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Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth Century American Literature

IN A RECENT "FRANK," "CRITICAL," and "courageous" book on *The Mormon Establishment*, Wallace Turner, a non-Mormon Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, described the Latter-day Saints as "fine people," and their doctrine as "humane, productive of progress, patriotic, wholesome and praiseworthy."[1] Most contemporary books and articles which mention the Mormons characterize them in similarly favorable language. That the Mormons were not so highly regarded throughout most of their history, however, is well known. Most of America's great libraries maintain a well-stocked shelf of books that are usually denominated as "anti-Mormon." These include not only the usual diatribes of hostile ministers and disenchanted apostates, but serious works of fiction and non-fiction as well. The announced intention of the authors of most of these works, some of whom enjoyed well-deserved reputations for literary excellence, was to attack Mormonism, in the name of Christianity and humanity, as "the blot that has made you a by-word to the citizens of the old world, a libel on your manhood, an insult to the mother that cradled you in her arms, and a curse to your wives and daughters."[2] Mormon society, as they often saw it, was an "alien" culture, professing beliefs and following practices which were unacceptable to the arbiters of American society.

What has caused this reversal in attitude toward the Latter-day Saints? Have the Mormons become "Americanized" — or do Americans now judge the Mormons by more tolerant archetypes? While a comprehensive answer to these questions would require a lengthy and carefully-prepared monograph, an analysis of some of the myths and symbols of early anti-Mormon fiction should, at least, provide some explanations for the almost universally unfavorable image of Mormonism in the nineteenth century. A tentative

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[1] Wallace Turner, *The Mormon Establishment* (Boston, 1966), p. 331.

[2] [Orvilla S. Belisle], *The Prophets; or, Mormonism Unveiled* (Philadelphia, 1855), p. 6.

hypothesis might be that non-Mormon fiction writers and their myths were more potent in molding public opinion than were the realities the Mormons continued to reassert, and that these myths were converted into the realities of official policy.

In the year 1852 the Mormons first publicly announced their practice of plural marriage. During the same year Harriet Beecher Stowe published her spectacularly successful *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The combination of these circumstances provided a stimulus for four early anti-Mormon novels. Among the earliest of fifty novels and adventure tales known to have been written about the Mormons in the nineteenth century,[3] these four, published in 1855–1856, were all written (ostensibly, at least) by women, and one of them was a comparative best seller which went through many editions and was translated into at least four foreign languages. They are particularly important because they set the pattern, so far as theme and characterization are concerned, for most of the anti-Mormon novels and stories which followed.[4]

In each work the heroines were strong-willed women who refused to become Mormons (the Mormons were presumably beneath their notice), while the men were cowardly, deluded, and depraved. The novels were highly sentimental, with frequent editorial outbursts. They were often filled with incredible scenes of violence, and contained a surprising amount of eroticism for having been written in the "feminine fifties."[5] With one or two exceptions these four novels, and those which were patterned after them, were abominable as works of literature, and utterly untrustworthy in conveying to the reader anything like an accurate or worthwhile account of the Mormons, their beliefs and practices. They are worthy of attention primarily because of what they tell us about the authors and the interests of the reading public, and because of their undoubted influence on national policy with respect to the Latter-day Saints. Above all, the popularity of these works suggests that "Gentile hostility" for the Mormons was not the result of any single

[3] See list appended at the end of the article.

[4] All but five of the novels written on a Mormon theme in the nineteenth century might be classified as "anti-Mormon." The exceptions are those by Anderson, Dougall, Dubois, Russell, and Tourgée. We are aware of four unpublished studies of early prose fiction relating to the Mormons: Agnes Lovendahl, "The Mormons in Fiction" (Master's Thesis, Columbia University, [1920]; Gean Clark, "A Survey of Early Mormon Fiction" (Master of Arts Thesis, Brigham Young University, 1935); Cassie Hyde Hock, "The Mormons in Fiction" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1941); and Kenneth B. Hunsaker, "The Twentieth Century Mormon Novel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1968). A recent published article is Neal Lambert, "Saints, Sinners and Scribes: A Look at the Mormons in Fiction," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, XXXVI (Winter, 1968), 63–76.

[5] Many of these novels give the impression that they were designed in part as vehicles of erotica. They contained frequent descriptions of flaggelations and indecencies — one can only speculate on an average reader's reaction. An interesting combination of self-righteous piety and suggestiveness, they remind one of some of the Biblical movies of recent years, in which nine-tenths of the footage consists of the dance of Salome and her seven veils, the fleshpots of Babylon, and the sins of Sodom, while the last tenth closes piously on a message of Moses or David or Jesus. Anti-Mormon novels, apparently, could be read by the self-righteous women and girls in all good conscience, because they dealt with the identification and rooting out of evil. One possible reason for the wide distribution of many of these books is that the buyers expected to find prurient descriptions of lust, licentiousness, and sensuality.

factor (e.g., polygamy, economics, or the political Kingdom of God),[6] but a combination of factors, not the least of which was that unreflective habit of mind that finds itself at home in a world of absolutes and stereotypes.

The plots of these novels revolve around a number of different motifs. There is the personal experience motif, in which a lovely and high-principled woman becomes associated in some way with the Mormons, and relates various experiences with the sect, all of which are designed to demonstrate that the Mormons were cruel, treacherous, and depraved. Or there is a vengeance motif, in which the narrative features encounters with the Danites, and thrilling escapes as the Destroying Angels pursue the pure-hearted heroine, in some cases across the seas. A third type is the loosely-drawn portrait of life in a polygamous household; polygamous husbands are shown to be materialistic, insensitive, and lecherous. In most treatments the Mormons are represented by two stereotypes: the wily, insincere leaders, and the rabble of ignorant, fanatical followers. The plots are designed to reveal numerous examples of cunning deceit and deluded obedience.

Most of the writers of these novels were the wives or daughters of New England ministers or reformers, and had little, if any, first-hand experience with the Latter-day Saints. Most of the characters were didactic stereotypes, and any resemblance between the characters and actual Mormons, and between the incidents described and actual historical events, was purely coincidental.

On what sources, then, did the authors draw for material? An analysis of the works suggests that at least seven popular contemporary images or stereotypes were drawn upon by the various writers in describing "the Mormons and their evil designs."

First, the image of the drunken, abusive husband. The temperance movement had long been a moving force in New England; sentiment against the consumption of liquor was widespread. The sexual libertinism with which many associated Mormon polygamy was thought to be related to the imbibing of alcohol. One temperance novelist, Pharcellus Church, was convinced that Joseph Smith's "early inspirations" came only from the bottle.[7] The anti-Mormon novelists and temperance writers displayed a similar habit of mind: Both were certain that the object of their attack was simply the root of *all* evil.[8] It did not matter that the Mormons, in fact, were among the most strongly committed of all American religions to the principle of teetotalism;

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[6] The most recent attempt to reduce anti-Mormonism to a single all-important factor is found in the stimulating and suggestive monograph of Klaus J. Hansen, *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing, Michigan, 1967).

[7] Pharcellus Church, *Mapleton* (Boston, 1853), p. 92.

[8] Also, both left a similar paradox unexplained; if alcohol was so nauseating, disgusting, and foul, why did men continue to drink? If Mormonism was merely a delusion and a sham, why did men continue to convert?

their leaders were nevertheless pictured as heavy drinkers guilty of the characteristic (it was thought) cruelty, neglect, and lack of consideration which the intemperate manifested toward their wives and families. During much of the century there was an association between the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Prohibition Party, and Anti-Saloon League, on the one hand, and the anti-polygamy and anti-Mormon crusaders, on the other.[9] Women who wrote anti-polygamy novels were often leaders in the temperance movement.

Second, the image of the white slave procurer. As sentiment mounted against interterritorial, interstate, and international transportation of girls for immoral purposes, sentiment likewise mounted against the activities of Mormon missionaries, who were often accused by rival ministers of engaging in the recruitment of girls for the harems of their leaders. Legends as far back as the Middle Ages had told of the kidnapping of innocent girls by political and military leaders, who took them to secret hiding places and held them for their personal gratification. These stock stories were applied to the Mormons in order to discredit their proselyting activities. They succeeded so well in fastening this false image of girl-napping that scholars even today explain Mormon polygamy as an outgrowth of the excess of women converts, despite the fact that Utah — and presumably the Church itself — showed at every census more males than females, and that the overwhelming pattern of convert emigration was by families.[10]

Third, the image of the seducer. From the beginning American fiction, strongly influenced by the writings of Samuel Richardson, was irresistibly drawn to the stock figures of the "captivating libertine" and the "seduced maiden." Through the use of potions, mesmerism, impersonation, phony weddings, and endless varieties of sham, the seducer worked his vile way into the innocent American household. In a typical novel, one of Joseph Smith's "victims" complained that the Prophet "exerted a mystical magical influence over me — a sort of sorcery that deprived me of the unrestricted exercise of free will . . . . No friendly voice was near to warn me, and I fell."[11] Recognized neither by the law nor the sentimental mind, a polygamous marriage

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[9] Mormon women, including plural wives, were often involved in these same movements and played an important role in the fight for female suffrage. (Utah women were the first in the United States to exercise the right of female suffrage.) This made it difficult for national feminist leaders to view Mormonism in simple negative terms.

[10] "It can therefore be said with confidence that, to the end of the sailing-ship period, which means for twenty-one years after the foundation of Utah and sixteen years after the announcement of patriarchal marriage, the Mormons were not, as sometimes alleged at the time, systematically recruiting single women to serve as additional wives in the mountain valleys. Observers who commented on the large number of women among Mormon emigrant companies were seeing a movement of people that lacked the usual preponderance of men." P. A. M. Taylor, *Expectations Westward: The Mormons and the Emigration of their British Converts in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh and London, 1965), p. 147.

[11] [Maria Ward, *pseud.*], *Female Life Among the Mormons . . .* (New York, 1856), p. 65.

could only be a sham marriage — and a natural vehicle for the countless Mormon "imposters" who were easily fitted into a favorite literary stereotype.

Fourth, the image of the sinister secret society. New York and New England, as well as England, had been saturated with tales of the evil doings of oath-bound societies and their terrible doctrines of organized vengeance. Many Americans in the 1850's were convinced of the existence of "The Great Slave Power Conspiracy." The practices and beliefs often wrongly attributed to the Masons, the Ku Klux Klan (after the Civil War), and other such groups were also borrowed by those writing about the Mormons.[12] These sounded plausible since the Mormons did have secret ceremonies and did make secret covenants.

Fifth, the image of the sinful, fallen city. The problem of the rise of the city and its attendant evils was not overlooked by novelists.[13] When the Mormons constructed their Salt Lake City in the pristine American wilderness, the act was immediately added to the growing list of Mormon crimes against man and nature. One wonders how the novelists would have handled the "Mormon Question" had the Saints been decentralized and not associated with a particular "city."

Sixth, the image of the lustful Turk. Since the time of the Crusades European writers had incorporated descriptions of the lascivious harems of the Turks, filled with voluptuous houris from both East and West. Thrilling tales of escape from these gardens of delightful debauchery titillated the imaginations of eighteenth-century readers. "The Abduction from the Seraglio" by Mozart, first produced in Vienna in 1782, played on this theme as did the musical play on which its libretto is thought to have been based, "The Sultan, or a Peep into the Seraglio," by Isaac Bickerstaffe, which had played in London a few years earlier. After the United States engaged in an intermittent war with the Barbary States (Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli) from 1801–1805, a number of persons were stimulated to write novels and personal adventure stories about the repulsive but fascinating slave markets, harems, bazaars, and sultans of the Ottomans.[14]

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[12] David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Catholic, Anti-Masonic and Anti-Mormon Literature," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLVII (September 1960), 205–224.

[13] For example, E. Z. C. Judson [Ned Buntline], *The Mysteries and Miseries of New York* (New York, 1848).

[14] They included Royall Tyler's *The Algerine Captive; or, the Life and Adventures of Doctor Updike Underhill, Six Years a Prisoner Among the Algerines* (Hartford, 1797, 1816), which is sometimes regarded as the first American novel; Julia Pardoe, *The City of the Sultan* (1837), and *A Romance of the Harem* (1839); Charles Jacobs Peterson, *The Algerine and Other Tales* (1846); *The Turkish Slave; or, the Mahometan and His Harem: A Story of the East*, by Lieutenant Murray [Maturin Murray Ballou] (Boston, 1850); *Turkish Barbarity: An Affecting Narrative of the Unparalleled Suffering of Mrs. Sophia Mazro, a Greek Lady of Missolonghi . . .* (Providence, R. I., 1828); and, long-banned, *The Lustful Turk or Lascivious Scenes in a Harem Faithfully and Vividly Depicted in a Series of Letters from a Young and Beautiful English Lady to her Cousin in England* (London, 1828; New York, 1968). In this last work "one virgin after another is ceremoniously deflowered in delightful detail."

Some of the anti-Turkish novels were quite frankly erotic, but this was not necessarily regarded as in bad taste, since these, after all, were descriptions of Infidels and intended to show the wickedness of these modern survivals of Sodom and Gomorrah. Although there was a world of difference between oriental and Mormon polygamy,[15] anti-Mormon novels are replete with such words as "Western Turks," pasha, bashaw, sultana, harem, seraglio. Even the illustrations used in anti-Turkish literature were sometimes utilized, showing what purported to be Mormon high priests with Turkish costumes, wielding Ottoman swords. In *Rasselas*, Samuel Johnson expressed a common European view when he wrote: "But to a man like the Arab such beauty was only a flower casually plucked and carelessly thrown away."[16] Anti-Mormon writers were inspired by phrases of this type — or, at least, they applied them in describing treatment by Mormon leaders of their lovely young female converts.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, the image of the cruel, lustful southern slaveholder. A popular object of scorn and indignation, this image was transferred with little modification to the Mormon polygamist. Standing over his wives like the slaveholder, with flask and knout, and with a pack of bloodhounds to track down escapees, the Mormon polygamist was described as treating his wives, daughters, and concubines as mere property. Many Mormon novels have at least one scene in which the polygamist barters his daughter for a cow, or a spare horse for his neighbor's plural wife. Women writers used the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* approach to Mormon polygamy: evocative scenes of wife-beating, of women crying, of broken hearts, of happy homes broken up by the entrance of another woman, and of escapees pursued with unrelenting vigilance.[17] Just as the Abolitionists were more anti-Southern slaveholder than they were pro-Negro, anti-Mormon novelists seem to have been more anti-polygamist than they were pro-monogamy. Just as Abolitionist literature sometimes reveled in salacious descriptions of the slaveholder's use of Negro women, so anti-Mormon novels featured libidinous scenes of Mormons "courting" luscious maidens.

If these were some of the "borrowed" images in nineteenth-century anti-Mormon literature, what was the nature of the four pattern-setting novels written in 1855–1856?

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[15] See Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* (New York, 1954). In his biography of *Brigham Young* (New York, 1925) M. R. Werner describes the Mormon marriage system as "Puritan polygamy." Of course, the identification of Mormonism with Islam preceded Mormon polygamy. The use of the word "prophet" and the modern book of scripture probably suggested the analogy. See, e.g., a lengthy review of *The Book of Mormon* in *The Athenaeum* (London), no. 701, April 3, 1841, pp. 251–253.

[16] Samuel Johnson, *Rasselas, Poems, and Selective Prose*, edited by Bertrand H. Robinson (New York, 1958), p. 588.

[17] See interesting comments about the comparison between polygamy and slavery in Richard Hildreth, "Slavery and Polygamy: Doctors of Divinity in a Dilemma," in *Autographs for Freedom* (Boston, 1853), pp. 20–22; and Charles Sumner, *The Barbarism of Slavery, Speech of Honorable Charles Sumner, on the bill for the Admission of Kansas as a Free State, in the United States Senate, June 4, 1860* (Washington, D.C., 1860).

The first of the four, *Boadicea, The Mormon Wife: Life-Scenes in Utah,* was ostensibly written by Alfreda Eva Bell. Miss Bell's propensities are partially revealed by a subsequent exposé entitled *The Rebel Cousins; or Life in Secession: The Autobiography of the Beautiful Bertha Stephens, the Accomplished Niece of the Hon. Alexander Hamilton Stephens, Vice-President of the Southern Confederacy . . . Written by Herself, and Prepared for Publication by Her Friend, Alfreda Eva Bell . . .* (Philadelphia, 1864). Each book pretends to be based on fact, but neither is factual; each has a good deal of moralizing; each is filled with fantastic tales calculated to promote disgust and hatred of a way of life regarded as contrary to the accepted (New England) brand of Christianity.

Boadicea might have been more appropriately sub-titled "Death-Scenes in Utah," for in the short space of 97 pages, 17 persons perish. Some are shot, others drowned, some beaten to death, others strangled, one poisoned, one hanged, one beaten with a whip handle, three crushed by a falling rafter, and one succumbs from a broken heart. In addition, there are assorted thrashings, attempted poisonings, successful abductions, and miscellaneous tortures, all of which clutter the lavishly-illustrated pages until the reader is convinced that these tales of Mormon atrocities compare favorably with those told about the German Army during World War I. Even the Indians "were incapable of committing deeds so infamous, so blood-thirsty, and so cruel" (82).

Miss Bell leaves little to the imagination. Mormon society, she writes plainly, "consists of blacklegs, murderers, forgers, swindlers, gamblers, thieves, and adulterers!" (21) The Territory might have been a "second Garden of Eden" (19), but it has been especially "profaned" by the spiritual wife system. The latter, as Miss Bell explains it, is the trading of wives — a kind of free-love system. After a girl has been one of the wives of one man for a while, she is then requested to share bed and board with another polygamist, and so on, until (presumably) she has sampled all. In such a community the men were "to the last degree demoralized, effeminate, and lazy," and the women were "inhuman wretches," or, more to Miss Bell's point, "white slaves" (34, 32, 54).

As the novel hobbles to a close, Boadicea's husband is inevitably sealed to a second wife (a "dark lady"). Boadicea (the "white lily") begins to waste away in the best sentimental tradition — with a bad case of "latent consumption." "That is the disease," the style-conscious Miss Bell is compelled to remind us, "of which the broken-hearted generally die" (65). Boadicea's baby is soon poisoned, her husband strangled, and one by one, all her friends are liquidated. But Boadicea, of course, eventually "escapes" to spin her story of shock and thrill.

The second of this quartet of feminine delights published in 1855 is *The Prophets; or, Mormonism Unveiled*, by Orvilla S. Belisle. The previous year, the same writer had published *The Arch Bishop; or, Romanism in the United States*, which was dedicated "To the American people who have the perpetuity and prosperity of our institutions at heart: To those who are opposed to the suppression of the Bible in public schools and legislative halls, of free thought, free speech, and a free press." It is a story, typical of the times, of the Jesuits and the dark doings of the Roman Catholic priests, of attempts to stamp out heresy by poisoning heretics, of forging deeds of property, of hypocrisy, duplicity, and secrecy. Thus, one is prepared for an anti-Mormon book that is near-bursting with fanciful stories of deceit and treachery, of knavery and cunning, of superstition and sensuality.

After several chapters dealing with Mormon history, she introduces her leading lady. She is Margaret Guilford, a "daughter of one of Massachusetts' most favored sons," and "the last of their race (98, 100)." Margaret marries Arthur Guilford, a typical Yankee, a rather likeable fellow — except for the now-familiar (in these novels) fatal flaw: Art possessed an "impulsive spirit" (100). Used and humiliated by local politicians — because of his great ambitions — Art and his pretty spouse flee to Kirtland, Ohio, where Art is converted to Mormonism.

A "true child of civilization," Margaret finds herself hopelessly trapped in a wilderness of the wild West and a religion she can neither understand nor accept. Later, when an unwilling recruit for the Mormon harems escapes, it is almost inevitable that a Simon Legree-like character cries out, "Get the dogs ye rascals and put 'em on the scent" (316). In Utah, Art takes a second wife; he is deep enough into Mrs. Belisle's barbarous West to take the bold step. Upon hearing the news, Margaret gives a "wild agonized shriek" and literally pops a blood vessel.

The author cripples an already-confusing plot by concurrently showing the "effect" of the Mormons on two English families — that of Oliver Hatfield, Manchester merchant, and a Welsh family, "the Queen" and her sister, "Lady Bula." The latter were "simple and trusting people" who quickly yielded to Mormon "tales of the advantages they should reap in the new world" (130). En route to America, many perish aboard ship. Once in the United States, the Welsh pair still must "traverse half a continent before they were to reach the land of promise" (131). But when they reach Utah: "Alas! for the deluded emigrants! the veil was rent asunder, and the hideous imposture shown in its true colors" (131). Mrs. Belisle's messages seem clear enough: *stay home* (and don't be over-ambitious). And don't believe the promise of the "promised land" — Mormon-style or American-style. Leaving Old or New England — leaving home and hearth — can only mean broken

families, humiliation, financial ruin, and even death; or, in Mrs. Belisle's words, seeing your own "warm life blood spouting in jets" (213).

The third of the feminine anti-Mormon novels of the mid-fifties is Metta Victoria Fuller Victor's *Mormon Wives: A Narrative of Facts Stranger Than Fiction*, published when she was only 25 years old. It was later republished under the title *Lives of Female Mormons*. Mrs. Victor (1831–1886), sister of the Frances Fuller Victor who wrote part or all of six of the Hubert Howe Bancroft histories, was author, under various pseudonyms, of more than a dozen sensational "women's novels." Her husband, Orville Victor, whom she did not marry until *Mormon Wives* was completed, was editor of the famous series of "Beadle's Dime Novels." One of her books for that series, *Maum Guinea and Her Plantation "Children"*, published in 1861, "was a slave romance comparable in its influence to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and so popular that half a million copies were sold in the United States and a hundred thousand in England." [18]

Mormon Wives is a story about a lovely New England girl whose husband becomes converted to Mormonism and takes her to Salt Lake City. But while it pretends to be a novel about Mormon wives and the "sham religion" which degrades them, it says virtually nothing about Mormon theology, practices, or personalities. There is no explanation of the key conversion, no description of her heroine's trek West — just a long quotation from Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke*. There is nothing about the work of the church, little about the activity of women, nothing about the problems of colonization. Miss Fuller has her heroine and her husband going to the Salt Lake Temple in 1849, which is four years before the cornerstone was laid and forty-four years before the temple was completed. Thus, this "narrative of facts" is not about real people or a real situation. Despite surface appearances, it is, in fact, a novel about the position of the West with respect to the hopes and aspirations of the self-righteous sons and daughters of New England.

What does this descendant of the Puritans reveal to us about her generation? First, they were snobbish and indignant. The Mormons were "horrid people" (191); the serene and melancholy heroine simply could not bring herself "to fraternize with some who claimed her friendship" (118). Her Puritan pride was mortified — "her pure nature was inexpressibly shocked" (119). "I cannot forget my Puritan education, Richard," she told her husband, "far enough to associate with those women without a shudder of dislike" (126). Then, when Harry, her brother, returns to Salt Lake City, he seethes and writhes until he can suitably punish Richard, her rogue of a husband, who dared to embrace that "moral monster" called Mormonism and drag Margaret into that human cesspool called Salt Lake City. He vows revenge. Soon he is found, fully justified, whipping out his pistol and shoot-

[18] "Metta Victoria Fuller Victor" in *Dictionary of American Biography*.

ing at Richard. When the Mormons gather around to protest, he bravely grabs a pistol with each hand and warns them to leave him alone (292–296). The implication is plain that the righteous man is justified in using force to blot out what he, if not others, recognizes to be an evil and a plague. The Puritan conscience must see to it that the country remains pure.

Second, we learn from the novel that, while many New Englanders were inclined to have a very special feeling toward the West, to regard it as a Garden of Eden, it was, in "reality," a region of chaos and barbarity — a wastebasket of the world, with a mask of religion but quite uncivilized. Margaret's husband, for example, "would point out every new charm, and talk with a winning eloquence about the wild, free, beautiful life they would live in that far away new world, that wonderful Atlantis, where all of nature's magnificence would be theirs, and wealth and honor only had to be sought and found."

> The conventionalities, the cold-hearted formalities of civilized barbarism should not fetter them there. It is true that they would dwell in a city, but a city unlike any other that was built — a city of sisters and brothers living in peace and delight. They would be free to worship in the grandest temples of nature, to love the beautiful, to grow out of the harshness and conventionality of old ceremonies each into his own individuality. Their natures would expand like the glorious prairies (111).

But what does Margaret find in this garden of their dreams? Poor, ignorant, deluded Mormons! "If it only were not for the people, Richard, I should think that our dreams might be realized." But, "instead of escaping the evils and stains of society, we have riveted around us those of a more degrading kind. Instead of the reserve and coldness of New England civilization, we have the interference and curiosity of ignorance and prejudice" (124). In short, the Mormons have prevented the fulfillment of one of America's fondest dreams — they have polluted the passage West!

After two years in Utah, the day of reckoning comes to Margaret; Richard tells her that he is planning to be sealed to a second. Margaret emits the now-familiar "sharp low scream, shuddering, prolonged, and strange, and drops at his feet like a stone" (211–213). Her whole world shattered, Margaret is soon wandering, almost unconsciously, out of this awful city and back to nature — toward the lake. "Her purpose . . . was to walk rapidly until she came to some body of water deep enough, and there drown herself" (229). But then who should ride by but her traitorous husband and his new "concubine." Margaret changes her mind about suicide, but soon contracts brain-fever; she pines away day by day, begins to spit up blood, and after a few weeks, finally expires with an angelic expression of forgiveness on her face.

Poor Margaret could only wilt like a flower in the monstrous ruined garden. But she is partially redeemed by the second wife who, when she

learns that Richard has married a third, leaves the Mormon to go East on a mission of enlightenment and warning: "Always, always," this reformed daughter of Puritanism promises, "my voice shall rise in defense of one love, constant through life, and faithful in death — one home — one father and mother for the children — one joy on earth — one hope in heaven" (316).

Our fourth and final venture into the never-never land of anti-Mormon literature is entitled *Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years' Personal Experience, by the Wife of a Mormon Elder, recently from Utah.* It is a tale exceeding "the wildest dreams of romance, a tale in which utterly unbelievable crimes are committed in a far-off country [Utah], on the outskirts of civilization" (iv). First published in 1855, *Female Life* sold 40,000 copies within a few weeks, was reprinted, re-reprinted, translated into four foreign languages, and reprinted many times under various titles until as late as 1913. Unquestionably, it was the most widely sold — as it was also the most abominably written — novel or pseudo-memoir about the Mormons.

We really do not know who wrote it. She used the name "Maria Ward," and some bibliographers have speculated that it was Mrs. Cornelia Ferris, the wife of Benjamin G. Ferris, secretary of Utah during the winter of 1852–1853. Our present guess is that Mrs. Ferris' book, *The Mormons at Home* (New York, 1856), provided the basis for *Male Life Among the Mormons,* a sequel to *Female Life,* but that some other Eastern woman, not yet discovered, was the real author of both of the "Maria Ward" books.

The story begins in New England. The feminine narrator marries a Mormon, but doubts she will ever convert. She knows little of the faith, except that it causes family after family to break up — or, rather, Mormonism is an *end result,* rather than a cause, of the breakings: "Half the evils of married life would be averted if wives would confide in their husbands more, and their [own] strength less" (46). The real root of the problem is not Mormonism as such, but often the restlessness and "pride of an overweening ambition" (332) which make men and women abandon their homes.

The narrator accompanies her husband to Salt Lake. While admitting that some western scenery might "inspire devotional sentiments" (266), the Great Lake itself, like the Dead Sea of Asia, might well be "the mouth of hell" (280). En route, an interesting note is added when an Indian girl — "a child of the desert" — who had joined the caravan, and who had married a non-Mormon frontiersman leaves the Mormon encampment abruptly upon learning that her husband has been killed (261). She returns, of course, to nature: "The ties that bound her to the whites have been broken . . . . She is disgusted by the rules and regulations of Mormonism, and . . . will henceforth associate with her own race" (401). It is perhaps significant that the narrator is ultimately led to safety by this "child of nature."

In Utah, in order to emphasize the threat of the Mormons and polygamy to the family, Mrs. Ward recites an imaginary "code of regulations" for Mormon families, which, added to other elements, made "the domestic altar a shrine of legal prostitution" (314). For the slightest infractions a precise number of blows or lashes were to be meted out. Such "practices" no longer shock Mrs. Ward; she had long since "observed that the further we removed from the civilized settlements, the more tyrannical the husbands became, and I finally began to wonder what would be the end of it" (168). Indeed, there was no "end of it."

This rambling, unconvincing book, with its horde of stock characters, is a long one (449 pages plus an introduction), and should be sub-titled "Utah as Torture-Chamber." There are no less than thirty-four references to and graphic descriptions of women being physically tortured — with red-hot irons, with tomahawks, with whips, and with ice. There are so many examples of the principal woman character wearing men's clothing and "firing away" at cowardly males and whimpering females that one suspects that Mrs. Ward had an overpowering desire to dress up like a man and whip females.

Several things are apparent from a reading of the book. First, the author was never a Mormon and made little attempt to learn anything about them; second, she was never in Utah and made little effort to learn anything about the territory; third, her book was very likely a protest, in part, against her parents, and perhaps little brothers and sisters, as well as against complacency, inaction, and hypocrisy. A person looking out for psychological symptoms would almost certainly find elements of transvestitism, lesbianism, and sadism. Mrs. Ward apparently needed an object for her aggressions and chanced on the Mormons. That such a work as this should have been the most popular of all anti-Mormon books is some kind of a commentary on the reading public of the time. That countless subsequent writers copied her is also a reflection on the integrity and intelligence of those who carried on the crusade against Mormonism.

This suggests a consideration of the motives of these and other writers of anti-Mormon novels in the nineteenth century. As with most literature, the motives were probably various — psychological, political, speculative, religious, social. With some, writing a book of Mormon horrors may have provided an outlet for personal frustrations and satisfied instincts of aggression.[19] With others, the Mormons were attacked as a means of discrediting

[19] One is tempted to suggest that many "frustrated" Victorian women, whose role was largely restricted to the sanctity and purity of hearth and home, sought to preserve that sanctity and purity by conducting campaigns against lustful Turks, lustful Southern slaveholders, and lustful Mormon polygamists. This at once got them out of hearth and home and gave them a means of "striking back," if only indirectly and subconsciously, at husbands and fathers. Resentment for the male in this male-dominated monogamous society was thus transferred to the hated Turk, slaveholder, and Mormon. It is a commentary on the Victorian imagination that in the engravings which illustrated much of this

the principle of popular sovereignty. For still others, the motive was to make money by pandering to the vitiated interests of their readers, or to combat the competition of Mormon preachers for the souls of their congregations. Some viewed polygamy as an obstacle to the emancipation of women — a cause for which many worked with dedication if not always with good judgment.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the Mormons provided a ready scapegoat for community tensions produced by the constant incursion of disparate nationalities and culture groups. America — and especially the Great West — was considered the "Garden of the World"; the Mormons were an "alien" group — alien in philosophy and even in nationality with their large number of British and Scandinavian converts — which had occupied America's Garden and threatened the dream of enlightenment, prosperity, and virtue which the Garden was expected to bring into realization.[20]

At least one word should be said on behalf of the generation that produced these works. Not every person, of course, was "taken in" by those professedly "truthful" stories. A book reviewer for the prestigious *Athenaeum,* respected London literary weekly, in its issue for October 6, 1855, published a lengthy review of two of these books — those by Mrs. Belisle and Mrs. Ward. Probably written by William Hepworth Dixon, the editor, the review said in part:

> Their worst enemies agree that the Mormons are a prosperous community as regards worldly goods; but the state of Mormon society, as set forth in these books, could not hang together for a week: it would fall back into a state of mutual war and general savagery. The two conditions of hard-working industry and unrestrained wholesale debauchery could not exist together. Industry, even when not ennobled by religious principle, is incompatible with vices of this class. . . .

"Mormonism," this reviewer went on, "is a social phenomenon without parallel in modern history." Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, "whatever their sins may be, and no doubt they are many and various, are two of the most remarkable men the world has ever seen . . . ." They have induced thousands to leave their homes and their countries to "gather" in the Mormon Zion.

> Such leaders, and such a people, require to be grappled with in a very different spirit to what is brought to bear upon them in all the books we have yet seen about them: — the compendious terms "dupes and imposters" do not cover the facts.[21]

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literature the men were usually pictured in black and the women in white. Few nineteenth century novels carry a believable relationship between men and women. See, e.g., William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (New York, 1961); Donald Meyer, *The Positive Thinkers: A Study of the American Quest for Health, Wealth and Personal Power from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale* (Garden City, N.Y., 1965); Fred Lewis Pattee, *The Feminine Fifties* (New York, 1940); Helen Waite Papashvily, *All the Happy Endings* (New York, 1956); Herbert Ross Brown, *The Sentimental Novel in America, 1789–1860* (Durham, N.C., 1940).

[20] The best analyses of the "Garden," but without mention of the Mormons, are in Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950); and Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (New York, 1964).

[21] *The Athenaeum,* No. 1458, October 6, 1855, pp. 1147–1148.

While the Mormons could rejoice that an English literary magazine of this stature would publicly regret the scurrilous myths presented by such pseudo-memoirs as those of Mrs. Belisle and Mrs. Ward, it is a reflection on Mormon culture that it had not produced imaginative fiction of its own which could supplant or counter-balance the predominant unfavorable image. The Mormon community included a number of writers of both talent and imagination,[22] but the first novel of Mormon life by a Mormon was Nephi Anderson's *Added Upon*, first published in 1898—almost fifty years after the earliest anti-Mormon novels.[23] The most obvious explanation for this delay and neglect is that Utah's pioneers, even the most sensitive creative artists, were involved in the desperate struggle to wrest a livelihood from the rugged mountains and desert wasteland that comprised the "Great Basin Kingdom." Another explanation might posit that literalistic community leaders inherited the Puritan prejudice against prose fiction and believed fiction to be a "tall story" unworthy of a great people who had migrated several thousands of miles to form a society based on Righteousness and Truth.[24]

Whatever the explanation, leaders in all ages have recognized that popular impressions are based on the imagery of myth as well as on the power of logic. Nineteenth century readers were moved not only by the discursive logic in the tracts of Orson Pratt, but also by the beauty and form in the poetry of Eliza R. Snow and Charles W. Penrose.[25] That "truth" may be expressed more endurably in the form of literary and artistic symbols than in selective "factual history" and "realism"[26] was well understood by the Latter-day Saint prophet, Joseph Smith; the "practical" administrative talents of Utah's great colonizer, Brigham Young, steered Mormon culture in a different direction.[27]

In appraising the remarkable achievements of Utah's pioneers one senses that a major deficiency was their failure to encourage or produce a body of

[22] That there were a number of persons in pioneer Utah capable of writing quality fiction is evident from a canvass of the diaries, recollections, letters, biographies, and poetry in the "Name Files" of the L.D.S. Church Historian's Library and Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah.

[23] The first "Mormon novel" by an active Latter-day Saint appears to have been *John Stevens' Courtship*. Authored by Susa Young Gates, a daughter of Brigham Young, this story of the Utah War first appeared in serialized form in *The Contributor* (Salt Lake City), XVII (1895–1896), but was not published in book form until 1909.

[24] Brigham Young's attitude was that novels were "falsehoods got up expressly to excite the minds of youth . . . ." Sermon of October 9, 1872, *Journal of Discourses* . . . (26 vols., Liverpool, 1855–1886), XV, 222.

[25] The most effective missionary tracts of nineteenth century Mormonism were Orson Pratt, *A Series of Pamphlets* (Liverpool, 1851). *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star* (Liverpool), regularly carried the best of "Mormon" poetry.

[26] "When people objected to his portrait of Gertrude Stein on the grounds that it did not resemble her, Picasso replied, 'It will.'" Richard Ellman and Charles Feidelson, Jr., eds., *The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature* (New York, 1965), p. 8.

[27] At least two "creative" histories were withdrawn by Brigham Young after their publication in England in the 1850's. They were: Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, The Prophet* . . . (Liverpool and London, 1853); and James Linforth, ed., *Route from Liverpool to Great Salt Lake Valley Illustrated . . . by Frederick Piercy* (Liverpool and London, 1855). There seems to be no adequate explanation for these withdrawals.

literature describing the variety, richness, and quality of pioneer life. It is at least conceivable that if the Latter-day Saint community had supported, on a regular basis, the labor and genius of a handful of loyal and imaginative writers, the enormous investment and loss involved in the Utah War, the Underground of the 1880's, and the incessant sparring with Federal officials throughout the nineteenth century might have been avoided, or, at least, materially lessened.[28]

The embodiment of ideas of permanent and universal interest in popular and artistic forms is an object of the highest and finest statecraft. A nation, a sub-culture, or a religious community which neglects it does so at its own peril. The enduring images by which people live — symbols of credibility, integrity, and artistic excellence — are the products of a people with qualities of greatness.

A LIST OF "MORMON" NOVELS AND TALES OF ADVENTURE PUBLISHED IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*

1. Aiken, Albert W. *Eagle Plume, The White Avenger: A Tale of the Mormon Trail* (New York, 1870). This is a Beadle Dime Novel, as are also the following by Aiken:
2. ..... *Gold Dan, or Talbot in Utah* (New York, 1898).
3. ..... *Gold Dan; or, The White Savage of the Great Salt Lake: A Terrible Tale of the Danites of Mormon Land* (New York, 1878).
4. ..... *Iron Dagger; or, The High Horse in Silver Land: A Tale of Strange Adventures in the Mogollon Country* (New York, 1885).
5. ..... *Old Lynx, the Mormon Detective; or, Saved from a Terrible Fate* (New York, 1884).
6. Anderson, Nephi. *Added Upon: A Story . . .* (Salt Lake City, 1898). Many subsequent editions under the same title.
7. Bartlett, A. Jennie [Jennie (Bartlett) Switzer]. *Elder Northfield's Home; or Sacrificed on the Mormon Altar: A Story of the Blighting Curse of Polygamy* (New York, 1882, 1891). Also published as: *Elder Northfield's Home . . . : A Story of Territorial Days in Utah* (Boston, 1894); and *Elder Northfield's Home . . . : A Story of Utah* (Boston, 1895).
8. [Orvilla S. Belisle, supposed author]. *The Prophets; or, Mormonism Unveiled* (Philadelphia, 1855); *Mormonism Unveiled; or, A History of Mormonism from its Rise to the Present Time* (London, 1855). Republished with slight changes as: *In the Grip of the Mormons. By an Escaped Wife of a Mormon Elder* (London, [1919]).

[28] Some of Mormondom's finest literature was produced in the Utah Penitentiary in the 1880's when highly imaginative and talented men were prevented from engaging in the ordinary business of life and therefore utilized this opportunity of engaging in creative writing. E.g., George Q. Cannon, *Life of Joseph Smith, The Prophet* (Salt Lake City, 1888); George Reynolds, *The Story of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, 1888); and an account of his life in the Utah Penitentiary by Rudger Clawson, still unpublished.

* This list does not include narrative poems, short stories, or magazine serials unless separately published and bound. Also excluded are personal experience tales and travelers' accounts which are not primarily fictional.

9. Bell, Alfreda Eva, ed. *Boadicea, The Mormon Wife: Life-Scenes in Utah* . . . (Baltimore, 1855).

10. [Clark, Charles Heber]. *The Tragedy of Thompson Dunbar: A Tale of Salt Lake City*, by Max Adeler, [*pseud.*] (Philadelphia, 1879).

11. Conybeare, William John. *Perversion; or, the Causes and Consequences of Infidelity: A Tale for the Times* (3 vols., London, 1856; New York, 1856).

12. Dougall, Lily. *The Mormon Prophet* (New York, 1899; London, 1899).

13. Doyle, Arthur Conan. *A Study in Scarlet* (London, 1887; Philadelphia, 1890). Republished many times.

14. Dubois, Louise. *Hilton Hall; or, A Thorn in the Flesh* (Salt Lake City, 1898).

15. Duplessis, Paul. *Les Mormons* (Paris, 1858, 1859; New York, 1859, 1860).

16. Ewing, General Hugh. *The Black List: A Tale of Early California* (New York, 1893).

17. Fuller, Metta Victoria [Metta Victoria (Fuller) Victor]. *Mormon Wives: A Narrative of Facts Stranger than Fiction* (New York, 1856, 1858). Republished as: *Lives of Female Mormons* (Philadelphia, 1859, 1860; New York, 1860).

18. Gash, Abram Dale. *The False Star: A Tale of the Occident* . . . (Chicago, 1899).

19. [Gilchrist, Mrs. Rosetta Luce]. *Apples of Sodom: A Story of Mormon Life* (Cleveland, 1883).

20. Hudson, Mary Worrell (Smith) [Mrs. J. J. Hudson]. *Esther, The Gentile* (Topeka, 1888).

21. Ingraham, Prentiss. *The Texan's Double; or, the Merciless Shadower* . . . (New York, 1884).

22. ..... *War Path Will, the Traitor Guide* . . . (New York, 1884).

23. Jones, Ethel, *pseud. A Latter Day Saint; Being the Story of the Conversion of Ethel Jones related by herself* (New York, 1884).

24. Kerr, Alvah Milton. *Trean; or, The Mormon's Daughter: A Romantic Story of Life Among the Latter-Day Saints* . . . (Chicago, 1889).

25. [Lewis, Charles Bertrand]. *Bessie Baine; or, the Mormon's Victim: A Tale of Utah*, by M. Quad [*pseud.*]. (Boston, 1876; Chicago, 1880).

26. Lewis, Leon. *The Sons of Thunder; or, the Rivals of Ruby Valley* . . . (New York, 1884).

27. MacKnight, James Arthur. *Hagar: A Tale of Mormon Life* (New York and Chicago, 1889; New York, 190?).

28. Marryat, Frederick. *Monsieur Violet: His Travels and Adventures Among the Snake Indians and Wild Tribes of the Great Western Prairies* (Leipzig, 1843; London, 1849). Many subsequent editions.

29. [Mathews, Amelia Veronique (Petit)]. *Plural Marriage: The Heart-History of Adele Hersch*, by Veronique Petit (2nd edition. Ithaca, New York, 1885).

30. Mitchell, Langdon E. *Two Mormons from Muddlety: Love in the Backwoods* (New York, 1876). Republished in *Love in the Backwoods* (New York, 1897).

31. Newberry, Fannie E. *A Son's Victory: A Story of the Land of the Honey Bee* (Philadelphia, 1897).

32. Paddock, [Cornelia], Mrs. A. G. *The Fate of Madame La Tour: A Tale of Great Salt Lake* (New York, 1881). Republished in New York, 1882, 1895, 1900; Copenhagen, 1902).

33. ..... *In the Toils; or, Martyrs of the Latter Days* (Chicago, 1879). Republished in New York, 1890; Chicago, 1890).

34. ..... *Saved at Last from Among the Mormons* (Springfield, Ill., 1881, 1894). Republished in Danish (Copenhagen, 1914).

35. Reid, Captain Mayne. *The Wild Huntress* (3 vols., London, 1861; New York, 1861).

36. [Richards, Robert, *pseud.*]. *The Californian Crusoe; or, The Lost Treasure Found: A Tale of Mormonism* (London and New York, 1854).

37. Russell, John. *The Mormoness; or, The Trials of Mary Maverick* (Alton, Illinois, 1853).

38. *Saved from the Mormons* (New York, 1872).

39. [Spencer, William Loring (Nunez)]. *Salt Lake Fruit: A Latter-day Romance, by an American* (Boston, 1884; Mansfield, Ohio, 188?; Springfield, Mass., 1889; New York, 1891).

40. [St. John, Percy Bolingbroke]. *Jessie, The Mormon's Daughter: A Tale of English and American Life* (3 vols., London, 1861).

41. Schoppe, Amalie (Weise). *Der Prophet: Historischer Roman aus der Neuzeit Nord-Amerikas* (3 vols., Jena, Germany, 1846).

42. Stephens, Mrs. Ann S. *Esther: A Story of the Oregon Trail* (London, *ca.* 1880).

43. [Todd, Mrs. Mary Van Lennup (Ives)]. *Deborah, The Advanced Woman*, by M. I. T. (Boston, 1896).

44. Tourgée, Albion Winegar. *Button's Inn* (Boston, 1887).

45. Trout, Grace. *A Mormon Wife* (Chicago, 1895, 1896, 1912).

46. [Walsh, Marie A.]. *My Queen: A Romance of the Great Salt Lake*, by "Sandette" [*pseud.*]. (New York, 1878).

47. [Ward, Maria, *pseud.*]. *Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years' Personal Experience. By the Wife of a Mormon Elder Recently from Utah* (New York, 1855, 1856, 1857, 1858, 1860; Philadelphia, 1863, 1888; London, 1855). Republished as *Maria Ward's Disclosures: Female Life Among the Mormons . . .* (New York, 1858); *The Mormon Wife: A Life Story of the Sacrifices, Sorrows and Sufferings of Woman* (Hartford, Conn., 1872, 1873, 1890); *Confessions of a Mormon Bride; or, The Truth About Mormonism* (Philadelphia, 1890): *Escaped from the Mormons* (London, 1913). Sometimes attributed to Mrs. B. G. Ferris.

The following translations are known:

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Les Harems du Nouveau Monde: Vie des Femmes chez les Mormons. Transl. by B. H. Revoil (Paris, 1856).

Frauenleben unter den Mormonen . . . (3 vols., Leipzig, 1856; Weimar, 1857).
Qvindeliv blandt Mormonerne . . . (Copenhagen, 1855).
Qvinnan bland Mormonerna . . . (Stockholm, 1857).

48. [Ward, Maria, *pseud.*]. *The Husband in Utah, by Austin N. Ward* (New York, 1857, 1859; London, 1857). Republished as: *Male Life Among the Mormons; or, the Husband in Utah* (Philadelphia, 1863, 1865, 1890).

49. Wheeler, Edward L. *Bullion Bret; or, The Giant Grip of Gitthar; A Tale of Silverland* (New York, 1884).

50. Winthrop, Theodore. *John Brent* (New York, 1861). Also published (Boston, 1862).