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Sisters under the Skin: Utah's Mormon and Non-Mormon Women and Their Publications

Although opponents in the antipolygamy controversy, Mormon and non-Mormon female journalists nevertheless shared basic beliefs about a woman's role in family and society.

Sherilyn Cox Bennion

Recent historical research has contradicted the idea that most nineteenth-century women stayed safely at home, happy to be cherished and protected in their domestic sphere. Although they called themselves “ladies” and espoused the ideals of “true womanhood,”¹ they also stepped out of their traditional roles as the century progressed to organize and join campaigns for civic improvement, becoming moral guardians of the community as well as the home. Utah women, both Mormon and non-Mormon, followed the pattern that developed throughout the country as they worked to promote education, cultural opportunities, and moral improvement. They diverged in their ideological views and in their belief in such practices as polygamy,² but their efforts to defend their disparate views arose from common impulses. Exemplifying the movement of women from private to public life, they shared more than they realized as they formed societies and founded publications.

From 1880 to 1883, Utah's Mormon and non-Mormon women published periodicals that reflected their differences. With strong, sometimes strident, prose, they championed their own ideas and attacked their opponents. Still, an examination of the Mormon *Woman's Exponent* and the non-Mormon *Anti-Polygamy Standard* reveals that they were sisters under the skin. They took opposing sides on the issue of polygamy, but both supported religious commitment, self-improvement, community involvement, and social reform, at the

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same time stressing the primacy of home and family in women's lives. Even their arguments for or against polygamy arose from common Victorian ideas about woman's sphere.

The Woman's Exponent and Anti-Polygamy Standard

Journalism was one of the few professional careers with which these ideas proved somewhat compatible; thus a considerable number of women worked as reporters or editors for newspapers and magazines during the latter part of the nineteenth century. In 1872, Brigham Young approved the founding of the *Woman's Exponent* by Louisa Lula Greene, and she promised in a prospectus for the paper that it would cover "every subject interesting and valuable to women," from current news to household hints.³ Usually appearing twice a month from 1872 until 1914, the *Exponent* also served as the organ of the Relief Society, although it was owned by its editors, first Greene and then Emmeline B. Wells, who took it over in 1877.

Non-Mormon women in Salt Lake City, who organized to combat what they saw as the threat to family and moral life posed by the Mormon practice of polygamy, also founded a paper with Jennie Anderson Froiseth as editor. The monthly *Anti-Polygamy Standard* arose in 1880 from impulses similar to those that inspired the *Woman's Exponent*, and leaders of the Ladies' Anti-Polygamy Society of Utah, begun in 1878, had aims remarkably like those of the LDS Relief Society. The organizations and their papers illustrate the increasingly common phenomenon of women's endorsing the tradition of "woman's sphere" while stretching its boundaries. An examination of the papers during the three years that the *Anti-Polygamy Standard* was published reveals how much the Mormon and non-Mormon women had in common.

Both papers grew out of organizations. The *Anti-Polygamy Standard* began as the official organ of the Ladies' Anti-Polygamy Society of Utah, which five months later became the Woman's National Anti-Polygamy Society. The *Woman's Exponent* served as the official publication of the Mormon Relief Society. A major part of the papers' content consisted of news about their parent organizations. The editors traveled extensively to start new branches and recruit new members. They reported on their journeys, reprinted

Anti-Polygamy Standard.

Let every Man have his own Wife, and Let every Woman have her own Husband.—1 Cor. 7: 2.

Masthead for the *Anti-Polygamy Standard*. The slogan reads, “Let every Man have his own Wife, and Let every Woman have her own Husband.—1 Cor. 7:2.” This issue—volume 1, issue 1—was published April 1880 in Salt Lake City and sold for 10¢.

WOMAN'S EXPONENT.

The Rights of the Women of Zion, and the Rights of the Women of all Nations.

Masthead for the *Woman's Exponent*. The slogan reads, “The Rights of the Women of Zion, and the Rights of the Women of all Nations.” This issue—volume 9, issue 1—was published June 1, 1880, in Salt Lake City.

speeches given by themselves or their traveling companions, and published minutes of meetings both local and distant.

Support for Sympathetic Organizations

The *Exponent* published minutes not only of the Relief Societies at general, stake, and ward levels, but also of other Mormon organizations in which its readers could be expected to have an interest. Activities of the Young Ladies' and Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations, the Primary, and the Sunday School received frequent attention. Minutes of the board of the Deseret Hospital, established at the instigation of the Relief Society, also appeared. The *Standard* ran the constitution of the Anti-Polygamy Society in serial fashion on its front page and also offered instructions for groups wanting to start their own subsidiary societies.

The emphasis on organizations extended beyond those affiliated with the papers' sponsoring groups. An 1881 *Exponent* note reported that Dr. Ellen B. Ferguson, a Mormon physician, would speak at a woman's congress in Buffalo, New York, on the question, "Can Women Organize?" Her answer, of course, would be in the affirmative, and she would offer Mormon women's organizations and projects as evidence.⁴ But both the *Exponent* and the *Standard* promoted the idea that women could—and should—organize to accomplish all sorts of worthy aims. In its first number, the *Standard* offered a history of the Blue Tea, a literary group organized in Salt Lake City in 1875, and commended young ladies of Washington, D.C., for forming a similar club.⁵ The *Exponent* encouraged support for the Unity Club, organized in 1882 to raise money for benevolent purposes, including the Deseret Hospital.⁶

As one would expect, the *Exponent* paid a great deal of attention to religion, with the LDS Church as its indirect sponsor, and, in addition to organizational reports, it printed essays about topics such as faith, charity, and prayer and encouraged moral responsibility. In the *Standard*, reports of such events as the cornerstone laying for St. Paul's Episcopal Chapel in 1880, news of travels of local clergymen, and the offering of a special combination subscription rate of \$1.50 for the *Standard* and *Christian Woman* left no doubt of its approval of organized religion.⁷

The *Standard* also gave considerable space to missionary and educational efforts of various Protestant churches in Utah. For example, the paper praised a proposal for a Presbyterian church and school in Logan and even offered to donate 25¢ toward construction for every new *Standard* subscription obtained through Presbyterian sources. Of course, the paper's publishers were interested in more than the general advancement of religious life; they pointed out that every non-Mormon church or schoolhouse built in the territory would be a step toward the eradication of polygamy.⁸

Beliefs about Home and Family

While the papers differed in their applications of the religious principles both endorsed, their comments about the sanctity of home and family were almost interchangeable, and both offered home management advice. A "Housekeeper's Corner" in the *Standard* described the Japanese method of cooking rice and explained how to wash clothes properly.⁹ The *Exponent*, too, ran recipes and helpful hints, telling readers how to care for house plants during the winter and what sorts of medicines they should have on hand.¹⁰ The papers often directed such hints specifically to mothers. As the *Standard* pointed out, "What the Republic needs is good mothers. . . . If we had better government in the homes, we should have better citizens and better government."¹¹

Thus, both publications espoused a concept of woman's sphere that gave the home priority even while they also encouraged moving outside it. An *Exponent* editorial called the words "husband, home, motherhood" the "most expressive of affection and happiness of any to be found in the English language."¹² As a prime argument against polygamy, the *Standard* cited its desecration of home and fireside, adding that this mode of marriage rendered "mutual confidence between husband and wife an utter impossibility." Because of polygamy's devastating effects on home and family, it seemed "right and meet" to *Standard* writers that "woman should be its most uncompromising opponent."¹³

Along with the primacy of home and family went the desirability of traditional womanly virtues. The *Standard* reprinted a claim from an unidentified source that a woman's first duty was to be

a lady: “A man’s ideal is not wounded when a woman fails in worldly wisdom; but if in grace, in tact, in sentiment, in delicacy, in kindness, she would be found wanting, he receives an inward hurt.”¹⁴

Even writers of articles that urged a wider sphere for women often stressed the compatibility of activity outside the home with the ideals of true womanhood. An *Exponent* correspondent from Beaver, Utah, admitted that a “true woman” would never neglect her family to obtain public honor but maintained, “Woman is not losing sight of the object of her creation, when she steps forth to engage in pursuits and profesions [*sic*] distinct and apart from home.” One of the Utah women who had studied medicine in Philadelphia pointed to her experience as evidence that “professional and domestic duties are not incompatible.”¹⁵

The editors of the *Standard* and the *Exponent* exemplified what they advocated. Both Wells and Froiseth had five children and added their editorial careers to home responsibilities, but they had many other public concerns as well. Wells founded the Utah Woman’s Press Club and a literary organization called the Reapers’ Club. Froiseth started a group that became the Salt Lake Ladies’ Literary Club and belonged to the Poetry Society. Both wrote poetry and fiction in addition to the factual and opinion pieces published in their papers.

Froiseth collected material from the *Standard* for a book titled *The Women of Mormonism*¹⁶ and extended her antipolygamy efforts by working on a campaign to fund construction of a refuge for Mormon women and children who left polygamous relationships. Congress appropriated funds in 1886 and 1888 for an Industrial Christian Home of Utah, but few Latter-day Saints took advantage of it, and it eventually became a residential hotel.¹⁷ Froiseth also worked actively with the Orphan’s Home and Day Nursery, but perhaps her major effort was a home for the aged, which she saw to completion after finding a donor to bequeath funding for it.

Wells worked on Relief Society projects—wheat storage, the Deseret Hospital, a woman’s cooperative store, and silk production—and served as general president of the Relief Society from 1910 until her death in 1921. She also belonged to the Utah Woman’s Republican League and the Utah Society of Daughters of the Revolution and ran for the Utah legislature in 1871. In their lives, as well as



Emmeline B. Wells (1828–1921). Wells served as editor of the *Woman's Exponent* from 1877 to 1914. Photograph by C. M. Bell. Courtesy Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

in their papers, these women worked toward societal reform, which they recognized as a fitting, even crucial, task for their sex.

Importance of Education for Women

The editors also agreed about the necessity of educational opportunities for women to aid them both as homemakers and as participants in community life. In a series titled “Woman as a Benefactress” that described women who had made substantial contributions toward the advancement of education, the *Standard* praised such activities as particularly appropriate for women: “We believe that woman’s sphere is the educational, in all its forms. . . . Everything man learns should have a worthy motive, everything he does a worthy aim. To inspire his soul with the love of the good and noble is woman’s province in her relations of wife, mother, sister and daughter.”¹⁸

The *Standard* hailed the establishment of “mission schools” in Utah as an effective means of countering Mormon dominance of the territory’s educational system. “Knowledge is power and the want of it engenders weakness and subserviency,” an editorial stated.¹⁹

The *Exponent* said nothing could be more important than the proper education of the young and hoped for a day when young women would study “physiology and anatomy, for their own improvement and the benefit of the next generation.”²⁰ Both papers carried news notes about educational accomplishments of women. They told of female students carrying off honors in philosophy, chemistry, and medicine at an eastern school and described the French system for educating women.²¹ In its “Woman as Benefactress” series, the *Standard* in 1880 lauded women who had advanced education. The *Exponent* that same year hailed “Women of Genius” and the literary work of two American female poets, Alice and Phoebe Cary.²²

In addition to presenting positive role models, the papers carried other types of educational material. Articles like the *Standard*’s “Minerals of Utah” and the *Exponent*’s “The Powers of a Cyclone” broadened the horizons of women who had little access to such information.²³ Reports of political developments at local, state, and national levels also kept readers informed.

Education was crucial to cultural improvement, another advance that both Froiseth and Wells promoted. Much of the educational content of the papers consisted of articles with a cultural emphasis. Biographical sketches of literary and artistic notables and articles such as “The Art Galleries and Museums of Vienna” encouraged readers to consider such topics important.²⁴ Both papers published several articles in 1881 about George Eliot, who had died the previous year, and both encouraged local literary and dramatic groups by reporting on their meetings and other activities.²⁵ In its article about the history of the reading group Blue Tea, the *Standard* lamented, “Girls whose school-days were full of brilliant promise, too often drop their intellectual pursuits on the eve of their wedding.” But participation in weekly meetings allowed them to exchange domestic cares for “communion with the great thoughts of great souls.”²⁶

Another way to recognize and further the cultural interests of readers was to provide a place for publication of their literary efforts; both the *Standard* and the *Exponent* regularly used poetry and essays by their readers, with an occasional piece of short fiction or a longer fictional work spread over several issues. These often had a didactic purpose. The *Standard*'s serial, “A Heart History,” begun in April 1881, told the story of a suffering woman abandoned by a husband who took up polygamy, balancing the *Exponent*'s “Jesse Burns, or, Was It Fate?” which started in December 1880 and recounted the tale of an abandoned woman rescued by a kindly older gentleman who made her his plural wife.

Temperance Campaign

In addition to education and the promotion of cultural interests, both papers saw involvement in the temperance movement, which was attracting widespread attention at the time, as an acceptable application of women's natural aptitudes. For the *Exponent*, acceptance of temperance came almost as a matter of course, for the Word of Wisdom advised Mormons to avoid strong drink—interpreted to include anything alcoholic. An editorial summed up the paper's position: “Every woman who has the interest of mankind

CHARITY FOR THE FALLEN.

"Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more."

How forcibly do these simple words of Jesus portray his charity for a fallen woman; but how different the charity of men and women professing the same religion! When a woman falls a victim to man's evil persuasions, it is the custom among all Christian people to look upon her as a thing beneath their notice, except if be to point the finger of scorn at and call vile names; and yet, if we possessed one spark of the charity of Jesus, the worst accusation that we would feel justified in making is, that she was *very weak*; and in many instances, could we know all the circumstances and realize the power of the tempter, and the arts and devices used to deceive and lead astray, and how long and cunningly the betrayer has pursued his victim, our censure might be turned to admiration for the strength that resisted so long. But we only see the fall; God alone sees the conflict, and He only is competent to judge; He alone knows how to draw the line between wilful sin and the temptations too strong for our resistance. Were we permitted to read one chapter in the pre-natal existence of many persons, and know the traits of character bequeathed to them by their parents;

WHAT WOMEN THINK.

I have been thinking of the *EXPONENT*, and wondering why more of our sisters (I should say all of them) do not take it. Surely it is of some importance that the women of Utah should be properly represented; we certainly have misrepresentation enough. The cry has ever been, the down-trodden women of Utah. This same cry of oppression is made an excuse for all kinds of newspaper abuse, and a pretext for interference in our public and domestic institutions; indeed, they would have the world believe us the most degraded and neglected beings of all God's creation. Now, we know this is not so; we enjoy full as much liberty as they do, and a great deal more, with all their boasted civilization. We do not need their sympathy nor their interference in our behalf. We enjoy all the rights that are accorded to our sex anywhere, and know as well how to use them as any of our compeers in the Eastern cities would. Indeed, we enjoyed more before they kindly introduced so much of their vaunted civilization into our midst. The day

Paragraphs from the *Woman's Exponent*. These paragraphs reveal the Mormon editor's concerns with women's issues, community issues, the family, and polygamy. (*Woman's Exponent*, June 1, 1880, 1; and February 1, 1882, 135).

WOMEN AND TEMPERANCE.

EDITOR EXPONENT:—In the last number of your valuable paper, the ruling of the Judge of the Supreme Court in regard to the liquor question was referred to, and it was suggested that every woman who has the welfare of mankind at heart should protest against it. I endorse the sentiment with all my heart. It is my earnest conviction, however, that women many times bring untold misery upon themselves and their offspring by indulging in spirituous liquors in various forms at certain times in their lives, thus creating an appetite for strong drink in their children before their birth, which will be a withering curse to them all their life long.

I have heard some women say they could not do without liquor at certain times, which, however, with my past experience I do not believe. To illustrate my belief I will relate an incident in my own life. My first child was born in the winter of '48, at Winter Quarters, and in the opinion of all my friends, I was very near unto death; and I wish to state emphatically in this connection that I was not snatched from an untimely grave by the use of alcoholic stimulants in any form, but by the power of God through the faith of the sisters who had met at Brother Heber C. Kimball's

THE INFLUENCE OF HOME.

Good, bad or indifferent characters are molded at home, and polished abroad. The more perfect the mold the more valuable the casting. The more careful the polish the more lasting the article. I will attempt to apply the above figure of speech to the molding and permanency of the human character. The cheerful family circle, radiant with smiles, suggestive of pure motives, appreciative of one another, are essential in framing minds that prefer to make home the place in which to spend their leisure time. The welcome "Good night" brother, or, "Good night" sister, in retiring; or the "How I enjoyed that reading," "the game you proposed," or similar sayings are intended to bind children and parents with inseparable ties that ever find them preferring home affection to the cold formalities of the outer world. If there is one place more like heaven than another, it is a bright, sunshiny home; where love is the ruling element, and where each one's aim is to promote the happiness of the other members of the family.

THE TEMPERANCE REVIVAL.

The importance of the Reform movement inaugurated in this city by Dr. Mc Kenzie, can scarcely be appreciated unless the need for just such a revival is taken into consideration and measured too. In all probability there is no city in the United States that has more drinking saloons than Salt Lake, in accordance with the number of its population, and when it is considered that the liquor license is ten times as high as in other cities, it must certainly go to prove that an immense amount of patronage is bestowed on these places. We are reliably informed that there are certain saloons which are infested on Saturday afternoons with working men, where they often spend the earnings of a week in wild carousal, then go home penniless; the wages which should have gone to the support of wife and children, having been left in the dram shop. It is also stated that the number of boys and youths who frequent these haunts is very large, thus showing that intemperance is alarmingly on the increase in our midst. There may be worse crimes than intemperance, but in ninety nine cases out of a hundred, intemperance is the path that leads to these

OUR POLICY.

Since the publication of the *ANTI-POLYGAMY STANDARD* has been determined upon, the questions have been asked repeatedly, "what attitude do you purpose to assume in regard to Mormon women? Do you intend to prosecute a war against all Mormon women, or all those who believe in, or practice the doctrine of plural marriage? And this class who do believe in it as a religious principle—and there are many such—are you going to hold them up to the scorn and contempt of the women of America?"

Paragraphs from the *Anti-Polygamy Standard*. In these examples can be seen the significance the Ladies' Anti-Polygamy Society of Utah placed not only on their antipolygamy campaign, but also on other community issues. (*Anti-Polygamy Standard*, April 1880, 4.)

What Polygamy Has Done for Women.

I have been request^{ed} by some of the ladies of the Anti-Polygamy Society to tell how I became a polygamous wife, and why I continued living in that unlawful relation, when I did not believe in the institution as a divine ordinance, and hated the system with my whole soul. My story is not an uncommon one, and can easily find many a parallel in the history of Mormonism.

I was born in England, and belonged to a respectable family of the middle class. My father was a successful tradesman, and being an only child, the best educational advantages were afforded me; in fact, I received what is termed in that country, a finished education. When I was about sixteen years old, my parents became converts to Mormonism, and as I had always been religiously inclined, and the Mormon doctrines as there preached seemed to me so simple and beautiful and good, it was not long before I became an enthusiastic votary of the new religion. I had heard that the Saints in America practiced polygamy, but did not trouble myself about it, as I did not anticipate leaving my own country; besides, the missionaries

at heart, who possesses a latent spark of divinity within her soul, should exert her utmost influence for the suppression of intemperance.” A letter received in response to this editorial went even further by maintaining that women should never drink, even in childbirth, or marry drinking men.²⁷

The *Standard*, too, joined women’s publications and organizations across the country in campaigning for temperance. It complained about the excessive number of saloons in Salt Lake City, praised the local Reform Club, and, while admitting the possibility that there might be worse crimes than intemperance, went on to point out that “in ninety nine cases out of a hundred, intemperance is the path that leads to these greater evils.”²⁸ The paper also encouraged contributions to a fund honoring “Mrs. President Hayes” that would be used to print temperance literature and arranged for reduced rates on a combination subscription to the *Standard* and *Our Union*, the organ of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union.²⁹

The Polygamy Question

Their common ideas about the obligation of women to improve personal and community morality, however, led the papers into vigorous campaigns on opposite sides of the question of polygamy. The *Standard* was born of its founders’ zeal for elimination of what they saw as a perverse and wicked system of marriage. They urged readers to overcome their “false delicacy” and get involved in the battle. Even in castigating polygamy, however, the paper’s writers took care to express womanly compassion for its victims: “We start out with good intentions, with pure motives, with kind feelings, and with hatred and contempt only for the sin, and not for the sinner.”³⁰

All of the *Standard*’s most common arguments against polygamy can be traced to a desire to elevate the moral level of society:³¹

1. Not only was polygamy against the laws of the country, it was against the laws of God. Mormon polygamy was not comparable to biblical polygamy, writers claimed, and even in the Bible its fruits were discord and violence.³²
2. It was contrary to the womanly sentiments of purity and goodness. The paper used “The Beauties of Polygamy” as a

cynical title for a continuing series begun in September 1880 that presented story after story intended to depict the practice as ugly.

3. It was productive of misery and wickedness. One writer told of a young man who had been evil from birth and attributed this to the influence of his mother's wicked thoughts while she was pregnant with him; she had been consumed with the desire to murder her husband's new wife.³³
4. It was a degrading type of bondage for the women and children involved. Although the *Standard* did not name names, it alleged that even many Mormons admitted that "numbers of the men only enter it for the purpose of pandering to their own base passions, and have no religious convictions whatever."³⁴
5. It led to economic suffering, because men often took more wives than they could support or abandoned less favored wives and their families.³⁵
6. It produced children who were inferior physically, mentally, and morally. Children of polygamous marriages grew up "entirely lacking in that simplicity and innocence which is an attribute of childhood almost the world over," developing "depraved tastes from infancy," according to one article.³⁶

Exponent counterclaims mirrored the *Standard's* charges by insisting that polygamy not only elevated moral standards within the Church but could be the moral salvation of society as a whole. Some frequently used defenses follow:

1. Although polygamy had been undermined by men's unjust laws, it remained a divine mandate with biblical precedent, a condition of the Abrahamic covenant.³⁷
2. Not only did it reinforce the womanly sentiments of purity and generosity, but it developed strength and self-reliance.³⁸
3. It produced happiness and virtue. As a prominent Mormon woman put it in a serial autobiography, "A life in the plural

or celestial order of matrimony is a much happier one than to live in the uncertainty and jeopardy that thousands of the women of the world are in, and suffer its attendant evils.”³⁹

4. It actually freed women from burdensome physical and emotional demands. In fact, women absolutely required “certain periods of continence” not needed by men, according to Dr. Romania B. Pratt, a Mormon physician. And plural marriage not only would improve their health but would bring an end to “abortions, foeticides, infanticides, seductions, rapes and divorces.”⁴⁰
5. Its emphasis on cooperative effort led to economic benefits for those involved. In addition, Utah law, passed by Mormons, made it possible for married women actually to hold property in their own names.⁴¹
6. It developed happy, healthy, and unselfish children. An editorial claimed that through the system of marriage “the world so loudly condemns” there had grown up “a race of the most perfectly developed young men and women any country can produce.”⁴²

In line with their insistence on the capabilities and responsibilities of women, both the *Standard* and the *Exponent* used first-person accounts to support their positions on polygamy, although the *Standard*'s correspondents often remained anonymous. The first issue of the *Standard* assured readers that its articles would be written “or the facts furnished by women who have had personal experience in the system, and consequently may be relied upon as true in every particular.”⁴³ As the *Exponent*'s eighth year of publication came to a close, an editorial expressed pride in the opportunity it had offered Mormon women to share their views and feelings “in a simple and untrammelled manner that could not fail to give evidence of their liberty of thought and action, and their religious sincerity.” It added, “They have also told the story of their own hardships and persecutions suffered in consequence of the bigotry and superstition that is always opposed to the dawn of new light.”⁴⁴

In order to translate their support of or opposition to polygamy into legislation, as well as to achieve other social goals, women had

to enter the arena of politics, and both publications encouraged them to do just that. The *Standard* campaigned for Utah's Liberal Party, urging readers to register and vote, and published reports of Liberal Party meetings.⁴⁵ Americans could blame only themselves for the continued existence of plural marriage, one editorial stated; citizens must rise up to elect a congress that would stamp it out.⁴⁶ The *Exponent* spoke out for the People's Party and urged registration and voting in its behalf.⁴⁷ Both papers also informed readers of developments in the polygamy battles at the federal and state levels and reprinted comments by government officials who favored their respective positions.

One issue that occupied a great deal of space in both the *Standard* and the *Exponent* during 1881 was the disagreement over seating Mormon leader and polygamist George Q. Cannon in the U.S. Congress, to which he was elected in 1880. Delegations and memorials spoke for and against Cannon, and the papers reported them, as well as expressing their positions in impassioned editorials. Cannon lost the seat in 1882 after passage of the Edmunds Bill. This bill, a federal measure prohibiting polygamists from voting or holding office and making plural marriage a crime, also attracted much attention in the papers. The *Exponent* lamented the bill's passage; the *Standard* celebrated it but not wholeheartedly, for it could and should have been stronger, the paper's writers suggested.

Woman Suffrage

The *Exponent* always came down firmly on the side of woman suffrage, which the antipolygamy legislation threatened. Utah women had been given the vote in 1870, just three months after Wyoming became the first state to enfranchise women, and they voted regularly until enactment of the Edmunds Bill took voting rights away from those in plural marriages. *Exponent* readers received encouragement to use the vote during the years when they legally could, plus reports of meetings and activities of the National Woman Suffrage Association and the travels and speeches of national suffrage leaders. Editor Wells attended several national conventions. As the threat to woman suffrage in Utah intensified, the

paper published more and more defenses. One issue reprinted Sojourner Truth's celebrated "Ain't I a Woman?" speech.⁴⁸

Many arguments emphasized the positive contributions voting women could make to society. For example, one article pointed out that a well-organized kingdom required the participation of both men and women and went on to ask all women to become familiar with the law and then raise their voices to abolish provisions that sustained "grog-shops and billiard saloons," which made drunkards of their husbands, sons, and brothers and encouraged "houses of ill fame." Another writer recognized women as generally superior to men in level of spirituality and asked, "If this is correct shall the better element be politically subservient to the worse?"⁴⁹

It might seem that the *Standard*, with its insistence on women's participation in societal reform, would also support suffrage. But if Mormon women voted, they could help maintain the influence of the Church—and polygamy. Getting rid of plural marriage was the *Standard's* first priority, and to the antipolygamist this meant abolishing woman suffrage in Utah.

The *Standard* claimed that Mormon men gave women the vote illegally only after non-Mormons began to move into Utah and that the women had voted as the Church directed ever since. "Suffrage, as it exists in Utah, is an entirely different matter from what the suffragists in the East are working for," one article pointed out. "There it represents a principle, here it was established to place greater power in the hands of the men, and instead of representing the sentiments of women, it is only a reflex of the opinions of the priesthood."⁵⁰ With such arguments, the *Standard* tried to persuade national suffrage association leaders who had supported Mormon women's right to vote to change their minds. Of course, the paper wanted polygamous men to be denied the ballot as well.⁵¹

Although bitterly opposed on the issue of polygamy and hence on the question of voting rights for Mormon women, the editors of both papers saw themselves and their publications as defenders and promoters of women's rights. The Anti-Polygamy Society evolved into the Utah Association for the Advancement of Women, with Froiseth continuing to take a leading role.

Whether disagreeing about polygamy or crusading for temperance, education, and political participation, the *Standard* and the *Exponent* not only used similar arguments but based those arguments on a shared perception of woman's role. Their diametrically opposed positions on plural marriage grew from assumptions inherent in Victorian ideas of what true womanhood entailed. The title of a 1974 article, "Diamond Cut Diamond," came from an 1878 speech indicating that even some Mormon women recognized similarities between themselves and their foes. "The women of this country want to crush us, but it will be diamond cut diamond," the speaker said.⁵² Although a major part of what they had in common was the idea, espoused by both, that woman's place is in the home, the Mormon women and their antagonists in the Ladies' Anti-Polygamy Society also shared the experience of moving outside the home to campaign for their views of what home and family life should be. With other American women, they found in society's view of their proper sphere justification for expanding that sphere.

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NOTES

¹ See Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151-74.

² This paper follows standard nineteenth-century and Mormon usage in employing the terms polygamy and plural marriage to refer to the practice of allowing a husband to take more than one wife. The more correct term for this system is polygyny.

³ Advertisement, *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, April 9, 1872, 3.

⁴ "Home Affairs," *Woman's Exponent*, October 15, 1881, 78.

⁵ C. P., "The Blue Tea," *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, April 1880, 2; and "For, and about Women," *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, April 1880, 3.

⁶ "Editorial Notes," *Woman's Exponent*, December 1, 1882, 100.

⁷ "Local Mention," *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, May 1880, 13; June 1880, 21.

⁸ "To the Members of the Presbyterian Church in the United States," *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, June 1880, 20.

⁹ "Housekeeper's Corner," *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, June 1880, 18; July 1880, 26.

¹⁰ “The Family Doctor-Shop,” *Woman’s Exponent*, April 1, 1882, 167–68; and “Winter House Plants,” *Woman’s Exponent*, October 15, 1882, 73.

¹¹ “The Great Need,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, September 1880, 41.

¹² “Husband, Home, Motherhood,” *Woman’s Exponent*, April 1, 1881, 164.

¹³ “The Ladies’ Anti-Polygamy Society of Utah, Article 2,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, May 1880, 9.

¹⁴ Gail Hamilton, “A True Lady,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, May 1880, 10.

¹⁵ Flora S. Hill, “The Impulse of the Hour,” *Woman’s Exponent*, April 15, 1880, 171; and Ellis R. Shipp, “Women Physicians,” *Woman’s Exponent*, May 1, 1881, 183.

¹⁶ Jennie Anderson Froiseth, ed., *The Women of Mormonism; or The Story of Polygamy as Told by the Victims Themselves* (Detroit: C. G. G. Paine, 1886). First published in 1882, the book contained an introductory chapter by Frances Willard.

¹⁷ Robert J. Dwyer, *The Gentile Comes to Utah, a Study in Religion and Social Conflict (1862–1890)*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Western Epics, 1971), 205–12. Chapter 7, “The Gentile Ladies Hoist Their Standard,” 190–214, tells the story of the Anti-Polygamy Society and the campaign for the Industrial Christian Home.

¹⁸ “Woman as a Benefactress,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, September 1880, 42.

¹⁹ “Education in Utah,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, June 1880, 17.

²⁰ “Education of the Young,” *Woman’s Exponent*, May 1, 1880, 180; and “Women Doctors,” *Woman’s Exponent*, July 15, 1882, 28.

²¹ “For, and about Women,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, October 1880, 54; and “Woman’s Education in France,” *Woman’s Exponent*, April 15, 1880, 176.

²² “Women of Genius,” *Woman’s Exponent*, April 15, 1880, 176; and Hannah T. King, “A Memorial of Alice and Phoebe Carey [sic],” *Woman’s Exponent*, May 15, 1880, 186.

²³ “Minerals of Utah,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, April 1880, 8; and “The Powers of a Cyclone,” *Woman’s Exponent*, May 1, 1880, 178.

²⁴ “The Art Galleries and Museums of Vienna,” *Woman’s Exponent*, March 1, 1883, 145.

²⁵ See, for example, “George Eliot’s Influence,” *Woman’s Exponent*, February 1, 1881, 134–35; and “George Eliot,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, July 1881, 25.

²⁶ C. P., “The Blue Tea,” 2.

²⁷ “The Position of Utah,” *Woman’s Exponent*, January 1, 1882, 116; and “Women and Temperance,” *Woman’s Exponent*, February 1, 1882, 135.

²⁸ “The Temperance Revival,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, April 1880, 4.

²⁹ “Temperance Testimonial to Mrs. President Hayes,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, December 1880, 67; and untitled note, *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, April 1881, 1.

³⁰ “Our Policy,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, April 1880, 4.

³¹ The papers reiterated the arguments listed in many forms. Representative statements of each are cited.

³² “Polygamy, Ancient and Modern,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, August 1880, 35; and Charles Derby, “The History of Polygamy as Found in the Bible and Book of Mormon, with Comments,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, February 1881, 83.

³³ “The Effects of Polygamy,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, September 1880, 41.

³⁴ “Characteristics of Mormon Polygamy, No. IV,” *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, February 1881, 82.

³⁵ "The Women of Utah," *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, June 1880, 18.

³⁶ "Characteristics of Mormon Polygamy, No. IV," 82.

³⁷ "Mormonism Will Live," *Woman's Exponent*, March 15, 1881, 156.

³⁸ "What They Say about Utah," *Woman's Exponent*, June 15, 1881, 12.

³⁹ Helen Mar Whitney, "Life Incidents," *Woman's Exponent*, January 1, 1881, 114.

⁴⁰ "Extract from Dr. R. B. Pratt's Lecture," *Woman's Exponent*, June 15, 1881, 16.

⁴¹ Lu Dalton, "Reply to Emily Scott," *Woman's Exponent*, March 1, 1882, 151-52.

⁴² "What They Say about Utah," 12.

⁴³ Untitled note, April 1880, 1.

⁴⁴ "Our Little Paper," *Woman's Exponent*, May 15, 1880, 188.

⁴⁵ "Re-organization of the Liberal Party of Utah," *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, September 1880, 44; and "Register, Liberals," *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, June 1881, 20.

⁴⁶ "Whose Is the Fault?" *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, January 1882, 76.

⁴⁷ "An Appeal to Women Voters," *Woman's Exponent*, September 1, 1880, 52.

⁴⁸ "Sojourner Truth," *Woman's Exponent*, August 1, 1881, 35.

⁴⁹ Mary Ann Pratt, "Give to Those Rights to Whom Rights Belong," *Woman's Exponent*, April 1, 1880, 165; and L. E. H., "Woman in Politics," *Woman's Exponent*, July 1, 1882, 17-18.

⁵⁰ "Polygamy and Woman Suffrage," *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, June 1880, 20.

⁵¹ "The Ballot in Utah," *Anti-Polygamy Standard*, February 1882, 84.

⁵² Kathleen Marquis, "'Diamond Cut Diamond': Mormon Women and the Cult of Domesticity in the Nineteenth Century," *University of Michigan Papers in Women's Studies* 2, no. 2 (1974), 105. This paper examines the polygamy conflict, recognizing the common values of supporters and opponents.