voters.”¹¹ A woman who honored her true roles, asserted Charles Dickens in an exchange, “does more for human nature and more for woman’s

⁹DN 20 March 1852.

¹⁰DN 14 May 1856, p. 78.

¹¹DN 24 September 1856, p. 232.

cause than all the sea-captains, barristers, judges, and members of Parliament put together.”¹²

An LDS author, “Sirius,” asserted,

there is no necessity for extending the sphere of [woman’s] influence. She already possesses more influence than man has, or ever can have, despite [man’s] boast of being lord of creation. . . Woman has in her hands the future, not merely of individuals, but of States, of nations and of worlds. The mind of the child, in her hand, is plastic as wax; she may mold it as she wills. The future hero or statesman is subject to her will, ready at her bidding. . . It is to women we are indebted for most of the good the world has experienced from their illustrious sons; and it is to women, under God, that we must look for the renovation and elevation of the human race. May the daughters of Zion appreciate their privileges and responsibilities, and faithfully discharge them.¹³

Additionally, Daniel H. Wells counseled women to “altho’ you may not be called upon to encounter the fierce contest of the world, as your brothers, fathers, or husbands, yet your path shall so closely entwine itself with theirs, as to strengthen, nourish and sustain them. . . Let excellence, goodness and industry, embellish your lives, and the star of your glory shall never wane, nor the promised inheritance to dwell among the Gods be withheld.”¹⁴

One article acknowledged that perhaps women’s rights was not necessarily a bad idea and “no doubt it is well enough, and may possibly so agitate the stagnation of social affairs that great good will eventuate from it.” However, the editor left those concerns to “Miss Lucy Stone and her co-workers.” This particular editor saw the greater trouble in women’s lack of concern about the state of their homes.¹⁵ This 1854 article is

¹²“The True Woman - who is called a Jewel,” DN 30 November 1854.

¹³DN 12 October 1859, p. 250.

¹⁴DN 24 September 1862.

¹⁵DN 7 September 1854.

significant in that it does not openly ridicule women's rights, but only is concerned with women's rights' dominance over more important female duties.

Indeed, the flavor of the *News* is impatience with women stridently advocating women's rights while neglecting important responsibilities, a classic characteristic of the superficial woman. Several articles listed "women's rights" which actually were women's responsibilities. An LDS writer listed women's rights as the right to a husband of her choice and the right to govern over her children. "These are all the rights which are necessary to make woman contented, useful and happy, and the duties and responsibilities connected with them, are as much as any woman can or ought to bear."¹⁶ In an exchange article written by a woman, a list of woman's rights included, the right to stay at home, the right to have her home in order whenever her husband returns home, the right to be kind to her husband even when he is ill-tempered, the right to nurse her children instead of leaving it to the maid, and the right to "remain a woman without endeavoring to be a man."¹⁷

Despite the obvious impatience in woman's rights issues, several articles indicated the *News*' sympathy for woman's plight. In one story an unkind, unreasonable husband refused to sympathize with his wife's desire to spend some time out of the house. He argued that he provided her everything she needed at home and she was ungrateful for desiring to leave this haven he had prepared for her. In answer, the wife arranged to have the husband tied up and put food and other items he might need within easy reach. She then enjoyed a day out. The experience compelled the husband to acquire more sympathy and understanding.¹⁸ Another article protested the lack of legal

¹⁶"A 'Mormon' on Woman's Rights," DN 12 1859, p. 250.

¹⁷DN 3 September 1862, p. 78.

¹⁸DN 17 October 1855.

redress for women.¹⁹ Several times the *News* acknowledged women's hard lot in terms of the amount of work requiring attention, especially if they had deadbeat husbands.²⁰

One article asked, "What is to be done with the women, is a question also repeated in every journal."²¹ As the period under study progressed, the question remained, but the tone changed. Editors grudgingly acknowledged that women possessed intellect and capabilities at least near to those of men. An article printed in late 1867 illustratively presents female lobbyists as wily seductresses who always get their way. However, at the end of this somewhat vague article, *News* presented a favorable view of women's participation in politics. The editor stated, "No longer the question is, shall women participate in politics; shall they form a controlling element in the government? But as there are women who will and do exert this power, shall they remain covert, equivocal, demoralizing, base? or shall it be brave and pure, and open as the sun?"

In early 1868, the attitude towards suffrage and women's rights in the *News* changed dramatically. In early 1868 the *News* asserted Utah's approval of women suffrage.²² Articles also reported favorably on women's rights lecturers in Utah and the West.²³ In December of 1868 the *News* acknowledged that "there is some justice in women claiming the right of suffrage." Indeed, the editor continued, "there is scarcely an argument of this character that can be urged against women having the right of suffrage, that cannot with equal consistency be applied to men." The article assured,

Among the Latter-day Saints this question has been decided years ago. In our conferences, from the first organization of the Church in these days until the

¹⁹DN 12 May 1858, p. 52.

²⁰DN 8 September 1858.

²¹DN 16 November 1865, p. 45.

²²Deseret News Semi-Weekly, January 1868. See also DN Semi-Weekly, 5 December 1868.

²³DN Semi-Weekly, 22 June 1869 (front page).

present, the right of woman to vote side by side with man has been practically recognized. At all political meetings, where the ladies have been present, they have had the right to vote accorded them without question. . . . The entire question of qualifications for voters, whether property, color or sex, has long been practically settled among the people of this Territory.”²⁴

Although the *Deseret News* did not offer a clear explanation for this sudden shift in thinking, the succession of articles pertaining to woman suffrage in 1868 and 1869 provide a possible explanation. Articles in the *News* revealed the ongoing combative dialogue engaged in by Church leaders and social activists in the rest of the country over activities in Utah. Plural marriage stood as chief among these controversial activities, most easterners viewing the unorthodox marriage practice as the “second twin relic of barbarism” (slavery being the first). Gentile newspapers proclaimed the Utah marriage system immoral and Utah women degraded and repressed. Incensed by these claims, Utah editors proclaimed, “What a tissue of absurdities! The wives of Utah ‘shy and sad’!”²⁵ Utah women, themselves, eagerly shot down such unflattering descriptions of themselves. Eliza Snow asked a gathering of several thousand women, “Do you know of any place on the face of the earth, where woman has more liberty, and where she enjoys such high and glorious privileges as she does here, as a Latter-day Saint? ‘No!’ The very idea of women here in a state of slavery is a burlesque on good common sense.”²⁶

Into this foray of words came proposals by eastern editors for female suffrage as a way to overthrow polygamy and, possibly, even the Church of Jesus Christ itself. The *News* determined two explanations for eastern interest in Utah female suffrage. First, with its abundance of women, eastern advocates considered Utah a perfect testing ground for female suffrage. Second, easterners hoped that if Utah women received the vote, they

²⁴DN Semi-Weekly, 5 December 1868.

²⁵DN Semi-Weekly, 19 September 1868.

²⁶DN Semi-Weekly, 18 January 1870.

would forthrightly abolish polygamy.²⁷ This became an obvious opportunity for LDS leaders to prove both the faithfulness of LDS women and to refute claims portraying LDS women as degraded. Church leaders vociferously proclaimed their support for female suffrage by congratulating Senator Pomeroy for proposing women's suffrage in Utah. The *News* stated, "Utah is giving examples to the world on many points, and if the wish is to try the experiment of giving females the right to vote in the Republic, we know of no place where the experiment can be so safely tried as in this Territory. Our ladies can prove to the world that in a society where men are worthy of the name, women can be enfranchised without running wild or becoming unsexed."²⁸ LDS leaders staunchly refuted the plausibility of Latter-day Saint women voting down polygamy. The *News* avowed women's acceptance of and loyalty to plural marriage and assured that women seldom, if ever, apostatized from the Church and left Utah unless led by an unrighteous husband.²⁹

The information in the *Deseret News* during this period thus suggests that a desire to refute non-LDS views of LDS women contributed to the *News*' sudden shift in opinion concerning female suffrage. Historians have also suggested that LDS leaders' favorable view of suffrage for Utah women was also exacerbated by a desire to increase Utah's faithful electorate. Although the *News* does not address this issue directly, Church leaders undoubtedly recognized the political advantages of offering the vote to women. The activities of women themselves also may have contributed to their increased political opportunities as they actively voiced their opinions in political issues in early 1870.

²⁷DN Semi-Weekly, 20 March 1869.

²⁸DN Semi-Weekly, 20 March 1869.

²⁹DN Semi-Weekly, 11 January 1868.

Before the late 1860s women's political participation was limited. Patty Sessions' diaries indicate that she and probably other women participated in politics, albeit to a limited degree that was appropriate for women at the time. In 1853 Patty mentioned raising \$250 for political causes from produce grown in her garden. She also mentioned attending meetings discussing political issues.³⁰ By early 1870 female political activities reached feverish pitch with the proposed passage of the Cullom Bill, introduced in Congress in 1869 by Representative Shelby M. Cullom of Illinois. This piece of legislation threatened to broadly enforce anti-polygamy laws and prevent women from acting as witnesses in defense of their polygamous husbands. In response Utah women held "mass indignation meetings" throughout the territory. The *News* reported that the Tabernacle held between five and six thousand individuals at the Great Indignation Meeting. Several LDS women's statements appeared in the *News* and the report of this meeting took up almost the whole of the first three pages of the *Deseret News Semi-Weekly* on January 18, 1870. Following this mass meeting, women in outlying settlements immediately held their own indignation meetings and the *News* reported their proceedings.

Following the succession of mass meetings, the *News* printed an article entitled, "The Recent Mass Meetings.--Their Real Significance." The *News* exuberantly proclaimed that their real significance lay in the fact that "they most emphatically give the lie to the above oft-repeated assertions of the 'sympathizers' [of LDS women] . . . If the ladies of Utah were as degraded and as anxious to get from under this so-called yoke,

³⁰Donna Toland Smart, Mormon Midwife: The 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1997), 192, 200.

as they are said to be, is it to be supposed for one moment that thousands of them would voluntarily assemble in mass meeting?"³¹

Although women's rights and suffrage began to receive favorable press in the *News*, editors quickly distinguished between woman's rights meetings in the East and the indignation meetings held by Utah women. First, the *News* admitted that until recently a woman's rights meeting in Utah would have been "unheard of." However, Utah's meeting, they asserted, "was not to assert and maintain woman's equality with man . . . but it was to maintain and assert the dearest of all woman's prerogatives,--namely her right to chose a husband," referring to the Cullom Bill's effort to remove polygamy from Utah.³² Indeed, LDS women did not meet in their mass indignation meetings to rally for female suffrage. They met to protest the federal government's proposed threat to restructure their family arrangements without acquiescence from Utah. The mass meetings did portray, however, LDS women's passion for defending Utah causes and their competence as political activists. In 1869 the *News* deservedly asserted, "women can wield a most potent influence in [reform], and it would be folly to ignore the fact. With woman to aid in the great cause of reform, what wonderful changes can be effected! Without her aid how slow the progress! Give her responsibility, and she will prove that she is capable of great things; but deprive her of opportunities, make a doll of her. . . and instead of being a help meet to man, as originally intended, she becomes a drag and an encumbrance."³³ In February of 1870 Utah became the second territory to grant woman suffrage. Governor Stephen Mann's signature on the woman's suffrage bill, however, did not end women's inability to vote in Utah. Utah's right to the franchise was rescinded as

³¹DN Semi-Weekly, 22 January 1870.

³²DN Semi-Weekly, 22 January 1870.

³³DN Semi-Weekly, 22 May 1869.

Utah and the federal government struggled over the issue of polygamy throughout the next several decades.³⁴

Despite the debate over the woman question, the *News* never faltered in its emphasis of women's true roles as wife, mother, and homemaker. However, the late 1860s brought increased opportunities and acceptance of female activities outside the home. Opportunities for LDS women to function outside of the home during the early territorial period certainly existed under the Church structure. For example, Utah's Polysophical Society, the Deseret Manufacturing and Agriculture Society, and the Female Council of Health included women.³⁵ Patty Sessions mentions this latter group often in her diaries. Evidently they were fairly active in the early 1850s, meeting together and discussing women's health issues and also aiding in the relief of those in need. Patty served first as counselor and eventually as president of the Female Council of Health.³⁶ During November of 1852 Patty mentioned going to "the female meeting," probably referring to the Female Council of Health. She indicated that the council voted members in several of the wards (except the first and fifth) to look after the poor.³⁷ Evidently this council served as a direct precursor of the female relief societies that would follow. Another precursor to the official Relief Society was the "Indian Relief Society" that functioned briefly. Patty mentioned her participation as president of the

³⁴See Carol Cornwall Madsen, "At Their Peril: Utah Law and the Case of Plural Wives, 1850-1900" *Western Historical Quarterly* 21 (1990): 425-443.

³⁵For more on the Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society, see Leonard Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), 226.

³⁶Smart, 180, 181, 210, 214.

³⁷Smart, 182. In late 1848 community leaders began apportioning land in Great Salt Lake City. City plats were organized into ecclesiastical jurisdictions called wards with a Bishop responsible for each. The city began with nineteen wards. See Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*, 51.

group, calling it “a benevolent society to clothe the Indians & squas.”³⁸ This group’s influence eventually extended from the Indians to the poor among the Saints. Patty related going to see the bishop of her ward who said “we had clothed the squaws and children firstrate we now must look after the poor in each ward.”³⁹ Patty’s involvement in this benevolent society increased in 1855. In June of 1857 Patty mentioned a “female releif society organized.”⁴⁰ Women actively participated in educational pursuits, also. In 1854 Patty mentioned going to school to learn the Deseret Alphabet. As increasing numbers of immigrants from abroad entered the Great Basin, Brigham Young promoted this phonetic alphabet as a way to simplify the number of languages spoken among the Saints.⁴¹ In 1855 a polysophical academy opened which included women. In 1862 Patty prepared a piece of writing “to carry to the Grammar school.”⁴² Utah’s liberal arts programs also afforded women opportunities for improvement. A Utah singing school was established, several women wrote poetry that was published in the *News*, and several women actively participated in the theater in Salt Lake City. During the mid-1850s, Patty Sessions’ out-of-home activities increased. A typical week included some level of involvement in a dancing school, midwives meetings, the benevolent society, the female council of health, social gatherings, philosophical (polysophical) meetings, or educational gatherings. By the late 1850s and early 1860, Patty’s mention of these outside activities sharply decreased, likely due to the impact of the Utah War in which many Salt Lake City residents moved south to avoid conflict with federal troops.⁴³

³⁸Smart, 205.

³⁹Smart, 210.

⁴⁰Smart, 245.

⁴¹See Church Educational System, Church History in the Fulness of Times (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 398.

⁴²Smart, 295.

⁴³Richard L. Jensen discusses these and other female organizations in Utah in “Forgotten

The Female Relief Society, however, unquestionably stood as the most important and influential of women's societies in Utah. Indeed, it was within the structure of the Relief Society that women functioned in political causes. Established by Joseph Smith in 1842, the Nauvoo Female Relief Society flourished briefly before Brigham Young disbanded it in 1844. Reasons for this action included the Church's need to focus its attentions on the impending conflicts with hostile neighbors and problems with the society's president, Emma Smith.

The first notices in the *Deseret News* concerning the Relief Society appeared in early 1857. In January the *News* reported the activities of the Fourteenth Ward Relief Society, under the direction of President Phebe Woodruff and Secretary Kezia D. Pratt. The article indicated that although the society had organized only recently, the women had nevertheless raised \$165 towards the "few needy and destitute of the 14th Ward" and recent hand-cart immigrants. A subsequent report of the same society appeared in March of the same year. Their second quarterly report showed they had raised \$200 which they donated mostly to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund and the rest in "charitable purposes." This article admitted that the number of relief societies in Salt Lake City was not known since societies had not sent the *Deseret News* their reports. However, the paper gave strong encouragement to such societies.⁴⁴ In September of 1857 the Ladies Awarding Committee of the Deseret Agricultural and Manufacturing Society received instruction to "visit the Ladies' Female Relief Societies and the female portion of the community generally in relation to the interests of the forthcoming exhibition," indicating a somewhat well-established group of relief societies by this point.⁴⁵

Relief Societies, 1844-67," *Dialogue* 16 (Spring 1983): 105-25.

⁴⁴DN 28 January 1857, p. 372 and 6 May 1857, p. 85 and 5 August 1857, p. 176.

⁴⁵DN 16 September 1857, p. 224.

Little or no mention is made of relief societies in the *Deseret News* until a decade later when the *News* announced the proposed reorganization of relief societies in Utah. First and foremost, the societies would help the bishops care for the poor of their wards. The societies would also “present a field of usefulness to [women] that they would gladly enter upon.” The article explained that although women did not participate in formal missions and other activities in which men engaged, they were nevertheless not “devoid of interest in the progress of the Work, or destitute of the desire to contribute, to the full extent of their ability, to the accomplishment of God’s purposes.” Furthermore, the purposes of the female relief societies would be “peculiarly” appropriate for women. “She is, by nature, kind and sympathetic, and the sight of suffering awakens the kindest emotions within her breast, and until that suffering is alleviated she cannot rest.” The bishops of the city and country received encouragement to take “early steps” to organize such societies and were assured that if they did, “they will find that they have an auxiliary force on which they can rely, and one, too, that will relieve them from duties which sometimes press heavily upon them.”⁴⁶

In 1868 the *News* published a lengthy, two-part article about the Relief Society by Eliza R. Snow. This article underscored several key points about the early Relief Society. First, Snow listed duties of the Relief Society. These included “every good and noble work,” along with relief of the poor. Sisters should participate in home manufactures, especially articles of straw and silk “that would be worthy of the patronage of sensible, refined and intelligent women who stand, as we in reality do, at the head of the world.” She specifically stated that the object of the Relief Society was “to do good--to bring into requisition every capacity we possess for doing good, not only in

⁴⁶DN 18 December 1867, p. 354 and DN Semi-Weekly, 10 December 1867.

relieving the poor but in saving souls.” Furthermore, she avowed, “it would require volumes in which to define the duties, privileges and responsibilities that come within the purview of the Society. President Young has turned the key to a wide and extensive sphere of action and usefulness.” Snow also emphasized the relationship of the Relief Society and the Priesthood. She explained that the society could not exist without the Priesthood because it “derives all its authority and influence from that source.” Snow emphasized that “no Society can overstep the counsel of its Bishop—his word is law.” Finally, Snow discussed that manner in which Relief Society could benefit individual participants. In a telling statement she proposed, “if any of the daughters and mothers in Israel are feeling in the least circumscribed in their present spheres, they will now find ample scope for every power and capability for doing good with which they are most liberally endowed.”⁴⁷

In a Relief Society meeting held in the Fifteenth Ward, Church leader George A. Smith expressed his pleasure in the relief societies and his desire for them to be permanent. He also encouraged home manufacturing. Daniel H. Wells expressed that the Relief Societies had influence and power to do much good.⁴⁸ The *Deseret News* periodically provided reports of individual Relief Societies including organizations in the tenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, seventeenth, nineteenth, and twentieth wards, and in outlying settlements, including Farmington and Ogden. Most reports included lists of home manufactured articles produced.

LDS women viewed themselves, their relief societies, and their Church in very lofty terms. In minutes of the Seventeenth Ward, Eliza Snow explained that within each woman existed “the germs of every faculty requisite to constitute a God or goddess.” She

⁴⁷*DN Semi-Weekly*, 21 April 1868.

⁴⁸Fifteenth Ward, Salt Lake Stake Relief Society minutes. 1868 March - 1869 May.

urged, “my sisters, let us so cultivate ourselves that we may be capable of doing much good. We are the daughters of our Heavenly Father, and our position as Saints of the Most High, is at the head of the world. Let us try to realize our responsibilities and honor our position.”⁴⁹

The *Deseret News* proclaimed that the Relief Societies served as excellent opportunities for advancement of women and the Kingdom of God. In 1869 the *News* purported, “the ladies now have abundant opportunities of doing excellent service in the advancement of Zion. . . We are pleased to chronicle that they have made a good commencement, and we hope they will maintain their zeal and courage and persevere; for the results will be most glorious.”⁵⁰

The Relief Society, among its many other uses, stood as a possible antidote for the superficiality and selfishness pervasive in the rising generation of young women. The *News* looked to societies to correct young ladies’ habit of scorning labor. “[Societies] can, by their example and influence, dissipate this absurd pride, and teach young ladies that leisure and indolence and frivolous pursuits are neither lady-like nor refined, but that labor, and all exertion which contributes to usefulness and independence, are ennobling and dignified.”⁵¹ In 1869 the *News* expressed the hope that Relief Society would be the means of teaching women house-keeping skills.⁵² In 1869 the Young Ladies Retrenchment Society formed. This society aimed to train young women in habits of industry, economy, and to “retrench” any extravagant habits. Mary Isabella Horne and Eliza R. Snow organized retrenchment societies throughout the territory.⁵³

⁴⁹*DN Semi-Weekly*, 10 April 1869.

⁵⁰*DN Semi-Weekly*, 20 February 1869.

⁵¹*DN Semi-Weekly*, 20 February 1869.

⁵²*DN Semi-Weekly*, 22 May 1869.

⁵³Church Educational System, 409.

Although women actively participated in their church meetings, their homes, their families, and some organized societies in the early part of the territory, the effective organization of women stands as the distinguishing feature of the late 1860s and beyond. Relief Society organizations served as a means for facilitating individual female ambition, achievement, and involvement in a way not previously possible in Utah. Indeed, the Relief Society became the answer to the woman question in Utah. The societies provided a structure within which women could improve themselves, function outside of the home in building the kingdom of God, and stretch the borders of their sphere without compromising their duties at home. In short, the Relief Society served as an acceptable forum in which women could function outside the home. Even political activities, such as the mass indignation meetings held by Utah women, occurred within the structure of the Relief Societies. In a Relief Society meeting in 1868 Elder George Q. Cannon stated that the women of Utah were solving the question of women's rights by "doing good and learning to elevate themselves and their fellow beings." He said there was a wide field open to their societies and that their sphere was so broad they would not have time to do all that was for them to do. According to Cannon, the sisters possessed great influence and "if they would use their power rightly they . . . could do much good hastening Millennial reign."⁵⁴

With the official organization of the female relief societies and retrenchment societies throughout the territory and the enfranchisement of women, women at the end of the period enjoyed more opportunities for functioning on a community and societal level than previously available in Utah. What may appear to be a shift in women's roles, however, was simply an addition to the same roles emphasized in the early days of the

⁵⁴Fifteenth Ward, Salt Lake Stake Relief Society Minutes. 1868 March - 1869 May.

territory. The importance of wife, mother, and homemaker as prescribed roles for women did not shift or change in the slightest degree throughout the period.

Additionally, although the Church of Jesus Christ sanctioned women's organizations within Utah to a much greater degree by 1870, women's organizations had existed throughout the period on a more limited scale. Only the 1870 addition of voting rights for women and the *News'* change in attitude from outward ridicule to cautious acceptance of woman's rights stood as a dramatic change from women's status in 1852.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Most Latter-day Saint women living in Utah in the 1850s and 1860s practiced and professed their devotion to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The weaving of LDS women's faith throughout the workings of their lives cannot be ignored in seeking to understand their history. Faith in their God convinced women to undertake the journey to the inhospitable Great Basin to continue and complete their lives with the rest of the Church. Their faith propelled them to follow the counsel of plural marriage, a doctrine initially repugnant to most, if not all, women. Their faith led them to accept missions with their husbands wherein they left established homes and settled outlying areas according to Brigham Young's direction. Although exceptions to this faith and devotion in the LDS community certainly existed, most women believed in and genuinely endeavored to follow the dictates of their religion.

Patty Sessions' diary reflects this deeply personal conviction that was strengthened through a lifetime of activity in the Church. She recorded some of these experiences in her diary. In several instances she spoke of meetings with other women wherein they blessed each other, prayed, and spoke in tongues.¹ These experiences constituted very special events in her life that brought her comfort and joy. In February of 1860 Patty experienced a priesthood healing that strengthened her faith. Because of a painful toothache, she explained, "the Bishop & Br[other] Rise came in laid hands on

¹See Donna Toland Smart, Mormon Midwife: The 1846-1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1997), 161. In the early days of the Church women exercised "spiritual gifts," such as speaking in tongues and washing, anointing, and blessing each other for healing and comfort. For the history of LDS women's participation in such activities see Linda King Newell, "A Gift Given: A Gift Taken: Washing, Anointing, and Blessing the Sick Among Mormon Women, A Mormon Historian Traces changes in the Practice," Sunstone 6 (Sep/Oct 1981): 16-25.

me & the pain left me instantly and I fell asleep.”² In another experience, Patty suffered a stomach cramp. After being administered to by Elders of the Church, the cramp did not relent (“the destroyer would let go his hold”). She sought further help and prayers and her husband assured her that if her work upon the earth was not completed, she would be allowed to remain and “see many good days and do much good.” Upon those words she began to “revive.” Her husband then instructed her to “be anointed all over” and have Elders lay hands upon her. A woman washed and anointed her and prophesied that she would be better in the morning. After being blessed by the Elders, she rested well through the night and awoke better. The following day she wrote, “I have set up the most of the time to day, many that saw me yestarday are astonished to see me so well and go out doors & in as usual.” Several days later she exhorted, “the Lord has healed me and blessed be his name, I desire so to live that I may do good and gloryfy my Father which is in heaven.”³ Especially towards the latter portion of her life Patty’s entries turn to bits of testimony of her belief in and devotion to the Church. “The Lord is my trust oh that he may help me to do right at all times and in all places that I may do good to my self and all others while I live this is my prayer all the time.”⁴ In April of 1854 Patty mentions that she “put my name in to give all I have to the Church.”⁵ This refers to the United Order or law of consecration in which Church members were asked to donate all material possessions to the Church, to be redistributed according to need and personal circumstances. In 1856, in an event known as the reformation, Church leaders instructed their followers to rededicate themselves to the principles of the Gospel. This reformation

²Smart, 281. In LDS practice, priesthood blessings could be given by laying hands upon the individuals’ head and pronouncing a prayer of comfort and/or healing.

³Smart, 302.

⁴Smart, 202.

⁵Smart, 202.

typically manifested itself in the re-emphasis of plural marriage. Patty reflected, "I have felt the nessesety of this refformation and I am trying to reform"⁶

Eliza R. Snow left volumes testifying to her religious dedication. "Zion's Poetess" most often expressed her devotion in verse. She asserted, "My heart is fix'd--I know in whom I trust . . . And am determin'd now *to be a Saint*, And number with the tried and faithful ones, . . . whose happiness is God's approval."⁷ Her thoughts turn specifically to women in "To a Young Saint,"

Fair, youthful Maiden, dost thou comprehend
The honor, dignity--the glory, and
The high responsibilities compris'd
In your profession?
You've essay'd to be
A Saint of God--to be an heir of his,
And a joint heir with Jesus Christ, to an
Inheritance, eternal in the heavens.
Number'd with Zion's daughters, you are rais'd
In honor, high o'er earthly princesses.⁸

LDS women's devotion to their faith is a key component to understanding the importance of the extensive female-targeted prescriptive literature in the *Deseret News*. As devoted Latter-day Saints who professed obedience to appointed leaders, women would have regarded counsel in the *News* with particular interest. Women's diaries kept during the period suggest that women generally sought to obtain and obey counsel from their leaders. Patty Sessions, for whom General Conferences of the Church were a great event stated, "I truly feel thankful to my hevely Father that he has servants to call after us and teach us our duty"⁹ Patty also indicated the forthright and no-nonsense style of

⁶Smart, 239.

⁷Donald W. Hemingway, comp., Gospel Themes by Eliza R. Snow: Thoughts she Learned from the Prophets She Knew (Orem, UT: Raymont Publishers, 1982), 7-8.

⁸Hemingway, 55-6.

⁹Smart, 329.

Brigham Young when she illustratively reported that he gave someone "the greatest whipping I ever herd from any bodys tounge" at a meeting.¹⁰ Martha Heywood also expressed a thoughtful, serious desire to follow the counsel of her leaders. She related,

In the afternoon I again attended the meeting tho very feeble. I was impressed that Bro. Brigham would preach and I was not disappointed and subjects of his remarks were of thrilling interest to me and I remarked to Sarepta as we left the house that my feelings were that I could not have missed hearing that sermon for all I had ever heard before. . . I was fairly drunk with enjoyment and the consciousness that I would have the pleasure of perusing it after publication is truly gratifying.¹¹

At a particularly trying time of her life when she sought divine guidance, Martha recorded another experience listening to Brigham Young at a meeting. "Before he spoke, supposing that he would, I prayed my Heavenly Father that I might get instruction that would suit my particular circumstances and I did feel that I did and had the very thing pointed out that I needed. And I prayed my Heavenly Father that I may receive it in honesty and that it may [make] an impression on my mind."¹² The writings of women as a general rule do not portray women who flawlessly and mindlessly followed the counsel of their leaders. Instead, women thoughtfully and deliberately strove to follow the instruction given them.

The instruction directed at women in Utah sometimes resembles female prescriptive literature produced elsewhere in the country. Indeed, as many of the articles in the *News* were exchanges, much of it was literally the same as that preached in the eastern portions of the United States. Historian Barbara Welter described prescriptive literature aimed at women in the United States from 1820-1860. She explained that the

¹⁰Smart, 228.

¹¹Juanita Brooks, ed., Not By Bread Alone: The Journal of Martha Spence Heywood, 1850-1856 (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1978), 120.

¹²Brooks, 122.

“Cult of True Womanhood” consisted of four components: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.¹³ Similarly, historian Mary P. Ryan described the true womanhood of the early and mid-nineteenth century as centering on the concepts of women’s place being in the home with the family and on the importance of women’s contributions being limited to meek, retiring feminine influence.¹⁴ Resembling prescriptive literature in the rest of the country, the *Deseret News* exhorted women to honor the same home-based roles and decried the same lack of women’s domestic education as eastern papers. However, several differences between true womanhood in the country at large and Utah’s true womanhood existed. Utah added a practicality born of the frontier experience and the impact of LDS doctrine to true womanhood. For example, the *News* encouraged women to become independent and marketable by undertaking education and employment. The delicate, useless femininity prescribed in eastern papers had little practicality in Utah where leaders repeatedly urged women to be strong and active. Additionally, in terms of piousness, LDS doctrine did not enforce the double moral standard in any way. Men were expected to be as righteous and as devoted to their religion as women. In terms of purity, members of the Church believed that polygamy effectively alleviated the double standard preached in the rest of the country by insisting that marriage, must, without exception, precede any sexual relation. Certainly, the fact that men held multiple spouses in the LDS community while women did not, constitutes its own type of double standard. Also, the *News* certainly instructed women to be submissive to their husbands, but only when their husband followed the counsels of the Church. Women were sanctioned to disobey husbands rather than “follow them to the

¹³Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151-74.

¹⁴Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 186-191.

devil.” Ultimately, in LDS doctrine, as in other religious traditions, both women and men pledged submission to God.

One possible explanation for the departure of the Latter-day Saints from some aspects of true womanhood lies in the concept of class, a concept furthered by Mary P. Ryan. The women who were in a financial position to fulfill the qualities of true womanhood were those whose middle class status provided them with the option of spending the day domestically while their husbands earned a living. Certainly lower class women, including black women, did not lead the kind of lives represented in the prescriptive literature. Many of the Latter-day Saints who immigrated to the Great Basin, especially those originating from England, were often not members of the middle class, and therefore not in a position to even consider a life of retiring domesticity. This is certainly not to imply that all Latter-day Saints originated from lower class surroundings. Many LDS women, including some of those in leadership, originated from middle-class families and were probably indoctrinated in middle class values.

It must be stressed that home-based roles and traditional Victorian ideals took center stage in the lives of Utah women, both in practice and in prescriptive literature. However, the *Deseret News* shows that certain dynamics in the Utah experience during the third quarter of the nineteenth century stretched woman’s sphere, lending credence to Welter’s claim that

even while the women’s magazines and related literature encouraged this ideal of the perfect woman, forces were at work in the nineteenth century which impelled woman herself to change, to play a more creative role in society. The movements for social reform, westward migration, missionary activity, utopian communities . . . all called forth responses from woman which differed from those she was trained to believe were hers by nature and divine decree.¹⁵

¹⁵Welter, 174.

Indeed, Utah's frontier experience urged women's activity and inclusion in any arena which might prove useful to the community, including employment and education outside the home. Additionally, movements for female franchise brewing in the rest of the country directly led to increased political opportunities for Utah women. And finally, the attempt to build and maintain a community built strictly upon religious principles fostered re-evaluation about men's and women's moral obligations.

Two broad conclusions can be drawn from a study of the articles aimed at women in the *Deseret News* of the 1850s and 1860s. First, the literature indicates that women were seen as a vitally important part of the well-being and success of the LDS community. Utah Territory, unlike many western territories, included as many women as it did men.¹⁶ With women composing an important demographic in the community, and the fact that the economic and spiritual well-being of the community hinged upon the cooperation of *all* its members, Church leaders most certainly did not ignore women and the role they could and did play in the building of the kingdom. The *Deseret News* makes this abundantly clear, first by devoting significant space in the paper to articles aimed expressly at women. Second, the substance of the literature indicates that Church leaders felt a great need and desire for women to help them in their endeavors to build Zion. Notwithstanding the interpretations and opinions later historians may pin upon Utah women's prescribed roles, it cannot be denied that Church leaders viewed women's roles as key and vital.

The patriarchal organization and male-dominated priesthood of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints suggests an organization that subverts, represses, and demands passivity from its female members. However, evidence shows that LDS women

¹⁶Leonard J. Arrington, "Women as a Force in the History of Utah," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 38 (Winter 1870): 3.

during this period generally did not exhibit passive characteristics. The fact that the *Deseret News* had to reiterate many concepts suggests the female recipients of such counsel did not always readily accept and follow it. An understanding of LDS doctrine indicates women's important, even equal place, with men. In LDS belief women and men were saved and exalted on equal footings. Indeed, according to LDS belief, neither men nor women could be saved independently, only as a couple, bound in celestial marriage. Women, Latter-day Saints believed, were destined to become goddesses just like their Mother in Heaven. Interestingly, the LDS doctrine of a Heavenly Mother was first penned by Eliza R. Snow and her verse remains the foremost statement on the subject. She stated, "In the heav'ns are parents single? No, the thought makes reason stare; Truth is reason -- truth eternal, Tells me I've a mother there."¹⁷

Women themselves indicated their independent thoughtfulness and self-motivation. When the 1850s and 1860s presented women with the opportunities for extended spheres of action, they snatched them and quickly and eagerly improved upon them in succeeding years. The fledgling Relief Societies of the 1850s and 1860s evolved into well over 100 societies by 1880, including societies in Hawaii and Europe. Women managed their own funds for these societies, independent of general Church finances. Women actively organized and participated in sericulture and medicine, where they undeniably presented themselves as capable managers. In 1872 the official organ of the Relief Society, the *Woman's Exponent* began publication, touting the masthead: "The Rights of Women of Zion, and the Rights of Women of all Nations." Women also stood as staunch defenders of their faith and their unorthodox family arrangements in Utah and

¹⁷Eliza R. Snow, "O My Father," *Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), 292.

National assemblies.¹⁸ Utah women did not passively follow priesthood authority; they thoughtfully and actively sought to obey doctrines which they held sacred.

The unwavering exhortations to the domestic sphere, the doctrine of polygamy, and the obligation to honor priesthood authority appear paradoxical to woman's rights. Utah women did not perceive any paradox. They believed that as they righteously fulfilled their duties in the home, extended opportunities would increase and unfold in due time and sequence. For example, suffrage evolved into an acceptable extension of women's sphere in Utah because it became one of her religious responsibilities. As contemporary historian Edward W. Tullidge expressed, "no sooner was suffrage granted to the Mormon women, than they exercised it as a part of their religion, or as the performance of woman's life duties, marked out for her in the economy of divine providence. In this apostolic spirit, they took up the grant of political power."¹⁹

As Eliza R. Snow stated,

Let your first business be to perform your duties at home. . . . Inasmuch as you are wise stewards, you will find time for social duties, because these are incumbent upon us as daughters and mothers in Zion. By seeking to perform every duty you will find that your capacity will increase, and you will be astonished at what you can accomplish.²⁰

Second, the literature in the *Deseret News* reflects a time of adjusting roles for women in America. As these attitudes crept into the Great Basin, Church leaders sought to evaluate and channel these changes so that they benefited the growing community, but

¹⁸See chapters two and three of Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of the Covenant: The Story of the Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992) and Anne F. Scott, "Mormon Women, Other Women: Paradoxes and Challenges," *The Journal of Mormon History* 13 (1986-87): 3-19.

¹⁹Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (Salt Lake City: n.p., 1965), 500.

²⁰"An Address by Miss Eliza R. Snow," *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* 36 (13 January 1874): 21 as quoted in Jill C. Mulvay, "Eliza R. Snow and the Woman Question," *Brigham Young University Studies* 16 (Winter 1997): 264.

more importantly, so that they were in accordance with LDS doctrine. The poem written by Eliza R. Snow in 1852, and the comments she and other LDS women made in 1870 concerning women's rights, appear to portray two vastly different opinions. Certainly change did occur in the two decades under study as women acquired a wider sphere of activity in Utah. Literature in the *Deseret News*, however, suggests that viewpoints did not change as radically as might initially be presumed. Indeed, although some peripheral ideas adjusted and evolved, such as the attitude toward woman suffrage, core beliefs remained constant. The central importance of women's domestic roles, women's responsibility to sustain priesthood authority, and women's moral obligations to the community did not diminish throughout the entire period.

Also, the two statements of Snow's which at once appear paradoxical, actually fit together very neatly. In 1852 Snow explained that social change (including, presumably, additional rights for women) could be obtained through "the Holy Priesthood's power."²¹ Accordingly, by 1870, voting rights for women received official priesthood sanction. Under this interpretation, Snow's and Church leaders' opinions regarding women's rights did not necessarily change. Instead, the right time had presented itself. A statement by Martha Heywood describes the same idea of social change hinging upon priesthood. "A woman be she ever so smart, she cannot know more than her husband if he magnifies his Priesthood. That God never in any age of the world endowed woman with knowledge above the man and when a woman has in any instance a message from God to man 'tis because of the Priesthood."²² Using this line of thinking, Snow's poem and Heywood's statement can be interpreted to appear not necessarily anti-woman or anti-woman's rights. Rather they speak of things happening in a proper time and a proper way.

²¹DN 10 January 1852.

²²Brooks, 122.

In the last stanza of her poem, Eliza R. Snow issued a challenge that, she believed, could further social change. She instructed, “Knowledge is power, Ye Saints of Latter day.” She continued, “Tis for you To act the most conspicuous and the most Important part . . . in planting on the earth The principles of Justice, Equity--” Perhaps embedded in this non-gender-specific statement Snow foresaw the knowledge that would eventually lead to a greater degree of justice and equity for women in the law, the educational system, and the franchise. In her poem, “Woman,” Eliza R. Snow, also referred to eventual, eternal elevation of women’s position. She expressed, “What we experience here, is but a school Wherein the ruled will be prepared to rule.”²³

Statements from the women’s meeting in 1870 reflect concern with things unfolding in their proper time. Many expressed the cautious suggestion that they should proceed with wisdom. Several expressed the desire and need for further knowledge in light of their new political responsibilities. Bathsheba W. Smith reportedly stated, “she never. . . felt more her own weakness, in view of the greater responsibilities which now rested upon them, nor ever felt so much the necessity of wisdom and light; but she was determined to do her best.”²⁴ Wilmarth East felt that “there is a bright day coming; but we need more wisdom and humility than ever before.”²⁵

The 1870 statements of Utah women convey a group of women eagerly, but humbly excited about their newfound responsibilities. Their concern seems to be more of adequately and righteously fulfilling their responsibilities than acquiring more rights, a distinction between them and eastern women’s rights advocates. Utah women had faith and hope that as they righteously fulfilled their responsibilities such as those expressed in

²³Donald W. Hemingway, comp., Gospel Themes Vol. II by Eliza R. Snow: thoughts She Learned from the Prophets She Knew (Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1983), 37.

²⁴Tullidge, 503.

²⁵Tullidge, 505.

the *Deseret News* throughout the 1850s and 1860s, they would naturally acquire the rights they desired and deserved.

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