Some of the Many Comments on Mormon Marriage Customs Appearing in Print Before 1852.

The Evangelical Magazine & Gospel Advocate (Utica, N.Y.) for Feb. 5, 1831, carried a letter from Chagrin, Ohio, telling of an event called Mormon-ites, and saying: "They have all things in common, and dispense with the marriage covenant.

In the fall of 1831, Ezra Booth left the Mormon church and wrote a series of letters to the Rev. Ira Eddy, explaining why he had done so. The letters were published in a number of newspapers. In the 7th letter he quoted Sidney Rigdon as saying of Joseph Smith, "were he to get another man's wife and seek to kill her husband, it could be no reason why we should not believe revelations through him, for David did the same."

E. D. Howe's History of Mormonism was published in 1834. On page 268 he quotes Levi Lewis as saying that he heard Joseph Smith and Martin Harris "both say, adultery was no crime."

The L.D.S. Messenger & Advocate for August 1835 reported that the Mormons were then charged with "the crime of fornication and polygamy." In its May 1839 issue, it reported that the Presidents of Seventies had adopted a resolution withdrawing fellowship from Seventies "guilty of polygamy or any offense of that kind."

The Illinois Gazette & Jacksonville News of May 24, 1837 quoted from the Missouri Republican, that a traveler in Illinois had said that in July 1836, he met a Mormon on his way to Missouri with "a brace of wives."

The Elders Journal for November 1837 said that, on a recent trip to Missouri, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were "daily" asked, "Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one?"

Farley Pratt's pamphlet, "Late Persecutions of the L.D.S.", published in 1840, said: "It is also current report among the ignorant that we do away with matrimony, and that we allow unlawful intercourse between the sexes, etc."

The letters written by John C. Bennett in the summer of 1842 and published in many newspapers, "exposing" certain practices among the Mormons, and his book published later in the year, told of a system under which a man could have more women than one.

The Sangamo Journal of Sept. 25, 1842 printed a letter from J. F. Olney, announcing his withdrawal from the Mormon church because "polygamy, lasciviousness and adultery" were being practiced at Nauvoo.

Oliver Olney's pamphlet, "The Absurdities of Mormonism Portrayed," published in 1843, told of an unlawful intercourse between the sexes going on at Nauvoo, and used the word "polygamy2 in speaking of it.

The Illincian of March 22, 1844 quoted from the Mount Holly (N.J.) Herald, a story that 13 Mormons at Shreveville had renounced Mormonism because "of a new revelation made by Joe Smith. The new revelation alluded to, is said to be of a most abominable character."
The Warsaw Signal of April 25, 1844 printed a letter in which the writer said that the spiritual wife doctrine was taught in Kirtland in 1834 and 1836, and later in Nauvoo.

The Nauvoo Expositor, in its only issue, June 7, 1844, charged editorially that Joseph Smith and others were practicing whoredom and all kinds of abominations under the cloak of religion. It told how young girls would be talked into becoming spiritual wives. It said: "The next step to avoid public exposition from the common course of things, they are sent away for a time, until all is well, after which they return, as from a long visit." Again the Expositor accused Joseph and Hyrum Smith of teaching plurality of gods, plurality of wives for time and eternity, and "the doctrine of unconditional sealing up to eternal life, against all crimes except that of shedding innocent blood." The Expositor also printed affidavits of William and Jane Law that they had seen the revelation shown by Hyrum Smith, which authorized certain men to marry as many as ten wives. Also printed here was the affidavit of Austin Cowles that, late in the summer of 1843, Hyrum Smith read the revelation before a High Council meeting. He said it spoke of sealing up against sin except the shedding of blood, plurality of wives or marrying virgins, and said that David and Solomon had many wives and armed not except in the matter of Uriah. It is significant that the supposed revelation made public in Utah eight years later did speak of a plurality of gods, by saying that men sealed to their wives for time and eternity, who did not shed innocent blood, might become gods. It also authorized a man to marry as many as ten wives if they were virgins. And it said that, although David had many wives and concubines, he did not sin, "save in the case of Uriah and his wife."

On June 25, 1844, Joseph Smith recorded in his journal that there was an indictment found against him, "charging me with polygamy or something else."

The New York Herald of Sept. 5, 1844 printed a long story by Joseph H. Jackson, telling of his experiences as a Mormon at Nauvoo. He told about the spiritual wife system there, and said that Hyrum Smith had told him that he had taken his wife's sister, Mrs Thompson, as a wife.

The Warsaw Signal of Sept. 12, 1844 reported that "on Sunday week", Brigham Young, preaching at Nauvoo, had avowed his belief in the spiritual wife system and said he wished had had a hundred. This story was also printed in the Burlington HawkEye and the Davenport Gazette.

The Lee County (Ia.) Democrat of Oct. 19, 1844 carried a letter from Nauvoo saying that the Mormon "doctrine of Polytheism and Polygamy will soon be fully exposed."

The New York Herald of Nov. 11, 1844 printed a letter from Benjamin Winchester explaining a talk he had made charging some of his fellow Mormons with practicing polygamy. He said that there was no polygamy in the church "from the time of the organization of the church up to the year 1841, at which time this flagitious doctrine of polygamy was introduced into the church."

Between Aug. 3, 1844 and May 24, 1845, there were 14 issues of the Mormon publication, The Prophet, in which the difficulties of the church over polygamy were discussed.

The Morning Star (Baptist)
The Morning Star (Baptist) of Dec. 18, 1844 quoted a letter to the Christian Herald from a man who said he heard Benjamin Winchester give a talk in which he said that Joseph Smith fell because of plurality of wives. The letter included a long description of the practice.

John Hardy's pamphlet, "Startling Developments," etc., published at Boston in 1844, told at length of the trial of Hardy for slander, because he had accused William Smith and others of teaching polygamy.

The L.D.S. Messenger & Advocate (Lamanite) carried stories about plurality of wives in 14 issues, beginning with the Oct. 1844 number.

The Warsaw Signal of Jan. 8, 1845 carried Gov. Ford's message to the legislature. In it he spoke of reports that Joseph Smith "had announced a revelation from heaven, sanctioning polygamy, by some kind of spiritual wife system, which I never could well understand."

The Missouri Whig of Sept. 17, 1845 quoted from the Warsaw Signal that Bill Smith had declared that the spiritual wife system "has long been taught secretly," and that William's wife had left him because he had practiced spiritual wifery with an English girl.

The St. Louis American of Sept. 12, 1845 carried the same story.

The Quincy Whig of Apr. 15, 1846 printed an unsigned letter telling about the spiritual wife system at Nauvoo.

The Warsaw Signal of May 6, 1846 contained an excerpt from a letter written by Reuben Daniel of Keokuk. He said that in May of 1844, he was ordained to the higher priesthood, and that Joseph Smith then explained to him the spiritual wife system which had been revealed to him.

The Burlington Hawkeye of May 28, 1846 told of a report that six of Brigham Young's wives had returned to Nauvoo from the "Grand encampment."

The Quincy Whig of July 8, 1846 carried a story from the Voice Haraké that six of Brigham Young's wives had died, martyrs to lust.

In his pamphlet published in 1846, Joseph H. Jackson told of his experiences at Nauvoo, and discussed at length the spiritual wife system, as he said it was taught to him by Joseph Smith.

Edward Brotherton, in a pamphlet published in England in 1846, said: "Suffice it to say, that it is clearly established that a system of all but universal female prostitution exists at Nauvoo, as a secret regulation of the church, none but the faithful being permitted to have the privilege. They teach that this system is what we are to understand by the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

The Quincy Whig of Dec. 23, 1847 reported, from the Boston Post, the story of Henry Cobb's suit for divorce from Augusta Cobb, on the that she had left him to become a wife of Brigham Young.

In her "Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons," published at Lynn, Mass., in 1848, Catherine Lewis told how she was taught plurality of wives in 1843, and how H.C. Kimball tried to get her to marry him.

The Oquawka (Ill.) Spectator of Feb. 15, 1848 printed a story about polygamy among the Mormons at Council Bluffs.
There were some things written about polygamy, before the death of Joseph Smith, but not printed until later.

Between January and September of 1842, Charlotte Haven wrote some letters from Nauvoo, which were published in the Overland Monthly for December, 1890. In a letter dated Sept. 8, 1843, she spoke of new revelations which had not been made public, but a "few of the elders put their heads together and whisper what they dare not speak about." She said that what the new revelations were about, "we can only surmise by faint rumors," but that Elder Adams had recently returned from England, "bringing with him a wife and child, although he had left a wife and family here when he went away, and I am told that his first wife is reconciled to this certainly at first unwelcome guest in their home, for her husband and some others have reasoned with her that plurality of wives is taught in the Bible.... I cannot believe that Joseph will ever sanction such a doctrine, ...." 

Between December, 1843 and June, 1844, Sarah Hall Scott and her husband wrote a series of letters from Nauvoo, which were published the New England Quarterly for December, 1893. A letter dated April 13, 1844 spoke of "things that are and have been taught in the Church of Latter Day Saints for two years past," and then said: "We will mention three in particular.

"A plurality of Gods. A plurality of living wives. And unconditional sealing up to eternal life against all sins save the shedding of innocent blood or consenting thereto. These with many other things are taught by Joseph, which we consider odious and doctrines of devils.

"Joseph had a revelation last summer purporting to be from the Lord, allowing the saints the privilege of having ten living wives at one time, I mean certain conspicuous characters among them. They do not content themselves with young women, but have seduced married women. I believe hundreds have been deceived. How should I yield up your daughter to such wretches?

"Mr. Haven knows these statements are correct, for they have been taught in the quorum to which he belongs by the highest authority in the Church. He has told me that he does not believe in these things but he does not come out and oppose them; he thinks that it will come out right."
Some of the many comments on Mormon marriage.

The Evangelical Magazine and Gospel Advocate (U. S., N. Y.) for Feb. 27, 1831, carried a letter from Chapin, O., telling of a new sect called

"Mormonites," and saying: "They fast & sleep together in common and die together with the marriage covenant."

In the fall of 1831, Ezra Benth left the Mormon church and wrote a series of letters to the Rev. E. E. Eddy, explaining why he had done so. These letters were published in a number of newspapers.

In the 12th letter he quoted Sidney Rigdon as saying of Joseph Smith: "I wish to see another man's wife and seek to fill her husband's place, if she would not believe in the union through time, from Eternity did the same."

C. D. Harris, "History of Mormonism," was published in 1834. On page 268 he quotes from a series as saying that he had both "seen and heard, and seen many Mormonism.

The L.D.S. Messenger and Advocate for Aug. 1, 1835, reported that the Mormons were being charged with "the crime of polygamy and fornication," and in May 1837 issue the Messenger and Advocate declared that the President of the Quorum of the Twelve had adopted a resolution withdrawing fellowship from societies "guilty of polygamy and other offenses of the church."

The Elder Goodwin J. Jacksonville News of May 24, 1837 quoted, from the Messenger, the result of a journey in Illinois, where he said that in July 1836, one a Mormon on his way to Missouri with "a large family."

The Elder Smith in Nov. 1837 said that, on a recent trip to Illinois, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were "daily asked: 'Do the Mormons believe in having more wives than one?"
Barney P. Pratt's pamphlet, "Facts Concerning the L. O. S.," published in 1846, said: "It is also a current report among the ignorant that we do away with matrimony, and that we allow unlawful intercourse between the sexes, etc."

In July of 1847, John C. Bennett began writing a series of letters, "exposing" certain practices among the Mormons, again "proving" their practice under which a man could have a large number of wives. The letters were published in newspapers. In 35 to 40 issues of a dozen newspapers, the Sangamo Journal of Sept. 23, 1847, printed a letter from J. C. Olney, announcing his withdrawal from the Mormon church because of "polygamy, lewdness and adultery." He declared it was being practiced at Nauvoo.

Olney's pamphlet, "The Absurdities of Mormonism Revealed," was published in 1848. In it, he spoke of unlawful intercourse between the sexes, young or old, and the word "polygamy.

The Illinoisian of March 23, 1849, quoted from the Nauvoo Herald, a story that 13 Mormons at Chicago had denounced Mormonism because of a new revelation made by Joe Smith. The new revelation, alleged to be of a most abominable character, was that the Nauvoo Expositor, published in a previous year, charged editorially that Joseph Smith and others were practicing "whoredom and all kinds of abominations under the cloak of religion. It told how young girls would be..."
talked unto becoming spiritual wives. "The next step is to avoid public exposure from the common view of things, they are sent away for a time, until all is well, after which they return, as from a long rest." Again the Expositor accuses Joseph and Hyrum of teaching plurality of gods, plurality of wives, fortuna, and strong and "the doctrine of unconditional sealing up to eternal life against all enemies except that of shedding innocent blood."

The Expositor also published affidavits of William and Joseph that they had seen the revelations, sworn by Hyrum Smith, which authorized unto men as many wives as they desired. Also published was the affidavit of Austin Covid that he had also seen the revelations before a High Council meeting. He said it was of sealing up against sin except that of shedding innocent blood, plurality of wives, or marrying a marrying again. And said that David and Solomon had many wives and concubines, and except in the matter of Uriah. It is significant that the apostles of revelation were joined in the eight years later did offer a plurality of godly marriage that many needed in their lives for health and strength, who did not shed innocent blood, could become leaders. It also authorized a man a group of men as ten wives if they were righteous. As it said that although David had more wives and concubines, he did not say "have in the case of Uriah and his wife."

On June 23, 1844, Joseph Smith records in his journal that their wealth and distinction flowed against him. Charging me with2405
The New York Herald of Sept. 5, 1844, carried a long story by
Joseph H. Jackson of his experiences as a Mormon at
Nauvoo. He told a long story of the frequent visits by JKH
there, and said that Brigham Young told him to find
his wife's sister, Mrs. Kimball, as a wife.

The Warsaw Signal of Sept. 12, 1844, reported that "on Sunday
week," Brigham Young preaching at Nauvoo, had
assured his belief in the spiritual wife doctrines and
said he seemed to have a hundred. This story was
reflected in the Burlington Hawkseye and the Davenport
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Winchester, explaining a talk he had made charging
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the time of the organization of the church up to the
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14 issues of this church publication, The Prophet, in
which the difficulties of the church were polygamy were
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Christian, recall from a Union man said to have been Benjamin
Winchester's, which involved the report that Joseph Smith be
because of his polygamy, was killed, a long description
of the murder.
John Hardy's account of "startling developments," published in Boston in 1844, told at length about Hardy's trial for libel because he accused William Smith and others of teaching polygamy.

The L. S. Messenger and Advertiser (Salt Lake) Carried stories about the plurality of wives at Nauvoo, in 14 columns, beginning with the Oct. 1844 issue.

The Mormon's Herald of May 6, 1846, contained an excerpt from a letter written by Reuben Daniels, Jr., of Kentucky. He said that in May of 1845, he was ordered to the higher priesthood, and that Joseph Smith then explained to him the "spiritual wife system," which had been revealed to him.

The Burlington Standard of May 28, 1846, told of a report that six of Brigham Young's wives had returned to Nauvoo by the "holy endowment."
Joseph H. Jackson's pamphlet about his experiences in Nauvoo was published in 1846. In it he dwelt at length on the spiritual wife system as he said he was taught by Joseph Smith.

Edward Brittain's pamphlet about the Mormons was published in England in 1846. In it he said: "Suffice it to say, that the evidence has been so clearly established that a system of all but universal female polygamy exists at Nauvoo, as a secret regulating principle of the church, now that the faithful women are permitted to fast with the priests, they teach that this system is what we are under the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Quincy Whig of Dec. 23, 1847 reported, from the Boston Post, the story of Nancy Cott, sent for divorcing from Augustus Cott, on the ground that he had left her to become a wife of Brigham Young.

The Oquirrh (U. S.) Spectator of Feb. 15, 1848 carried a story about polygamy among the Mormons at Council Bluffs.

The Presbyterian "Narrative of Some of the Proceedings of the Mormons, by Catherine Lewis," was published at Logan, Mass. in 1845. It told how she was taught polygamy in 1843, and how N. C. Russell tried to get her to marry him.

There were some things written about polygamy before the death of Joseph Smith, but not published until later.

Between January and September of 1843, Charlotte Harter wrote a series of letters from Nauvoo, which was published in the Overland Monthly for Dec. 1846. In a letter dated Sept. 8, 1843, she offered new revelations which had not been made public, "not a few of the elders put their heads together and were not satisfied that the report was correct." She
said that without the new revelations we would not be "prophets, seers, and "wizards, or "prophets by certain mere rumour", but that Elder Adam had recently returned from England, bringing with him a wife and child, although he had left wife and family behind when he left. And Joseph told that his first wife is reconciled to this certainly at first unbelief of his guest with his family, for her husband and some others have reasoned with her that plurality of wives is taught in the Bible... I cannot believe that God would ever sanction such a doctrine,..."

Between December 1843 and June 1848, Sarah Hall Scott and her stepmother wrote a series of letters from Nauvoo and returned to their family in Nauvoo. These letters were published in the New England Quarterly for Dec. 1936. A letter dated April 13, 1844, after a meeting of the Church of Jesus Day Saints for two years past, and they said: "We will meet in these in particular.

"A plurality of gods, a plurality of living persons, and unconditional sealing up to eternal life against all saving the shedding of innocent blood or cheating their [names], these with many other things are taught by Joseph which we consider as errors and doctrines of devils.

"Joseph has a revelation last summer purporting to be from the Lord, allowing the saints to indulge in having ten living wives at one time, I mean certain consciences characters among them. They do not associate themselves with young women, but have seduced married women. I feel the hundreds have been deceived, now shall I yield up your daughter to such Watchers?"

"Mr. Soren knows the statement is correct, for they have been taught in the presence in which he belongs by the higher authorities in the Church. He has told me..."