

Gent(i)le Reader:

Audience Negotiation and Self-Presentation in Fanny Stenhouse's
"Tell It All": The Story of a Life's Experience in Mormonism

by

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Abstract

The faith of the “other” has long been a subject of interest in American literature. Many works in this field have taken the form of the religious exposé, a genre that operates by claiming to unmask the inner working of a faith, usually to a mainstream Protestant audience. “Tell It All”: The Story of a Life’s Experience in Mormonism (1874) by Fanny Stenhouse was one of the most influential anti-Mormon works of the 19th century. “Tell It All” was loosely structured around Exposé of Polygamy in Utah, (1872) which Fanny had written chiefly for non-Mormon readers. Stenhouse molded “Tell It All,” though, to also appeal to Mormon readers. As a former Latter-day Saint, she hoped to awaken her sister-saints to the dangers of Mormonism, especially as a result of its polygamy doctrine. Although she claims to simply relate the facts of Mormonism, Stenhouse very carefully crafts her arguments. Because she is reaching out to a divided audience, she invests a great deal of effort into how she presents her contentions and herself to the reader.

A background of the religious exposé genre provides a firm foundation to study its effects on Stenhouse’s audience approaches and rhetorical techniques. In chapter 1, I study how the book compares to both Mormon and Catholic exposés.

In chapter 2, I will investigate the differences between Exposé and “Tell It All,” as Stenhouse developed different arguments to appeal to her larger audience. She also alters the presentation of herself, which raises questions about her fundamental goals. In the latter part of this chapter, I explore why Stenhouse employs elements of both the spiritual autobiography and the religious exposé in her work.

The issue of conversion is another important element in “Tell It All.” In chapter 3, I analyze Stenhouse’s reflections on conversion and how she presents herself to address both Mormon and non-Mormon concerns. Stenhouse studies why believers remained in the Church, probing the effects of various coercive techniques and the power of communal rituals. She also attempts to provide rational explanations for the “miracles” that the Mormons were then claiming to perform.

Slavery had been abandoned less than a decade before Stenhouse published “Tell It All,” so the controversy was still fresh in the American mind. In chapter 4, I probe Stenhouse’s comparison of slavery to the polygamy system. Stenhouse’s work gained the imprimatur of Harriet Beecher Stowe, who wrote the intriguing preface. Stowe argued that the inability to feel perpetuated the system of slavery. Stenhouse contends that the same is true of polygamy, and so she encourages readers to heed the sentiments that tell them that polygamy is wrong. I investigate the different functions of emotion in this work and in the Mormon community, as a whole.

Chapter 5 studies why Stenhouse utilizes the accounts of other Mormon women within her own narrative. These individuals corroborate Stenhouse’s contentions, but each of them also provides a unique perspective on the faith.

The claim to “tell it all” is indeed impossible. However, Stenhouse does reveal a great deal about the psychological, emotional, and spiritual effects of Mormonism. The techniques that she uses to interest and motivate her audience reveal her careful crafting of her arguments and presentation of self.

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Short Titles

EP: Stenhouse, Fanny. Exposé of Polygamy in Utah

TIA: Stenhouse, Fanny. Tell It All: The Story of a Life's Experience in Mormonism.

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-Introduction-

Clean-cut missionaries in crisp, white shirts and black suits, the beaming faces of the Tabernacle Choir, a majestic temple in Salt Lake City, and large, happy families are just a few of the images that come to mind when many people think of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These associations are by no means random. Each year, the Church spends millions of dollars on television commercials and magazine advertisements to ensure that these symbols retain their iconic status. In spite of their aggressive marketing efforts, though, the Latter-day Saints still face a major public relations hurdle that they may never overcome: just over one hundred years ago, the Church proudly advocated polygamy and defied anyone, including the federal government, to try and stop them.

In their short history, the media spotlight has shone brightly on this extraordinary community of believers. Even recent decades have not been without controversy.¹ Nowadays, except for carefully orchestrated interviews or their own folksy advertisements, the Church usually avoids media attention. The skillful framing of Mormonism for the “Gentile” (non-Mormon) population, combined with the group’s aggressive proselytizing efforts, have transformed the Church from an isolated cult to a worldwide religion with almost 10 million adherents.² In many parts of the country this once-unorthodox faith has gained a comfortable, middle-class respectability.

A century ago, though, the situation was quite different. Americans were both fascinated and outraged by the Mormons and their incredible claims. One group of people became so enraged by this religious movement that they resorted to violence. The angry mob that assassinated Joseph Smith in a Carthage, Illinois jail in 1844 undoubtedly

thought that by murdering the prophet of Mormonism, they were ensuring the sect's demise. Had they not engaged in this brutal act, though, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints might not even exist today. Smith, the founding prophet and translator of The Book of Mormon, was bold and charismatic, but his erratic nature, clandestine polygamous relationships, and wild schemes repelled many potential converts.³ After Smith's death, Brigham Young became the new president and prophet of the Church. Young had the foresight to create a "Desert Zion" in Utah and develop a vast mission program to ensure that the Church would continue to grow. He also capitalized on Smith's earlier "revelation" about polygamy and molded it into a fundamental Mormon doctrine.

Aggressive evangelism efforts abroad accounted for a substantial number of converts during the 1800s. Thomas Stenhouse, a Scottish convert, was one of many Mormons who had agreed to serve as a missionary. While Stenhouse was proselytizing in St. Heliers, Jersey, England in 1849, he met a young woman named Fanny. Fanny was working as a governess for a wealthy French family, but had returned home to visit her parents. She was surprised to discover that Stenhouse had converted her family, formerly devout Baptists, to the peculiar "Mormonite" faith (TIA 40). After only two weeks at home, Fanny also converted, and in 1850 she married Thomas Stenhouse. The couple evangelized in Switzerland, migrated to New York in 1855, and traveled by oxcart to Utah in 1859.

Soon after their arrival, the Stenhouses established themselves as one of the most prominent families in Salt Lake City. "[Thomas] founded and edited the *Daily Telegraph*, the city's first daily paper."⁴ He also became an elder in the Church. Fanny

served as President of the Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association, a service organization, and devoted some of her time to suffragist interests. Her hat and linen business also gave her opportunities to interact with Brigham Young and his wives. The Stenhouses were "model Mormons" and according to Mormon historian Ronald Walker, they "were introduced to virtually every important visitor to the territory during the 1860s."⁵

Although she was affluent and highly respected in the Mormon community, Fanny Stenhouse became increasingly uneasy about her family's situation. She knew that 15 years of monogamous marriage was a rarity for a couple of their prominence. Because Thomas was an elder, other Church authorities constantly encouraged him to set an example for others and take up the "Divine Duty," as polygamy was sometimes called. Thomas appears to have held out for as long as he could, but he eventually married another woman who bore him two children. As he was contemplating marriage to a third wife, Fanny began to seriously doubt the divinity of Joseph Smith's revelation about polygamy and shared her concerns with her husband. Thomas, too, became suspicious that President Young might not be a true prophet.

During their last few years as Church members, the Stenhouses were active in the New Movement, a reform-minded group of prosperous English-immigrant Mormons who wanted to loosen Brigham Young's tyrannical influence over private businesses and personal decisions. The Stenhouses' growing concern about polygamy and their involvement in the New Movement eventually made them incompatible with the Church. "In 1870, [Fanny] and her husband withdrew from the Church, and his second wife soon divorced him."⁶

While visiting Gentile friends in New York, Stenhouse was encouraged to write about her experiences in Mormonism and the institution of polygamy. She penned Exposé of Polygamy in Utah: A Lady's Life among the Mormons (1872) in a few weeks. This work briefly outlined Fanny's life, but it focused primarily on the polygamy doctrine and its effects. The text was quite popular; even Ann Eliza Young, one of Brigham Young's wives, "claimed the influence of this book as one reason why she left and later divorced her husband."⁷ In 1874, Fanny published "Tell It All": The Story of a Life's Experience in Mormonism. This book was an even bigger success than Exposé. Although the Saints were ordered to read only faith-promoting books and newspapers, over 500 copies of "Tell It All" were rapidly sold when it became available in Salt Lake City.⁸ The work was reissued at least ten times, with editions published in Great Britain and even Mexico.

At first glance, one might presume that "Tell It All" is merely an expanded version of Exposé. However, substantial differences distinguish these two books. Exposé was written for a non-Mormon audience hungry for news on the bizarre practice of polygamy. In this work, Stenhouse describes the arrogance and selfishness of many Mormon men. She does not delve into her own emotions and actions, though. Most of Exposé focuses on the evils of polygamy by employing a documentary style. Succinct accounts about friends and an appendix of Church doctrines and speech transcripts serve as proof texts to verify the dangers of plural marriage.

On the other hand, Stenhouse uses "Tell It All" to explain more about her own life and to explore the psychological and emotional aspects of the faith. Her broad critique of Mormon men also narrows to an attack on Brigham Young; he is the one, she now

asserts, who has corrupted the morals of both the male and female Saints. “Tell It All” investigates the doctrine of polygamy and also studies its effects upon believers. By blending the exposé genre and elements of the spiritual autobiography, Stenhouse is able to reflect on the emotional and psychological aspects of the faith. She includes interesting accounts from some of her friends; these “stories within the story” enable her to discuss what the Mormon experience is like for others. Fanny also probes the connections between slavery and polygamy.

Perhaps the most notable difference between Exposé and “Tell It All” is Fanny’s relationship to her readers. While Exposé appealed primarily to those unfamiliar with the faith, Stenhouse contends that “two objects influenced my mind when I first proposed to write [“Tell It All”]. In the first place, I earnestly desired to stir up my Mormon sisters to a just sense of their own position . . . In the second place, I was anxious to enlist for them the sympathy of the Gentile world” (TIA 618). Notably, Stenhouse calls out to her Mormon peers first. Also, her reference to non-Mormons as “Gentiles” displays that she still views the world through Mormon lenses and has not completely released herself from the clannish mindset of the faith. Many other ex-LDS writers aligned their works to appeal to non-Mormons and often maligned their former brethren as ignorant, lecherous boors. Stenhouse, however, hoped to interest Gentile readers and also awaken her sister Saints to their own degradation.

Because she addresses a wider audience in “Tell It All,” Fanny had to judiciously select her arguments. If she were too vitriolic in her attacks, many Mormons would dismiss her work as another truth-twisting smear campaign against the Church. If she were too cautious or sympathetic, though, non-Mormons would question her loyalties.

Finding the right balance of rhetoric in order to motivate both groups posed a daunting task.

Stenhouse also had to consider how she wanted to present herself to the reader. In the preface of “Tell It All,” she laments the growing number of poorly written works on the Latter-day Saints and asserts that “the demand for a *true* history by a *real Mormon woman* has never yet been supplied” (TIA xiii). The presentation of herself as a beacon of truth endears her to an audience eager to find out what the faith is really like. Fanny, in fact, does not “tell it all,” but she does tell a lot. This accomplishment is even more impressive when we consider the obstacles that she faced: she was a former Latter-day Saint *and* a woman attempting to explain her views on polygamy, a politically divisive and sexually-charged issue. To compound matters, Stenhouse desired a Mormon and Gentile reading audience.

Maurice Charland’s work on autobiography suggests that, in writing their autobiographies, some women “crafted an image of an activist for the causes they espoused; the image they project of themselves creates a ‘subject position’ . . . which they hope readers will choose to fill. In effect, these autobiographies function to *create* an audience for their causes.”⁹ Through her unique exposé, Stenhouse hopes to compel her divided audience to end polygamy. She must first convince them of the need to act, though. Her writing techniques, arguments, and reflections provide a fascinating glimpse into how she negotiates with her readers and how she wishes to portray herself. By studying the unique elements of “Tell It All” and Exposé, we learn why Stenhouse *cannot* “tell it all:” she must carefully develop the presentation of herself and her contentions in order to appeal to, and motivate, a very diverse audience.

-Chapter 1-

The Evolution of the Exposé

During the mid-1800s, bookstores and newsstands teemed with writings by defensive Saints, angry ex-Mormons, and Gentiles, all of whom had different opinions on Mormonism. Some periodicals and newspapers, such as the *New York Tribune*, even sent correspondents to Utah to report on this peculiar sect. The religious exposé, which claimed to reveal the inner workings of a faith to a mainstream audience, became the genre of choice for angry Gentiles and bitter ex-Saints eager to unmask the “real” Church.

Mormonism was certainly not the first faith to endure negative exposure through the religious exposé. Since the late 18th century, writers had honed their aggressive tactics on Roman Catholicism. Books on the “Romish faith” often dealt with issues of female entrapment and confinement. The accounts of Maria Monk and Rebecca Reed, two of the most popular anti-Catholic narratives of the time, depicted the sufferings of naive Protestant girls who were lured into monastic orders and subsequently abused by lascivious priests.¹⁰

Both Catholicism and Mormonism shared tenets that proved to be problematic for the Protestant majority. The celibacy of the Catholic clergy and the alleged reproductive prowess of immigrant Catholics were both too extreme for middle-class mores. Not surprisingly, sexual issues arose in Mormonism, as well. Even at a time when other utopian religious communities were advocating unorthodox sexual practices such as celibacy or “open” marriages, mainstream Protestants focused their outrage on the polygamous Latter-day Saints.¹¹ The longstanding association of Muslims, or “Turks,”

with both polygamy and tyranny may have played a role in this reaction.¹² Some exposé writers capitalized on these comparisons and referred to Joseph Smith, the founding prophet of Mormonism, as a “second Mohamed.”¹³

Questions of authority and loyalty also plagued Catholicism and Mormonism. Many patriotic Protestants believed that the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church and the Prophet/President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Later-Day Saints were potential threats to democracy, as these patriarchs could override the will of the people. Eventually, public attention shifted almost exclusively to Mormonism as it isolated itself, theologically and geographically, from the rest of the Protestant community.

Although the media had dogged the Church since its founding by Joseph Smith, the despotic Brigham Young was the one who really kept the Gentile presses running.¹⁴ Young reigned over Salt Lake City, the “New Zion” of Mormonism, from 1847 until his death in 1877. As the Chief Prophet, Seer, and Revelator of the Church, believers revered his status as the mouthpiece of God. Accordingly, devout Saints obeyed Young when he “counseled” them to buy their groceries and supplies from his stores, to run their businesses according to his dictates, and to let him arrange their children’s marriages.

President Young received and promoted many revelations that the LDS Church has since discarded or altered, including the unorthodox beliefs that Adam is God and that man can become a god.¹⁵ However, he is probably most famous for his zealous advocacy of polygamy, which was originally revealed to and practiced by Joseph Smith in the 1840s. Smith “sealed” himself to several different women and taught the doctrine of “celestial marriage” to only a select few initiates, out of well-founded fear of reprisal. His first wife, Emma, vigorously opposed polygamy and used her influence as the

prophet's wife to stir up dissent.¹⁶ Young, though, who became President after Smith's assassination, was undaunted by objectors and avidly endorsed the practice. In 1852, after several years of official denials, the Church publicly admitted that it endorsed polygamy and attempted to garner support to freely uphold this doctrine.

As Young's power grew and his revelations became more bizarre, detractors of the sect increased in number and intensity. Several writers published exposés of the unorthodox faith, intermingling fact and fiction that resulted in provocative but inaccurate narratives. A handful of non-Mormon writers tried to produce accurate, probing works, but their Gentile status severely hindered the depth of their investigations.

Under the circumstances, the ex-Mormons, or "vile apostates," as Brigham Young graciously referred to them, were potentially the best sources of information on the LDS establishment. They were no longer bound to Church dogma and their insider status meant that they could divulge a great deal about the Mormon mindset. Unfortunately, though, many ex-Mormon writers like Maria Ward and Ann Young were so intent on demonizing the Church and its leaders that they ended up hurling the same insults and accusations as countless authors before them.¹⁷ Ward's caustic assessment of the Saints' moral caliber was typical of ex-Mormon writers at the time: "I had known for many years that the scum of society, the refuse of prisons, and criminals hoary with all sorts of sin, were freely admitted and registered in [the Church's] ranks."¹⁸ Ann Young, a former wife of Brigham Young, was even more graphic in her descriptions. Her book, Wife No. 19, included chapter headings that ranged from the pithy "Men Get the Best of It" to the acerbic "Fiend-like Deeds of Certain Mormon Wretches."¹⁹

Many of these exposés read like Mormon versions of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, outlining a litany of grievances against the LDS hierarchy. Revenge, though, not reform, was the motive of the writers. These books allowed their authors to finally "get back" at the Church that they felt had wronged them. Some of the most incredible and disparaging narratives appear to have been the most popular, going through several printings and launching lucrative lecture tours for their authors. The lurid details of Latter-day licentiousness piqued the interests of many readers. Unfortunately, though, both Mormon and ex-Mormon authors preoccupied with polygamy and other perceived offenses usually squandered the opportunity to shed light on the inner life of this unique religious subculture. The growing body of anti-Mormon literature failed to address some of the most salient issues in the faith.

One of the most pressing questions about Mormonism arose from the exposés themselves. Ex-Mormon authors gained their readers' trust by portraying themselves in their works as diligent and honest individuals. However, if the Mormons were really as depraved and vicious as these exposés asserted, the reader had to wonder how these virtuous authors ever joined the sect.

To their credit, some writers ventured to address the troublesome issue of conversion. Maria Ward and Ann Young both asserted that Joseph Smith had been trained in Mesmerism and that missionaries well versed in "animal magnetism" could lure converts with their hypnotic stares.²⁰ "How else," Mormon historian Leonard Arrington facetiously asks, "could so many have been won to such a sacrifice of the traditional values of Western civilization?"²¹ Although this explanation seems rather far-fetched, it was probably comforting to Christian readers to know that these otherwise

moral and upstanding people were not joining this peculiar sect of their own free will. One must also consider that the field of hypnosis was in its infancy, but already played a central role in several religious philosophies and in popular culture.²² Attributing one's conversion to "Mesmerism" conveniently absolved proselytes of personal accountability for their actions and implied that Smith and other missionaries must have had subversive intentions.

One of the most successful Mormon exposés by a former believer, "Tell It All": The Story of a Life's Experience in Mormonism, was first published in 1874. Fanny Stenhouse, the author, captured readers' attention by reflecting on her own conversion experience, daring to discuss some of the appealing aspects of the faith, and alerting readers to the emotional and psychological tolls of Mormonism, especially as a result of its polygamy doctrine. She addressed the traditional exposé audience, but she also called out to the Latter-day Saints, whom she hoped to awaken to their own degraded state. Stenhouse's articulate presentation of herself and her concerns won over thousands of readers.

"Tell It All" actually evolved from a book that Stenhouse had written over the course of a few weeks in 1872, not long after she had left Mormonism. Fanny claims that the prodding of her friends convinced her to write about what she had endured under Mormonism. One woman actually blocked the exit from her house until she had extracted a promise from Fanny to write about her life as a Latter-day Saint. Stenhouse's assertion that outside forces compelled her to tell her story is an oft-repeated claim in the autobiographies of 19th century women activists. Martha Watson contends, "Regardless of the sincerity of [the author's] protestations that she was writing in response to pressure

from others, each woman was keenly conscious of her role in and responsibility to a group advocating social change.”²³ Stenhouse’s explanation that her friends served as the catalyst for her writing subtly assures her reader that she is not a publicity-hungry or conceited individual. Rather, she is writing for the public benefit and because others have convinced her that her cause is just. Although she described it as a “pamphlet,” Exposé of Polygamy in Utah: A Lady’s Life among the Mormons (1872), was over 200 pages “illustrated with woodcuts, [which] briefly outlined Stenhouse’s life and presented her arguments against the doctrine of polygamy.”²⁴ The first “pamphlet” edition of Exposé sold out in ten days, and the second and third printings went almost as quickly.²⁵

After Exposé came out, the pro-Mormon “*Salt Lake Herald* issued Fanny a ‘spiteful invitation’ to tell polygamy’s full story.”²⁶ The newspaper was infuriated that Exposé had only divulged critical accounts of polygamy and had ignored its myriad benefits. Fanny responded to the paper’s specific challenge to “tell it all” by using the phrase as part of her title and putting it in quotation marks to emphasize that her work was a response to the paper’s dare. “According to Fanny, the ‘full story’ of polygamy showed how restrained her first volume actually had been.”²⁷

Both the mob that assassinated Joseph Smith and the *Salt Lake Herald* editors who attacked Exposé made the same mistake. Both groups thought that they could end their frustration by attacking the perceived “source” of their problem. Instead, though, their actions only exacerbated the situation. The jailhouse murderers thought that Mormonism would die with Joseph Smith, but it clearly did not. Smith’s martyrdom actually bolstered the zeal of the Latter-day Saints and solidified their loyalty to Brigham Young. Likewise, the *Salt Lake Herald*’s vitriolic attack did not influence Stenhouse to

reconsider her stance or simply retreat in shame. Instead, it firmly convinced her of the need to write a second work and tell even more people about the dangers of Mormonism.

Fanny Stenhouse, like the early Mormons, was not about to give up.

-Chapter 2-

Staging the Self: From Exposé to “Tell It All”

With the publishing of Exposé and “Tell It All,” Stenhouse had completely severed herself from the Mormon community she had known for most of her life. She could not afford, emotionally or financially, to be rejected by the mainstream Protestant community, as well. The most pressing concerns she had to consider were how she would present her contentions and herself to the reader. Although Fanny addresses a number of issues in her works, the claim to “tell it all” sets up a distinct impossibility. Issues of self-censorship immediately manifest themselves when one compares Stenhouse’s first work, Exposé of Polygamy in Utah: A Lady’s Life Among the Mormons, to “Tell It All”: The Story of A Life’s Experience in Mormonism, published two years later in 1874. In fact, Stenhouse is conspicuously silent or evasive at several points in her book. She clearly censored her own thoughts and experiences in many parts of the work in order to present her contentions and herself more favorably to a wider audience.

In Exposé, Stenhouse depicts herself as a woman who was never truly happy in Mormonism. She leads the reader to believe that she was suspicious of the Church and its doctrines from the beginning. The subtitle of this work, A Lady’s Life Among the Mormons, is especially telling. Stenhouse does not write about life *as* a Mormon. Rather, she asserts that she is a “lady,” with all the culture and breeding that the title imparts, who was forced to live “among” the Mormons. By her own admission, she never truly belonged in this community.

In Exposé, Stenhouse refers to her husband as “Mr. S.” and divulges that he is a rather heartless and selfish person. In “Tell It All,” she uses the more familiar term “my husband” and defends his personality in context of the religious influence he was under. Quite a few of the men in Exposé seem insensitive and overbearing. Some Mormon males, Fanny divulges, “assumed such authority that they impressed the ‘Saints’ with the idea that they were little gods.”²⁸ Stenhouse frames several scenarios in which these “little gods” assert their authority over women, including in the household and at church. Even something as innocuous as a ballroom social becomes an excruciating experience for Mormon women. Fanny describes a typical Mormon ball, where sullen wives sit along the wall while their husbands dance and flirt with potential future mates. She inquires:

Let me ask my lady readers . . . how do you think you would feel if *you* were kept waiting long after the hour of midnight, far away into the morning, until your husbands had got through with their dancing and flirting, while your own hearts were breaking? I hear you say, “I would not stand it.” You do not know, I assure you, *what* you would do under the circumstances. . . . How can you possibly judge what the feelings of a Mormon woman are, who has been taught to believe that ‘her desire shall be unto her husband, *and he shall rule over her.*’”²⁹

Stenhouse attempts to justify herself before non-Mormon women who would probably wonder how she could endure such abuse. Although Fanny attempts to clarify her own

perspective, she argues that Gentile readers simply *cannot* comprehend what the sister Saints endure. Her quotation from the book of Genesis is also quite telling. Although this verse states that male domination is an unfortunate result of Original Sin, the Church strongly reinforces it as a glorious ideal.

The inclusion of illustrations further accentuates the burdens that polygamy inflicts upon Mormon women. Figure I coincides with a description of the duties of plural wives. Older wives often had to console the newest “sister-wife,” who was sometimes married without her consent. The upper illustration displays how older wives “break in” or “tame” a young, rebellious wife and attempt to convince her of “the great glory . . . of ‘celestial marriage’” (EX 72). Figure II corresponds with Fanny’s account of her own despair after her husband decides to take up polygamy (EX 112). Mrs. Stenhouse is left at home to watch the children while “Mr. S” courts his future wife. Both of these illustrations are designed to elicit sympathy and shock the reader’s value system. Mormon women are ordered to submit and sacrifice while the adulterous men apparently do as they please.

Righteous indignation against men pervades Exposé. Christian readers would certainly recognize the similarities between Stenhouse’s reprimands and the prophetic warnings of the Bible. Just as the biblical prophets chastised a wayward Israel, Stenhouse calls out several times, “O men of Utah!,” rebukes them for their callousness, and encourages them to end polygamy (EX 83).

After enduring such abuse, Stenhouse tells the reader, “I once felt as if I perfectly hated the whole of the male sex, so great was my indignation,” but tempers this statement by asserting, “My object is not to decry or speak evil of individuals. I simply want to

Figure I: "Labouring With A Rebellious Wife."



"LABOURING" WITH A REBELLIOUS WIFE.—Page 72.

Figure II: "Wife At Home. – Husband Abroad."



WIFE AT HOME.—HUSBAND ABROAD.—Page 112.

show what men will do when under the influence of superstition, and how it will destroy the finest feelings of their natures” (EX 82). Stenhouse is not merely angry. Her fear that she is being deceived leads her to “bec[o]me wretchedly suspicious” of other men, even her own husband (EX 22). From these descriptions, the reader gets the sense that polygamy dulls the sensitivity of men, but heightens the emotional pain of women. Fanny focuses on her own misery, but she does not investigate the pressure that the Church has put upon her husband.

In contrast to the indignant woman described in Exposé, Stenhouse uses “Tell It All” to portray herself as an intelligent, earnest woman who enters polygamy against her will, but who dutifully submits in order to appease Church officials and her loving, but deluded, husband. She also softens her arguments against men, so prominent in Exposé. Instead, “Tell It All” displaces most of the blame onto one man—Brigham Young. He is the one, she claims, who has manipulated the morals of all the Latter-day Saints. Shifting responsibility to this patriarch makes the work more palatable to male readers, as they are not being directly attacked. Most of the Mormon laity, both men and women, now become objects of sympathy because they have been misled by Young and other Church leaders. Nevertheless, Stenhouse keeps the gender issue alive by employing Brigham Young as a symbol of all the negative characteristics of Mormon men.

As the title indicates, Exposé of Polygamy in Utah concerns itself chiefly with arguments against Mormon polygamy. Stenhouse states in her introduction, “I have told *a plain story of facts*, and have endeavoured to present a faithful picture of the terrible realities of Mormon Polygamy” (EX 6). Stenhouse’s inclusion of autobiographical material, unembellished anecdotes about friends, transcripts of church leaders’ comments

on polygamy, and an appendix of key LDS doctrines all lend the work a documentary feel and provide further proof of sanctioned abuse under the “celestial marriage” system.

Fanny clearly believes that polygamy is a great evil, but she appears confident in Exposé that the institution will eventually collapse on its own. She happily informs her overwhelmingly Protestant audience that more Mormon girls now marry “in the society of Gentiles” or choose to not marry at all (EX 202). In addition, second-generation Mormons are now seeing the ravages of polygamy and are beginning to question whether the revelations on the “Divine Duty” are truly divine. At the end of Exposé, Stenhouse requests that the U.S. Congress enact clear, comprehensive laws to end polygamy nationwide. Her petition indicates that she wants some guarantee that no “subtlety” in the legislation will allow polygamy to return (EX 206). However, her assessment of the present situation in Utah leads the reader to believe that abandonment of polygamy will be instigated by changes *within* the Mormon community.

Utilizing an autobiographical approach in the first part of Exposé, Stenhouse succinctly describes the events of her life, from the period in which she first heard of the “Mormonite” faith to her withdrawal from the Church. In the latter part of this work, several short anecdotes about the experiences of Fanny’s friends and acquaintances accentuate the pain that polygamy inflicts. Generic titles such as, “a gentleman from Liverpool,” “a Mr. M.,” or “a young woman I knew” protect the identities of former acquaintances (EX 47, 54). Fanny staunchly defends her secrecy in the preface: “I have studiously avoided all mention of names or details which might reasonably give the least pain to any of my former friends and acquaintances” (EX 5). She even protects private information about Brigham Young and his family and does not include this in her

arguments against his *public* behavior. Ironically, Stenhouse feels the need to tell the reader how modest and discreet she is. With her precarious position, though, she needs to use every possible opportunity to attest to her integrity. Some Mormon exposé writers used various tactics in order to create a facade of propriety and integrity. Maria Ward, for example, coyly referred to “B____m Y____g,” although it was quite obvious whom she was referring to.³⁰ Stenhouse’s efforts to protect identities, on the other hand, appear earnest.

By the time Stenhouse releases “Tell It All,” she has apparently decided to reveal the names of more individuals, even ones whom she had refused to identify in Exposé. In addition, “Tell It All” contains fewer anecdotes about her peers, and only those that tightly fit with her own arguments against Mormonism. Fanny recognized that readers would better identify with a few, detailed anecdotes from specific people rather than with several, bland accounts from nameless individuals.

Exposé of Polygamy in Utah: A Lady’s Life Among the Mormons remains an important book for students of Mormon history; Stenhouse’s accounts are articulate and well-documented.³¹ Nevertheless, the discussion of her conversion experiences, her reflections on the faith, and her apostasy from the sect all remain underdeveloped or non-existent. The framework for “Tell It All” is perceptible in Exposé, but Stenhouse had not yet fully negotiated how she wanted to present herself to her audience. Not until “Tell It All” rolls off the presses does the reader gain a firm grasp of the author’s sentiments and of the emotional and psychological burdens of Mormonism.

The changes from Exposé to “Tell It All” make the most sense if we see them as motivated by Stenhouse’s goal to expand her audience. Exposé exuded a confidence that

the Mormons themselves would eventually abandon polygamy. "Tell It All," though, calls for immediate action, namely moral protest from Mormons and legislative lobbying from Gentiles, in order to force an end to plural marriage. If Stenhouse truly wants to end polygamy, she must demonstrate that it poses a grave threat to democracy and common morality. The softening of critiques of Mormon men is also better understood in light of Stenhouse's desire to interest Mormon readers. By narrowing her attacks to Brigham Young, she makes the same valid complaints, but now both LDS men and women can blame President Young for deluding them and perverting their behavior. These alterations in rhetoric reflect Stenhouse's attempts to interest and motivate both Mormon and non-Mormon readers.

Staging the Self: Employing the Exposé and Spiritual Autobiography

At first glance, the genre of the religious exposé and the genre of the spiritual autobiography may appear diametrically opposed. The exposé is loud and flashy; it cries for attention through emotional pleas and stirring accounts. The spiritual autobiography, on the other hand, is traditionally private and contemplative. These genres are really not so different, though. Both endeavor to enlighten readers by encouraging them to examine a faith from the author's perspective. Emotional appeals and strategies of identification also have key roles in both genres. Stenhouse effectively employs elements of both the religious exposé and the spiritual autobiography in "Tell It All" in order to develop an emotional bond with the reader and effectively clarify her arguments against Mormonism.

"Tell It All" distances itself from more tawdry exposés, eschewing the lurid tales of wife-swapping and lechery that popularized so many other books. Nevertheless, implementation of some exposé elements advances her cause and keeps the reader's interest. The inclusion of a primer outlining fundamental doctrines and worship patterns gives uninitiated readers a basic understanding of the faith. Fanny also inserts a gossipy wife-by-wife rundown of Brigham Young's household, including a description of the personalities and quirks of some of his wives. These accounts are probably the closest she gets to sensationalism, although the stories about Young's wives had already been widely-circulated in other exposés and newspapers.

Details on shameful events in the Church's history give further credence to Stenhouse's attacks. She includes information on the "Reformation," a Mormon Inquisition designed to weed out threats to Brigham Young's power, and other stains on the Church's history. Her commentary on the Mountain Meadows Massacre, another tragedy, is succinct but powerful. In August of 1857, a band of "Indians," actually Latter-day Saints dressed in costume, murdered a large company of Gentile emigrants traveling through Mormon territory. The murderous "Saints" justified their brutality against these men, women, and children by contending that at least one of the individuals in the group had been recognized as having been in the mob that killed Joseph Smith. Stenhouse includes several gruesome details from the crime:

Most of the property of the emigrants was sold by *public auction* . . . the clothing stripped from the corpses, blood-stained . . . was placed in the cellar of the tithing office, where it lay about three weeks, when it was privately sold. The cellar is said to have smelt of it for years. Long after this time, jewelry torn from the mangled bodies of the unfortunate women was publicly worn in Salt Lake City . . . A tithing of it all [was] laid at the feet of Brigham Young. (TIA 337).

These statements are obviously meant to incense readers.³² After describing the massacre, Stenhouse mimics the rhetoric of Mormon sympathizers. Surely, she sarcastically argues, no more tragedies will occur now that the Gentile [Federal] Army and the Union Pacific Railroad are in the territory. She then counters these comforting

statements with a dire warning: vengeful believers still boast “that when ‘*Deseret*’ becomes a State the ‘Saints’ will ‘sh[o]w still greater Zeal *for the Lord!*’”³³ Fanny does not oppose Utah statehood, but her alarmist rhetoric reveals her fear that Mormon/Gentile friction is not yet over.

East Coast newspapers widely publicized the Mountain Meadows Massacre and other atrocities, but Utah papers were heavily censored. Even Thomas Stenhouse’s *Daily Telegraph* and other publications had been subject to “Church review” at various times. Although Gentile readers simply learned more facts about these grisly events when they read “Tell It All,” Fanny’s former brethren may have been shocked by these uncensored accounts. Stenhouse indicates that she often heard rumors of what “really” happened at various events that were quite different from the sanitized news accounts printed in Church-affiliated newspapers (TIA 47, 169). However, now that believers can finally see these allegations “confirmed” in print, they might begin to think more critically about their faith. She discreetly opines that a vast majority of Mormons surely find such brutality inexcusable. This tactic assures Mormon readers that they are not being attacked en masse, but it also encourages them to consider what their faith has induced their brethren to do.

The root meaning of the term “exposé” is to expose or reveal something that has been shrouded from public view. Perhaps nothing better exemplified the goal of the exposé than to unveil the workings of a secret, Mormon temple ceremony. Temple rituals, performed for events like baptism, marriage, and ordination, intrigued non-Mormons because they were open only to devout Mormons. Also, believers swear during the rituals that they will not reveal its sacred ordinances to the outside world,

under penalty of death. Several ex-Mormons eagerly divulged the details of these unique ceremonies in their exposés, anyway, as readers considered this “proof” that they had truly been Latter-day Saints. Apparently, either these apostates felt that their oaths to the Church were no longer binding or they simply did not care. Stenhouse, however, justifies the inclusion of this rite by insisting to the reader that she never took the oath of secrecy. In a footnote, she states, “I myself made a movement with my hand—for I believed that my life was at stake and I dared not do otherwise. The words of the oath I did not utter” (TIA 365). This addition subtly indicates to the reader that Stenhouse is a principled woman; even though she is no longer a believer, she still recognizes the importance of an oath.

The discussion of the temple ceremony also allows Stenhouse to address the friction that exists between Mormonism’s evangelical tendencies and its obsession with secrecy and exclusivity. The Latter-day Saints are instructed to cheerily share their faith with the Gentiles and endeavor to convert them. During the temple ceremony, though, they affirm their own moral superiority, mock the tenets of several Christian denominations, and even threaten “blood atonement,” or the slitting of the throat, of those who work against the Church or who divulge the secret rites of temple ceremonies (TIA 365). Fanny does not swear by these oaths and admits that their hatefulness shook her faith to its foundation.

The inclusion of these gruesome and offensive elements of the temple ceremony could have been problematic for Stenhouse. She would have to justify to Gentile readers why she remained in the Church even after observing, but apparently not swearing allegiance to, such practices. To defuse the situation, she reflects on how bizarrely

comical these rites were. Initiates were given new secret names, taken from the Bible, whereby they would be admitted into the “celestial kingdom,” a level of heaven. Fanny admits that this secret name would have been a source of pride for her, but she overhears another woman receive the name “Sarah,” the same as hers. She continues:

To make the matter worse, another sister whispered: ‘Why that is my name too.’ This entirely dispelled any enthusiasm which otherwise I might have felt . . . if we were all Sarahs, there would not be much distinction or honor in being called by that name. As a matter of course I supposed that the men would all become Abrahams” (TIA 361).

The women and men had been kept in separate rooms, but are “reunited” in the middle of the ceremony with the lifting of a heavy curtain. Both sexes are dressed in pajama-like, temple undergarments and their faces are dripping with holy oil. From across the room, the men and women stare at each other as the curtain is raised. Stenhouse remarks that “there was just the ghost of a smile upon our faces as we looked at each other and dropped our eyes again. To any one who did not feel as we did the religious nature of the initiation, the scene must have appeared perfectly ludicrous. In fact, some of us felt it so” (TIA 361). Fanny critiques the violent nature of the temple ceremonies, but she emphasizes their complete absurdity even more. Clearly, she would rather be perceived as a foolish dupe in this case than a murderous and vengeful zealot.

Documentary-styled accounts, tabloid-like anecdotes, and other exposé elements helped Stenhouse articulate her concerns, but they were limited in their scope. Were

these techniques alone used, the reader would still not know why Stenhouse converted to Mormonism and why she remained in the movement for so long. By utilizing elements of the spiritual autobiography, Fanny could share these sentiments with her reader in an effective and moving way.

The first part of "Tell It All" operates in the tradition of the spiritual autobiography, often used by Quakers and other marginalized Protestants to justify their faith and accentuate its spiritual truths. Stenhouse highlights her spiritual awakening, conversion, and initial zeal for Mormonism in a convincing manner. Soon after her conversion, though, "Tell It All" operates as a kind of spiritual autobiography in reverse.³⁴ Fanny divulges her slow, painful realization that this faith is not what it seems. Instead of gaining a deeper understanding of the Divine, as most spiritual autobiographers did, Fanny's work reveals her belief that Mormonism is clearly *not* divine.

The genre of the spiritual autobiography also allows Stenhouse to foster a kinship with the reader. Fanny was certainly not alone in her desire for spiritual fulfillment. Non-Mormon readers might not understand the spiritual path she had chosen, but her aspirations were similar to many believers. In addition, Mormon readers could see that Fanny had truly been one of them; she was not like other exposé writers who simply wanted a best-seller, no matter how slanderous. Stenhouse draws in readers with her sincerity and compels them to explore why she abandoned the faith she had so ardently defended for most of her life.

-Chapter 3-

“Into the Kingdom”: Conversion

Elements of the spiritual autobiography are visible even in the opening chapters of “Tell It All.” Stenhouse reflects on the religious inclinations of her youth and how extraordinary Mormonism initially appeared when compared to other faiths. Interestingly, the LDS Church was not the first group to attempt to proselytize Stenhouse. Fanny was born and raised in St. Heliers, Jersey, England to a large Baptist family. At age fifteen she took a job teaching English at a convent school in France and afterwards became governess to a wealthy French family. She relates that, while in France, she was instructed to attend Catholic catechism classes. Although the cathedrals she visited were aesthetically impressive and her catechizer, a young priest, proudly boasted of Catholicism’s apostolic authority, Fanny was unmoved by the claims of the Church. She notes that even the young clergyman who tried to convert her was “not himself too happy in the sacerdotal robe” (TIA 34).

In a statement that reveals her familiarity with the rhetoric of the anti-Catholic narratives of the time, Stenhouse confesses, “To the numerous stories of Catholic oppression and artifice in undermining Protestants and seducing them from their faith, I cannot add my own testimony” (TIA, 35). Fanny admires many Catholics as individuals, but her other observations confirm the prevailing Protestant perception of “Romanism” as an ostentatious and hollow faith. She carefully reconstructs the unsuccessful attempts to convert her in order to clarify that she is *not* like the flighty girls in the anti-Catholic narratives who convert simply because they like the Church’s rituals and exotic adornments. Instead, she alleges that she is looking for a deeper spirituality, a search that

many of her Protestant readers would probably identify with. The rejection of a “convenient” faith as preparation for a future religious journey also plays an integral role in many spiritual autobiographies.³⁵ Converts to Mormonism were often stereotyped as gullible yokels, so Fanny uses these accounts of attempted conversion to defend her sensibility and prudence. By expounding upon her desire for spiritual fulfillment and demonstrating her sense of judgement, she hopes that readers, both Mormon and Gentile, will recognize that she is not really so different from them.

When Stenhouse returns to England to visit her family, she is surprised to find that most of her relatives and several of her neighbors have converted to the peculiar “Mormonite” faith. Fanny recalls, “The Mormons were then simply an earnest religious people, in many respects like the Methodists, especially in their missionary zeal and fervor of spirit” (TIA 47). The emotional appeals and theological claims of Mormonism even convinced some of the clergy: “In fact, a very large number of the leading Mormons had been Methodist local-preachers and exhorters” (TIA 55). These recollections reinforce to the reader that early Mormonism in England was somewhat similar to mainstream evangelical Protestantism.

At the urging of her parents, Fanny begins to attend many of the Church meetings and is moved by what she hears. During that interval, she recounts,

My mind was haunted with what I had heard of this new gospel dispensation, as it was called. That angels had again descended from heaven to teach men upon earth; that a prophet had been raised up to speak again the mind of the Lord to the children of men; that the Saints were

partakers of the gifts of the spirit, as in the Early Christian Church,—all these assumed facts took the form of reality, and came back into my mind with greater force every time I strove to drive them away. (TIA 43).

An internal struggle manifests itself as Stenhouse wavers between the miraculous claims of this “restored” faith and the religious orthodoxy of her youth. Her Baptist upbringing reminds her that these missionaries may be the “wolves in sheep’s clothing” that the Bible specifically warns against.³⁶ At the same time, though, this sect seems to breathe new life into the Bible; no longer are the wondrous miracles of Christ and the Apostles simply historical events, never to be repeated. In alignment with the pattern of the spiritual autobiography, Stenhouse shares her initial skepticism of this new belief system, but gradually convinces herself of its verity through a spiritual awakening.

After only two weeks back home, Fanny accepts Mormonism and is baptized by Elder Thomas Stenhouse, the Scottish missionary who later becomes her husband. The idea of a one, true Church, an ultimate spiritual center, was a powerful concept for her. Fanny believed at the time that Mormonism was “the *only* faith in which I might find joy and peace in believing” (TIA 52). “Most evangelical Protestants [including the Mormons]” Virginia Lieson-Brereton contends, “agreed that would-be converts must reject all reliance on their own abilities, all ‘self-dependence,’ as they put it; they had to renounce any belief in their own merit, yielding their will utterly to God’s . . . [In the conversion,] the feeling heart was absolutely central.”³⁷ After one particularly moving Church meeting, Fanny reflects, “I was indeed like one born again from an old existence into a new life” (TIA 55). Fanny’s reflections on her “born again” conversion and

baptism highlight Mormonism's initial connections to the rhetoric and persuasive techniques of evangelical Protestants.

By explaining how Mormonism appealed to basic emotional and spiritual desires, Stenhouse had deviated from the typical ex-Mormon exposé. Most other authors were so critical of the Church, its doctrines, and its members that readers probably found it hard to accept that they had ever believed in the religion. Fanny, though, maintains that she stayed with Mormonism because she felt that it was a dynamic movement committed to the teachings of Christ. She advises,

The reader must remember that at that time polygamy was unheard of as a doctrine of the Saints, and the blood-atonement, the doctrine that Adam is God, together with the polytheism and priestly theocracy of after years were things undreamed of. The saving love of Christ, the glory and fulness of the everlasting Gospel, the gifts and graces of the Spirit, together with repentance, baptism, and faith, were the points upon which the Mormon teacher touched; and who can wonder that with such topics as these . . . they should captivate the minds of religiously inclined people?" (TIA 48).

This message helps Protestant readers better understand how this faith could appeal to so many individuals. Her reflection also encourages Mormons, especially those who were converted in the early years of the movement, to recognize how far the Church has deviated from its original tenets.

Though Stenhouse remains conspicuously quiet on this subject, the empowerment of female believers appears to have been an appealing aspect of early Mormonism. The blessing she receives after her baptism clarifies the roles that women could assume in the Church:

Fanny; by virtue of the authority vested in me, I confirm you a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . You shall have visions and dreams, and angels shall visit you by day and by night. You shall stand in the temple in Zion, and administer to the Saints of the Most High God. You shall speak in tongues, and prophesy; and the Lord shall bless you abundantly, both temporally and spiritually. These blessings I seal upon your head. . . Amen. (TIA 54).

This prophetic blessing was never fulfilled, but it must have left quite an impression for Stenhouse to be able to recall it and include it in her work. On a much smaller scale, when her missionary husband was out of town, Fanny was often asked to “lead the singing, to pray, to preach, in fact, to do everything” at the Church meetings (TIA, 123). She does not divulge how these duties made her feel, but she does indicate that assuming her husband’s role was sometimes uncomfortable.

Although Stenhouse briefly mentions the power initially promised to women in the Church, she does not at all acknowledge that she was a staunch advocate for women’s voting rights. She even served as a representative to the Utah board of the National Woman Suffrage Association, led by Susan Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.³⁸

The LDS Church officially supported voting rights for women, but the issue was still highly contentious. Stenhouse's hesitancy to discuss her personal empowerment, especially *female* empowerment, reflects anxiety over how her work would be interpreted. After the publication of her books, she moved onto the national lecture circuit and her woman suffrage interest took a back seat to her anti-polygamy campaign. Fanny upheld the dignity and freedom of women in such broad terms that she still received the endorsement of feminist activists. "Her lecture appearance at Boston's Tremont Temple won the praise of Lucy Stone," the leader of the American Woman Suffrage Association.³⁹ Nevertheless, had she included specific suffragist arguments in her work, she probably would have limited her audience. In addition, Estelle Jelinek argues that suffragists, "were under the often unspoken but nonetheless present charge of proving their 'femininity.'"⁴⁰ Perhaps Stenhouse felt that including suffragist arguments would raise too many concerns about her personally and cloud the chief issue in her work, the abolition of polygamy.

Into the Kingdom: The Psychology of the Saints

In many respects, the Mormon meetings and revivals in the 1800's were like those of their Methodist and Baptist counterparts. Emotions ran high, the zeal of fellow believers was contagious, and evangelists roused the crowds into a spiritual frenzy. As she reflects on the initial happiness she felt at these Mormon meetings, Stenhouse declares, "Into the psychological . . . causes of these scenes of excitement I cannot here enter;—I simply mention facts as they came under my own observation" (TIA 56). However, Stenhouse *does* venture to explain some of the psychological roots of the Saints' behavior.

One of the earliest and most frustrating disappointments that Fanny tries to psychologically dissect involves the *glossolalia*, or the claim to speak in tongues. Mormons believed that Joseph Smith had returned this gift of the Holy Spirit, which was originally bestowed upon the first century Church in order to spread the gospel in different languages. Fanny finds it hard to hide her vexation when she learns that the Mormon *glossolalia* was not much more than child-like babbling. She explains to the reader that, "these extraordinary displays are by no means confined to Mormonism. People of a certain temperament, excited to frenzy—generally by religious enthusiasm—have in all ages given painful illustrations of this mental disease" (TIA 68). The term "mental disease" accentuates Fanny's perception that such emotionalism was evidence of a weak mind and its failure to keep sentiments in balance. Fanny then proceeds to describe groups that have exhibited such characteristics throughout history, including the *Convulsionnaires* of the Middle Ages and the Anabaptists of Luther's time.

Stenhouse divulges that, when one person would babble his or her “prophecies,” another would stand by to translate. Apparently, some prophecies could turn out quite humorous if a “half witty or half-witted expounder” was assigned to explain the meaning of the incoherent phrases (TIA 68). After a particularly unimpressive revelatory session, an older Saint asks the newly-converted Fanny whether she believes that God is at work through these unintelligible speakers. Her hesitant reply, “Yes, I think I do,” gives away her skepticism and is met by the sharp retort that, “To doubt is sin” (TIA 70). This simple theme runs through the work in several forms, but the overall message to the Saints, “conform, but do not question,” is quite clear.

Although Fanny questions the validity of “speaking in tongues,” she fondly recalls that all Latter-day Saints used to be equal partakers of these spiritual gifts. Now, though, the Church has consolidated its power and demoted former celebrants of the faith into mere supplicants of Brigham Young. Due to a fear of “too many rival seers,” speaking in tongues and other powers are now confined to the President/Prophet. (TIA 56).

A few sections of “Tell It All” have sub-headings like “How Converts are Made” and “Effects of Song upon Religious Feeling,” in which Stenhouse attempts to describe the “real” causes of certain emotions. She recollects how the Saints would belt out their distinctive hymns, with rich, symbolic lyrics and rousing choruses. There is a tinge of sadness in her voice as she recalls the emotional effects of these songs:

I have often heard in magnificent cathedrals, hoary with the dust of time,
and in vast places of amusement. . .the outpouring of that glorious vocal

flood, which a chorus of a thousand well-trained singers can alone send forth. I have felt sometimes that entrancing state of ecstasy which thrilled the soul of the seer in Patmos, as he listened to the melody of the angelic throng. . .but never, even when surrounded by all that was best calculated to produce a sentiment of devotion in my mind--never did I experience so rapt a feeling of communion with 'the armies of heaven'—as I felt in that unadorned meeting-room surrounded by those plain but earnest and united people. (TIA 59)

There was no magnificent organ, no impressive artwork, or anything else at these simple worship meetings that Stenhouse felt had been “calculated to produce a sentiment of devotion in [her] mind” (TIA 59). Instead, the contagious zeal and earnestness of her fellow worshipers was what lifted her spirits. This display of emotion seems sympathetic, almost wistful. Nevertheless, immediately after discussing the glorious singing, Fanny wryly adds,

I suppose melody has always played a prominent part in all religious revivals. . .The Apostles had their psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; the martyrs their *Te Deum*; . . .and in more modern days the followers of Luther, Wesley, and (may I add?) Joseph Smith, have poured out the fulness of their souls after the same fashion. (TIA 60)

In addition to Stenhouse's description of religious enthusiasm through time, this list of examples also demonstrates that Mormonism is not nearly as extraordinary as it claims to be. Throughout history, religious sects have revived interest in faith through innovative hymnody, powerful preaching and other means.

At times, the extreme joyousness that Mormon songs and rituals attempted to induce contrasted starkly with the real-life situations of the Saints. Stenhouse recalls the apprehension she felt while journeying with her family from New York to Utah. During the day, the believers would sing "the songs of Zion" and engage in prayers of thanksgiving for the privilege of being able to come to Utah (TIA 241). When they were not praying or singing, though, the women quietly shared their "misgivings, and doubts, and fears" of polygamy (TIA 241). Stenhouse reveals that the veneer of pious joy hid underlying fears and turned the women into "living contradictions" (TIA 24). She reflects on one song in particular:

How little sometimes do the songs of gladness reflect the real sentiments
of the heart. How often have I heard many a poor heart-broken woman
singing the chorus:

'I never knew what joy was

Till I became a Mormon.'

I never could sing that song, for my experience had been exactly the
reverse. (TIA 241).

This memory reinforces to the reader that singing and other rituals did not always have the desired effect. Sometimes it was impossible for Stenhouse to convince herself that she was better off in the faith. The image of a “poor heart-broken” woman singing of her happiness in Mormonism is especially poignant. She clings to this faith, perhaps the one thing that sustains her, but she does not recognize that it has probably *caused* most of the distress in her life.

Stenhouse’s cynicism is not limited to critiques of the *glossolalia* or musical manipulation. She also ventures to rationalize the emotional excitement that a convert feels upon receiving a blessing from the elders:

When we consider the excited state of her [the convert’s] mind. . . . together with the pressure of half a dozen human hands upon her head, it is not at all astonishing that when the hands were lifted off she should firmly believe that she had been blessed indeed. She had been told that she should receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost; and she did not for an instant doubt that her expectations had been realized. (*TIA* 51)

Recollections such as these contain a twinge of bitterness. Fanny seems to long for the emotional and spiritual zenith that she felt when she first joined Mormonism, but she is also painfully aware that her emotions had betrayed her. Every rich description of happiness found through Mormonism is followed by a reasonable, psychological explanation for the event in which she deflates her emotional high.

When she had first converted to Mormonism, Fanny informs her reader, these disappointments were only minor setbacks for her. She had convinced herself of the verity of the faith's divine origin, even if certain people were shaking her confidence. As she matures spiritually and intellectually, though, she begins to question Mormon teachings. She also suspects that the Church hierarchy knowingly continues the ruse in order to gain power and wealth. "The Apostles and Elders themselves are not deceived. They know well enough that there is no truth in all this mockery; they know that the only source of all their revelations is the man Brigham Young" (TIA 190).

Unlike some exposé authors, Stenhouse knew that the specter of hypnotism was an inadequate explanation for the popularity of Mormonism. This rationale also insulted believers by fostering the impression that they are brainwashed drones. The psychological explanations for various emotions are more complex, but they are also more realistic. Stenhouse appears determined to prove to her reader and herself that none of these emotional states reflect divine influence. Her memories of her early spiritual fervor link her to Mormon readers who still have ties to the faith. However, Stenhouse asks believers to consider whether they, too, are "living contradictions," individuals who open themselves to outside influences and emotional manipulation but inwardly question the tenets of the faith.

-Chapter 4-

Slavery & Sentiment: Emotional Appeals Against Polygamy

In the mid- 1870s, both Fanny Stenhouse and the LDS Church broke with tradition in order to advance their respective causes. Stenhouse deviated from the exposé norm by reaching out to Mormons, the subject of her work. She encouraged Mormon readers to consider her arguments against the faith and its polygamy doctrine. The Church, on the other hand, desired to advance the political and social legitimacy of polygamy. Forsaking its tradition of sanctimonious speeches against non-Mormons and arrogant defiance of the U.S. government, the Church reached out to Gentiles. The Church's campaign attempted to unite citizens under the suppositious cause of religious freedom. Americans who knew anything about the Saints, though, immediately recognized that the underlying purpose of this endeavor was to garner enough public support to continue the "Divine Duty." For both Stenhouse and the Church, opening themselves up to the "other" had very different results. Stenhouse's work heightened public awareness and arguably hastened the abolition of polygamy. The Church's efforts, though, were not so successful.

Mormon apologists attempted to defend plural marriage by espousing democratic rhetoric, recalling famous polygamists in Jewish history, and even proposing eugenic arguments. Prominent female Saints wrote panegyric works on the bonds of Mormon sisterhood and the sense of community that polygamy fostered. Their efforts to garner public support backfired miserably. In fact, several non-Mormon readers noticed indignantly "that the Mormon defense of polygamy was similar in many respects to the defense of slavery as expounded by southerners during the generation leading up to the

Civil War.”⁴¹ In such defenses, the Saints argued that all women needed the protection and guidance of a man, even if that meant that several women would share one husband. Newspapers, such as the *New York Tribune* fostered perceptions that Mormon women actually *were* slaves, whether they knew it or not. An article from 1859 argued, “No where else on the Continent of North America are white women to be seen working like slaves, barefooted, in the field. It is notorious to all here that large numbers of Mormon women are in a state of great want and destitution, and that their husbands do not pretend to provide them even with the necessities of life.”⁴² Melodramatic descriptions such as these solidified public sentiment against polygamy and reinforced the suspicion that most Mormon women were not freely entering the practice.

Except for Ann Eliza Young, a former wife of Brigham Young, most Mormon and ex-Mormon writers were relatively unknown outside of the LDS community. Fanny Stenhouse, though, received an enormous publicity boost from Harriet Beecher Stowe, the abolitionist and famous author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Stowe wrote the preface for “Tell It All,” essentially granting her imprimatur to the work and its goal to abolish polygamy. Stowe’s involvement also helped propel Stenhouse into the lecture circuit in order to share her message with a wider audience. In the brief but powerful foreword, Stowe reflects on the end of African slavery and compares it to the new fight to end the “enslavement” of Mormon women:

Our day has seen a glorious breaking of fetters. The slave-pens of the South have become a nightmare of the past; the auction-block and whipping-post have given place to the Church and school-house; and the

songs of emancipated millions are heard throughout our land . . . Shall we not then hope that the hour is come to loose the bonds of a cruel slavery whose chains have cut into the very hearts of thousands of our sisters—a slavery which debases and degrades womanhood, motherhood, and the family? Let every happy wife and mother who reads these lines give her sympathy, prayers, and efforts to free her sisters from this degrading bondage. (TIA vi)

Harriet Beecher Stowe had argued in many of her writings and speeches that the inability to feel perpetuated the system of slavery. By opening up their deepest emotions, she asserted, individuals would recognize the immorality of slavery and work to end it. The obsession with feeling and denial of feeling constitutes an important element in Stenhouse's work, as well. She asserts that men can be deluded and let their passion lead them astray, but for women, polygamy is "contrary to the holiest sentiments of the heart" (TIA 622). In fact, although some female Saints attempted "to [emotionally] unsex themselves . . . a woman never was and never will be a man. In sentiment and feeling, her mind is utterly the reverse of masculine, and no man, however refined or sensitive he may be, can ever fully understand a woman's heart" (TIA 435). Critic Linda Wagner-Martin argues that, "Negatively charged from years of condemnation in literary history, the word *sentimental* suggests the melodramatic evocation of feeling, something contrived to make readers respond predictably."⁴³ She goes on to say that not everything that evokes emotion is bad, though. Stenhouse informs women that they have a *duty* to listen to the sentiments telling them that polygamy is immoral.

The “supremacy of feelings,” in which the sentiments of individuals guide their thoughts and actions, is a difficult issue to address. On the one side, Stenhouse’s personal anecdotes demonstrate that emotion is the overwhelming force that leads individuals to stray from orthodox religion and *accept* the grand claims of Mormonism. Emotions can manipulate individuals, crippling their ability to think rationally. On the other side, Stenhouse instructs women to rely on their emotions and sentiments in order to recognize the evils of Mormonism and *reject* the faith. She believes that deep-seated sentiments regarding womanhood, family, and marriage should not and, in fact, cannot be purged.

While Stenhouse emphasizes the necessity of emotion, female Mormon apologists argued exactly the opposite. Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, in her apology Why We Practice Plural Marriage, claimed, “A woman’s instincts revolt against the thought of a plurality of husbands, and judging his feelings by her own, she cannot see how a man can want, or at least can love a plurality of wives. But, as this point involves a constitutional difference of sex, it is one in which we must be aware that our feelings cannot guide us.”⁴⁴ Whitney retains her sense of femininity by distancing herself from the actual practice of polygamy. Instead, she argues that the beauty of polygamy is seen through the virtue of submission to the husband and to God. The works of several other Mormon women mirror Whitney’s emphasis on the suppression of sentiment in order to sacrifice oneself for the faith.

Stenhouse convincingly argues that advice like Whitney’s degrades and dehumanizes women. Displacement of these “natural” sentiments completely disintegrates any chance for a healthy marital relationship. In part, this discussion of

emotion serves as a refutation to those who believe that the Mormons should be able to practice polygamy if they choose. Stenhouse asserts that many of the females have been reduced to Latter-day drones, devoid of emotion and independent thought. They do not engage in polygamy because they want to, but because they fear what will happen if they refuse. Stenhouse recalls the bitterness she felt when she first read a transcript of the revelation on polygamy. Figure III is an artist's recreation of this scene (TIA 135). Stenhouse's emotional reflections and this illustration again reinforce to her readers the need for outside intervention to end polygamy and free women from the bonds of the Church.

"Tell It All" fosters the perception that women remain spiritually enslaved while the men serve as masters. "Mormon husbands are so influenced by their religion that they neither act nor think like other men" (TIA 257). The cultural stereotype of the devout wife who drags her husband to church is reversed. In Mormon communities, the men proudly uphold Young's revelations, but the women appear to be more skeptical of the faith. The zeal of some males outweighed their common sense. For example, the Church taught that each child was considered a gift to "build up the kingdom" and would "exalt" the husband and wife to a higher level of heaven.⁴⁵ Stenhouse highlights the disparity between the wealthy and poor polygamous families in two comparative sketches. Figure IV highlights the poverty of many Mormons. Figure V displays the regal life that Brigham Young leads, chiefly off of the tithes of the believers.

In the early to mid 19th century, the slavery issue indirectly benefited Mormonism by deflecting attention off of polygamy.⁴⁶ After the Civil War, though, the media again turned to New Zion. The link between slavery and polygamy, which the national

Figure III: "Too True!"

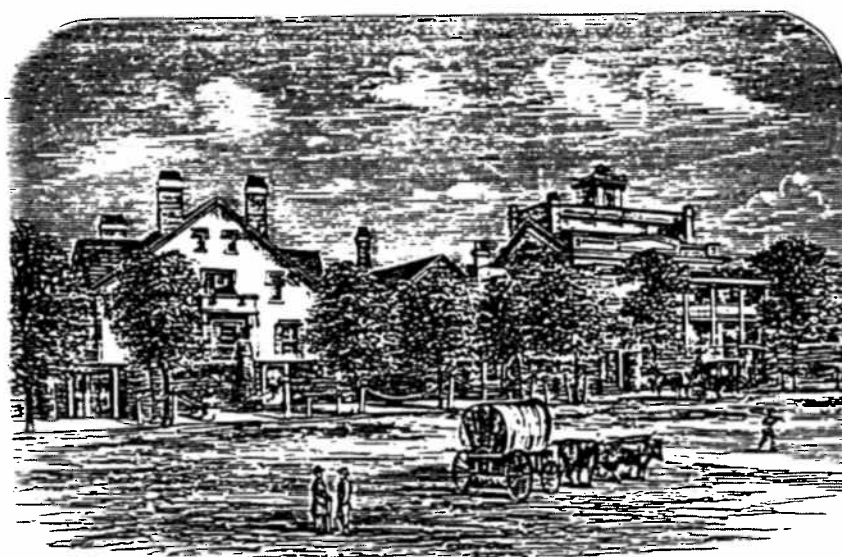


TOO TRUE!

Figure IV: "Polygamy in Low Life - The Poor Man's Family"



POLYGAMY IN LOW LIFE:—THE POOR MAN'S FAMILY.



POLYGAMY IN HIGH LIFE:—THE "PROPHETS" MANSION.

Figure V: "Polygamy in High Life: The Prophet's Mansion"

Republican Party had referred to as the “twin pillars of barbarism,” resonates through the narrative structure of “Tell It All.” Stenhouse interweaves comparisons to slavery and the slave-master relationship at several points. For example, after enduring a particularly humiliating temple ceremony, she divulges, “I was then indeed a miserable slave, with no one to stretch forth a kindly hand and strike away the fetters of my mental degradation and lead me forth into light and liberty” (TIA 369). Comments such as these accentuated Fanny’s sense of powerlessness and fear.

Naturally, some readers might question why Stenhouse and others did not simply leave the faith if they were treated so poorly. The slavery comparison allows Fanny to explain that the situation was more complex than it appeared. Although female Saints were not slaves to the soil, they were mentally shackled to the Church and its leaders. Utah Mormons who defected from the Church found that the emotional isolation and fiscal hardships resulting from excommunication were as painful as a master’s whip. Fanny also notes that other subversive tactics were used. Outspoken Gentiles and apostates sometimes “disappeared” or were attacked by “Indians,” in reality rowdy Mormons dressed in costume.⁴⁷ When the Stenhouses themselves withdrew from the Church, they were sprayed with manure as they walked home one evening 581 Considering all of these adverse factors, some disillusioned believers remained “public Mormons” in order to keep their jobs and ensure their family’s security.

Living a lie like this took a heavy psychological toll. Stenhouse accentuates the irony of feeling completely alone in a community where everyone is supposed to be perfectly harmonious in their thoughts and actions. Bishops, elders and other leaders act as a kind of spiritual Gestapo, ensuring that believers tithe adequately, attend all Church

meetings, and uphold official doctrines. Although Fanny could confide in a few people, a vast majority of individuals, including her own husband, simply did what they were told. Their willingness to conform, when compared to her “rebellious heart,” often made her think “that the fault was all in myself (TIA 368).

Stenhouse uses simple anecdotes to explain how Mormonism changed her entire perspective on life. “From my earliest childhood I had thought of God as a father and a friend, to whom I might go and tell all my griefs and cares; but now He was . . . a hard taskmaster.”⁴⁸ Even the landscape around her appeared to change as the years went on. She also notes that the stunning Rocky Mountains that initially greeted her family when they arrived in Salt Lake City eventually seemed to “encircl[e] us like mighty prison-walls” (TIA 242). Observations such as these emphasized how Mormonism drastically changed the author’s perspective.

Stenhouse also refers to slavery when she attempts to relate the joy she felt upon leaving the faith:

Those who have never been enslaved by a superstitious faith which mentally and bodily enthralls its devotees, as Mormonism does, can form no idea of the joy, the happiness, which is experienced when, after years of spiritual servitude, the shackles are burst asunder and the slave is “FREE!” There is pleasure even in the thought itself that one is free—free to think and free to act, free to worship . . . and free to speak one’s own opinions and sentiments. (TIA 579)

The description of Mormonism as a kind of intellectual and spiritual “slavery” resonates with readers concerned about the believers. In addition, the preoccupation with subjugation and confinement hearkens back to the anti-Catholic narratives from even earlier in the century, where young religious novices claimed that they were literally trapped inside religious orders. Stenhouse also emphasizes the importance of being able to not only share these feelings, but to also be able to react to them at both the political and spiritual level. By focusing on the importance of listening to one’s emotions and considering the comparisons between slavery and polygamy, Stenhouse hopes that her readers will understand how detrimental polygamy is. The ultimate decision to sever a polygamous relationship must come from those involved in it, so the emphasis upon sentiment is vital.

-Chapter 5-

A Community of Misery: Listening to the Sister Saints

Stenhouse provides compelling and thought-provoking accounts from her own life. However, she also shares what other Mormon women have endured by utilizing anecdotes from her acquaintances. This creation of biography within autobiography accentuates that the author is not alone in her struggle. In addition, Mary Mason's generally accepted thesis of gender difference in autobiography asserts that, where men stress their individualism in their autobiographies, women often define their identity in terms of their relationship with others.⁴⁹ This approach manifests itself in "Tell It All," as well. Mormon apologists claimed that polygamy created a sense of sisterhood among married women, where wifely duties and privileges could be equally shared. Stenhouse though, only sees a community of misery that pits women against each other and needlessly induces feelings of jealousy and distrust. Fanny's "stories within stories" center around three women; a middle-aged Swiss woman, a talkative, manipulative "friend" in Utah, and a young girl whom Fanny befriends soon after she marries Elder Stenhouse,. Through each of these women, the reader can trace Stenhouse's own spiritual, emotional, and intellectual development.

Before emigrating to the United States, the Stenhouses served as missionaries in Switzerland. Elder Stenhouse had converted Monsieur Baliff, a man who received Mormonism "with all his heart" (TIA 122). "The high-spirited, impulsive" Madame Baliff, however, joined the Church in order to appease her husband. Of the Baliffs, Stenhouse writes, "She impressed me as being one of the happiest of wives; he one of the best of husbands . . . Poor, dear lady! How often have I bitterly regretted that I was

instrumental in leading her into the Mormon Church. . .” (TIA 122). As Fanny’s story unfolds, the reader begins to understand what she means by this statement.

Stenhouse becomes extremely upset when she learns about Mormonism’s plural marriage doctrine. To compound matters, her role as a missionary means that she will be required to share this revelation with her converts. Elder Stenhouse seems to have had no qualms about explaining this doctrine. He uses eloquent rhetoric and snippets of Old Testament history to convince the male proselytes of the verity of “Celestial Marriage.” However, Stenhouse notes:

These husbands had not courage enough, or were ashamed, to tell their own wives about this wonderful Revelation; and so I, a weak woman, hating in my heart the doctrine as much as a woman could hate—I was chosen to introduce this pleasant subject, and to persuade those I loved to their own ruin” (TIA 146).

Stenhouse’s sarcasm reveals her contempt for the hypocrisy of these men. They all affirm polygamy among themselves, but they are literally afraid of how their “weak” wives might react. As a missionary, Stenhouse knows all about faith-building exercises. She recognizes what her husband and other Elders are trying to do when they place her in charge of telling the women about the Divine Duty; “They knew very well that nothing tends more to confirm the faith of the wavering than setting them to teach others” (TIA 144). Although she believes that the revelation has to be true, she wonders “how could I

teach them [female converts] that which my own heart abhorred, a doctrine . . . I hated with my whole soul!" (TIA 143).

Madame Baliff was by far the most well-educated and influential convert at the Stenhouses' Swiss mission. Not surprisingly, Baliff is chosen to be "the victim to whom should first be imparted the mysteries of the Revelation, for it was thought that whatever reception she might give to Polygamy, her views would greatly influence the conduct of the rest" (TIA 145). After much prodding from her husband, Stenhouse meets Madame Baliff and slowly explains the revelation to her. Baliff becomes enraged by what she is told. The piercing look of "rage and disgust" on her face makes Fanny feel "as humbled as if I myself had been the author of the Revelation" (TIA 147). This recollection assures the reader that Stenhouse feels horrible about she was doing, even though she believes that it was the will of God.

Baliff recognizes that Stenhouse is no more enthused about this revelation than she is. Both of these women comfort each other and Stenhouse asserts, "We found now, as we tried to look our common enemy in the face, how strong a hold Mormonism had taken of us" (TIA 148). In retrospect, Stenhouse chastises herself for not following "the light of reason which God had given for our guide" (TIA 148). This self-castigation clearly juxtaposes the heavy emphasis that Mormonism places on emotional zeal for the Church. At the time though, both of them knelt and prayed for faith to accept this doctrine. As she reflects on her emotional turmoil, Fanny recollects, "We tried to crush out the remembrance of our own womanhood" (148). This statement connects with the rhetoric of female Church apologists, who admitted that the only way to accept polygamy

was to suppress one's sentiments, one's ideals – essentially, one's selfhood. Repressing their most deeply held sentiments, though, proved impossible.

Stenhouse variously describes Madame Baliff as her “companion in misery” and as a “sister in affliction” due to their newfound knowledge of polygamy (TIA 149). Nevertheless, the two worked together to convince the rest of the sisters of the importance of Celestial Marriage. Although they personally abhorred the doctrine, both women believed that it must have been divinely inspired. When the Stenhouses move from Switzerland, Fanny loses contact with Madame Baliff.

After a few years in Utah, the Stenhouses learn that the Baliffs reside there, as well. Fanny resolves to visit her former friend. She does not hide that curiosity is a chief factor in her decision. Stenhouse's visit turns out to be completely demoralizing for her. One of the most intelligent and independent women that she has ever known is now a “poor, careworn, broken-spirited, and ill-clad woman.” (TIA 406). Madame Baliff lives in a two-room cabin with her 5 children, her husband, his second wife, and her two children. Fanny manages to keep the conversation light, but the drastic changes that she observes in her friend clearly shock her. Once feisty and quick-witted, Baliff now keeps her mouth shut and submits to authority. The wearisome toils of polygamy have extinguished the spark of independence that Fanny once admired in her.

After her depressing visit, Stenhouse becomes even more anxious about her own situation. She wonders how much longer she can live monogamously before her husband decides to take up polygamy. The Baliff account demonstrates that polygamy can crush even the most intelligent and independent women. Madame Baliff dies soon after the visit, but Fanny does not mourn her loss in the traditional sense. Instead, she somberly

reflects, "I thanked God that at last, poor soul, her days of trial were for ever over and she had entered into her eternal rest" (TIA 409).

Although both Madame Baliff and Stenhouse joined Mormonism before they knew about polygamy, one woman Stenhouse befriends has long been familiar with this doctrine. Fanny meets this woman shortly after moving to Utah and she simply refers to her as "my talkative friend" (TIA 378). Although Stenhouse frequently utilizes these kinds of titles in Exposé, this is the only example in "Tell It All." Perhaps she wished to shield this individual because she portrays her in a rather unfavorable light. Another possibility is that "my talkative friend" is actually a composite character, exhibiting the less-desirable traits of several Mormon women. In either case, the "talkative friend" adds an interesting perspective to the polygamy situation in Utah. This individual knows how to maneuver through the Church bureaucracy in order to get what she wants. She brags about her proficiency in choosing her husband's future wives. From her perspective, the first wife should play a strong role in her husband's future courtships; she believes that a good sister-wife is also a good cook and housekeeper. The talkative friend even convinces Fanny that she should help decide who her husband's plural wife should be (TIA 547).

Conversations with the talkative friend provide one of the few comic releases in this work. The friend's shrewdness at "wife-shopping" and her ability to turn new sister-wives into loyal domestic help are bizarre revelations, but also strangely humorous. An illustration of Stenhouse and the friend in conversation indicates that she serves as a kind of comic relief (Figure VI). The talkative friend is drawn in a cartoonish manner, with puffy cheeks, a bulbous nose and beady eyes peering behind spectacles. Although the

Figure VI: "My Talkative Friend"



MY TALKATIVE FRIEND.

friend is entertaining, the message behind her statements is rather upsetting. Stenhouse creates the impression that this woman has been a Mormon for so long, that it has grated away at her dignity and sense of femininity. The talkative friend feels powerful because she can choose her husband's wives and boss around her sister-wives. However, Stenhouse wants the reader to see through this illusion of control. In reality, the talkative friend is nothing more than the chief housekeeper in her husband's harem.

By far, the most compelling biographical account within "Tell It All" shares the experiences of Mary Burton. Stenhouse is only twenty years old when she meets Mary Burton, "a young girl—little more than a child" (TIA 84). Fanny had just married Thomas and she looks wistfully upon the beauty and innocence of Mary. Mary is quite a remarkable girl because she attends the Mormon meetings and revivals against the wishes of her family.

Ironically, Stenhouse relates that sweet, innocent Mary is the one who informs her of polygamy. Mary had overheard a conversation among Church leaders and recounted its contents while talking with Stenhouse. Fanny remembers this vividly: "Presently drawing nearer to me, she said quite suddenly, 'Sister Stenhouse, do you know the meaning of the word *Polygamy*?'"(TIA 97) Mary continues her inquiry, questioning if the rumors of murder and theft by Mormons in the States must have some grain of truth. Stenhouse is taken aback by her incredulity, but as her faith is quite strong at this point she assures Mary that these are simply vicious rumors spread by anti-Mormons.

After the Stenhouses leave England, she receives correspondence from Mary Burton. Many transcripts of these letters are included in their entirety. In these writings, Burton voices many of the same fears and criticisms as Stenhouse. Hearing these

concerns from a very young girl, though, demonstrates to the reader how vulnerable and impressionable she is.

When the Stenhouses move to New York, they find Mary there, too. Fanny is clearly taken aback by the beauty of Mary, now a young woman. Mary, like Stenhouse, is now married to a Mormon elder, Mr. Shrewsbury. In her conversation with Mary Shrewsbury, Fanny notices a peculiar, glazed look in her eyes: "Her form was as graceful, and her eyes as bright as ever; but from those eyes there now shone forth another light than that which I had thought so charming in the by-gone time" (TIA 197). Fanny also observes that Mary seems more zealous for the Church. When Fanny asks whether Mary whether she still detests polygamy, Mary replies that her husband has corrected her and that, "I never doubt now" (TIA 198). In an interesting turn of events, the Fanny and Mary have switched positions. Stenhouse once reassured the young, half-doubting Mary of the falsehood of polygamy and other "vicious rumors." Now, though, the zealous newlywed Mary attempts to assure her wavering sister of the verity of the faith. Stenhouse, already tired of the Church's duplicity and speaking from experience, comments, "Unknown to herself her excess of zeal was the offspring of doubt" (TIA 199).

A few months after their encounter in New York, Mary writes another letter to Stenhouse, which tells of her travels across the plains. Mary and her husband are travelers in the disastrous "Handcarts to Zion" scheme, developed by Brigham Young. Stenhouse "feel[s] sure that if the reader did not peruse the story in the exact words of my unfortunate friend, he never would believe that in this country and in our own times such a terrible tragedy could have been enacted" (205). Burton's descriptions of the freezing

weather, meager provisions, gruesome deaths of travelers on the journey allows the reader to put a human face on this tragic event. When the group of travelers finally arrive in Salt Lake City, several members short of its original number, Brigham Young speaks of the Handcarts plan as having been a “successful experiment” of his own devices (TIA 207). However, Mary distinctly remembers that Young had earlier claimed that the plan was a revelation from God. This contradiction demonstrates to the reader that Young either confuses his “prophecies” with his own opinions or there is really no difference between the two. After this letter, Fanny’s correspondence with Mary is limited.

Stenhouse’s usage of these three individuals adds variety to her work and lets readers look at Mormonism from a different perspective. Madame Balif demonstrates the suffocating characteristics of polygamy. The talkative friend exemplifies how the faith perverts the emotional and psychological states of women. Mary Burton shows how Church leaders, especially Brigham Young, manipulate individuals and exploit them for their own interests. Stenhouse also sees her own past in the behavior of Burton and her husband. Spiritual zeal followed by overwhelming disappointment are mirrored in both Burton and Stenhouse’s lives.

-Conclusion-

In a work that highlights the religious deconversion of the author, an inevitable question arises. Readers want to know what the author “moved” to next, whether atheism, agnosticism, or another spiritual path. Stenhouse’s answer to this question is quite telling, but she does not address it in “Tell It All.” After leaving Mormonism, she and her husband became members of the Church of Zion. This sect included many other New Movement reformers who had left the Mormon Church. The Church of Zion upheld many tenets of Mormonism and combined them with elements of Spiritualism. Séances and other Spiritualist rituals granted women and men an equal role in worship and greater liberty of conscience.

Although these later religious tendencies distanced Fanny from Mormon orthodoxy, they also reveal that she could not fully release herself from the faith. Her work addresses the psychological roots of Mormon zeal, attacks the numerous contradictions in Church doctrine, and points out the horrible character flaws of Brigham Young and other leaders. Nevertheless, even these critiques betray an underlying sadness. Fanny knew that she had been emotionally manipulated, but she still longed for the emotional fervor of the “songs of Zion,” the company of poor, but earnest, believers, and the hope in a one, true Church.

From Exposé to “Tell It All” Fanny’s conception of her audience and of herself changed substantially. By pulling elements from the exposé genre and the spiritual autobiography, she was able to influence readers and create a personal connection with them. She also compared her work to other Mormon and Catholic exposés in order to highlight the uniqueness of “Tell It All.”

The connections between slavery and polygamy, with help from Harriet Beecher Stowe, helped Stenhouse's audience understand what Mormon women were enduring in Utah. This line of arguments also led into a discussion on sentiment. Although emotional zeal lured individuals into Mormonism, Stenhouse believed that it could also lead them out.

When we consider what Stenhouse wished to say, and to whom she wished to speak, she really could *not* "tell it all." Revelation of her post-Mormon spiritual interests and her suffragist concerns would have isolated some of her audience. Also, arguments for Mormon readers had to be more carefully executed than contentions geared for an all-Gentile audience. In spite of these obstacles, Stenhouse managed to discuss a great deal about the psychological, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual effects of Mormonism. She negotiated with her audience in order to prod both Mormons and Gentiles to better understand each others' goals and beliefs. "Tell It All" remains an appealing and intriguing work precisely because Stenhouse wrote it for a "divided" audience and carefully considered how she wanted to present herself to the reader.

NOTES

¹ John Heinerman, The Mormon Corporate Empire (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985). Steven Naifeh, The Mormon Murders (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1988). Public criticism of Mormonism certainly did not halt when polygamy was abolished. In the 1970s, the Church faced criticism for its opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment and its ban on allowing African-Americans into the priesthood. The priesthood ban was not lifted until the mid-1970s. Interestingly, the President/Prophet received a revelation to lift the ban soon after Stanford University refused to play football against Brigham Young University because of the Church's priesthood stance.

Critical books such as The Mormon Murders and The Mormon Corporate Empire investigated the Church's attempts to suppress embarrassing early documents and its abuses of its tax-exempt status, respectively.

At the time of thesis publication, the most recent controversy surrounded allegations that some LDS officials may have bribed International Olympic Committee executives to secure the Salt Lake City site.

² Mormons consider themselves to be God's "new" chosen people and refer to all non-Mormons, including Jews, as Gentiles. The term "Gentile" is used in this work not to affirm this doctrine, but to emphasize how it heightens the unique Mormon sense of community and exclusivity. An individual who leaves the faith does not become "Gentile" again, but an "Apostate."

³ The term "Mormon" originates from The Book of Mormon, which Smith first published in 1830. Smith claims that he translated the text from golden plates given to him by an angel. The Latter-day Saints believe that The Book of Mormon was the holy book of early Native Americans.

⁴ Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf, ed., American Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide from Colonial Times to the Present (Detroit: St. James Press, 1973), 161. Hereafter cited in the text as "AWW."

⁵ Ronald W. Walker, "The Stenhouses and the Making of a Mormon Image" Journal of Mormon History (1974): 53.

⁶ AWW, 162.

⁷ AWW, 162.

⁸ Ronald W. Walker, Wayward Saints: The Godbeites and Brigham Young (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 302. Hereafter cited in the text as "WS."

⁹ Julia Watson, Lives of their Own: Rhetorical Dimensions in Autobiographies of Women Activists, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 5. Hereafter cited in the text as "LO."

¹⁰ Rebecca Reed, Six Months in a Convent (Boston: Russell, Odiome, & Metcalf, 1835). Maria Monk, Awful Disclosure of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery (Hamden: Archon Books, 1962). Originally published in 1836.

These books were two of the most popular anti-Catholic narratives of this time. Monk's work sold over 300,000 copies before the Civil War. Monk was never a nun, and was not even a Catholic.

¹¹ Lawrence Foster, Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the 19th Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 7. Hereafter cited in the text as "RAS." Foster describes the reaction of mainstream Protestants to the celibacy of

the Shakers, the "open" marriages of the Oneida Community, and the polygamy of the Mormons.

¹² From a conversation with Julie Ellison, 10 March, 2000.

¹³ John Hyde, Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs (New York: W. P. Fetridge, 1857) 183.

¹⁴ Stanley P. Hirshon, The Lion of the Lord: A Biography of Brigham Young (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Co., 1969), 119, 125. Hereafter cited in the text as "LOL."

¹⁵ Brigham Young, The Deseret News (June 18, 1873): 308.

Brigham Young, Discourses of Brigham Young (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1926).

The Deseret News, the official Church newspaper, printed Young's revelations. Young also recorded his revelations in his Discourses, a kind of spiritual journal.

¹⁶ Linda King Newell and Valeen Tippetts Avery, Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1984), 98.

¹⁷ John C. Bennet, The History of the Saints, or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism (Boston: publisher unknown, 1842), 73. Although his exposé vigorously condemned Smith's advocacy of polygamy, Bennet had been excommunicated from the Church because he was teaching the doctrine to too many "unqualified" men.

¹⁸ Maria Ward, Female Life Among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years Personal Experience, by the Wife of a Mormon Elder, Recently from Utah (New York: J. C. Derby, 1855), 424. Hereafter cited in the text as "LAM."

¹⁹ Ann Eliza Young, Wife No. 19, or The Story of a Life in Bondage (Hartford: Dustin, Gillman & Co., 1876), 102. Hereafter cited in the text as "WNN."

Ann Eliza Young was especially famous for her "lectures" on polygamy, which were not much more than salacious storytelling sessions on wife-swapping and other types of sexual deviancy.

²⁰ LAM, 24. WNN, 12.

²¹ Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, The Mormon Experience (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), 23. Hereafter cited in the text as "TME."

²² Hypnotism already played a role in Theosophy, Christian Science, and Spiritualism. It was also appearing more frequently in popular literature, especially mystery and horror works.

²³ LO, 2.

²⁴ AWW, 162.

²⁵ WS, 298.

²⁶ WS, 298.

²⁷ WS, 298.

²⁸ EX, 21. In fact, Brigham Young taught believers that men could become gods, so this complaint could be taken literally as well as figuratively.

²⁹ EX, 93. Genesis 3:16.

³⁰ LAM, 420.

³¹ AWW, 162.

³² Fanny Stenhouse, An Englishwoman in Utah (London: Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1882), 380. This later edition of "Tell It All" includes a transcript of the "Complete Confession of Bishop John D. Lee," a Church official who sanctioned the

Mount Meadows murders. The title An Englishwoman in Utah indicates that Stenhouse still wished to assert her distance from the Mormon community. This approach was first seen in the subtitle of her first work, A Lady's Life Among the Mormons.

³³ TIA, 339. "Deseret" was the name given to the Mormon territory in 1849, which is now present-day Utah. The word is from the Book of Mormon and means "honeybee."

³⁴ From a conversation with Professor Julie Ellison, 28 October 1999.

³⁵ Historic examples of rejection in spiritual autobiographies include Quakers who were persecuted for rejecting Anglicanism and Roman Catholics who refused to convert to various Protestant denominations.

³⁶ Matthew 7:15

³⁷ Virginia Lieson Brereton, From Sin to Salvation: Stories of Women's Conversion, 1800 to the Present (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 26.

³⁸ Lola Van Wagenen, Sister-Wives and Suffragists: Polygamy & The Politics of Women's Suffrage (Binghamton: New York University Press, 1994), 41. Hereafter cited in the text as "SWS."

³⁹ SWS, 107.

⁴⁰ Estelle Jelinek, The Tradition of Women's Autobiography (Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1986), 98.

⁴¹ Davis Bitton, The Ritualization of Mormon History (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 42.

⁴² New York Tribune (Jan 3, 1859), 131.

⁴³ Linda Wagner-Martin, Telling Women's Lives: The New Biography (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 15.

⁴⁴ Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, Why We Practice Plural Marriage in Robert C. Webb, The Real Mormonism (New York: Sturgis & Walton Co., 1916), 50.

⁴⁵ TIA, 257. In Mormon theology, believers can rise to different levels of heaven and worthy males can even progress to godhood. Women produce "spirit children" in the afterlife, but cannot rise to the status of "goddess."

⁴⁶ TME, 170. Thomas Stenhouse served as a Mormon representative and visited President Lincoln to try to convince him to let polygamy continue. Already embroiled in the slavery controversy, Lincoln told Stenhouse, "You go back and tell Brigham Young that if he will let me alone I will let him alone."

⁴⁷ TIA, 338. Costumed Mormons attacked Dr. Robinson, a prominent Salt Lake City resident whose business plans angered some Church leaders. Perhaps the most famous "Indian" Mormon attack on non-Mormons was the Mountain Meadows Massacre of August 1857.

⁴⁸ TIA 156. Stenhouse also refers to her perception of God as a taskmaster on page 430.

⁴⁹ Shirley Neuman, Autobiography and Questions of Gender, (Portland: F. Cass, 1991), 3.

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