

## Chapter 15

### Charges That Hyrum Secretly Taught Polygamy Are False

The purpose of this chapter is to show the fallacy behind the marring of Hyrum's character in order to make him the avenue through which polygamy came into the Church. It is also to show what Hyrum did publicly to fight polygamy during the last six months of his life.

This truth is in direct conflict with the fallacious secret acts that the writers for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints proclaim that he did. Hyrum has been wrongly accused of having a major role in introducing polygamy into the Church, just as his brother Joseph was accused of promoting that doctrine. The Latter-day Saints, with headquarters in Salt Lake City, have ignored Hyrum's public fight against polygamy. Instead, they have published one side of the issue—the testimonies and affidavits of polygamous men and women who have incorrectly labeled Hyrum a strong advocate of polygamy. Their affidavits and testimonies have been published again and again without any references to the opposition which he showed to that doctrine.

Indeed, historian Jenson and others, including Hyrum's son Joseph F. Smith, have made the claim that Hyrum was a polygamist. Jenson printed Joseph F.'s statement (previously reviewed in chapter 9), which he wrote to convince everyone that his father and Joseph Smith Jr. secretly had plural wives. Joseph F. Smith was five-and-a-half years old when his father was killed and thus was not a qualified witness—but merely an advocate.

In September 1844, two-and-a-half months after his father (Hyrum Smith) was assassinated, Joseph F. Smith's mother, Mary Fielding Smith, became the plural wife of Apostle Heber C. Kimball (see George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy* “. . . but we called

*it celestial marriage*”, 601). Mary Fielding Smith Kimball died in 1852, and Apostle Kimball naturally had much influence on his stepson’s beliefs. Kimball’s many plural wives became Joseph F.’s aunts, and their numerous children became his stepbrothers and stepsisters. Helen Mar Kimball—an alleged plural wife of Joseph Smith Jr. and a stepsister to Joseph F.—was a prolific writer and defender of polygamy. It would have been very difficult for Joseph F. to have formed opinions different from his influential stepfather, as well as from his numerous and influential family members.

Records reveal that Hyrum Smith was the father of eight children—all from monogamous marriages. He and his first wife, Jerusha Barden Smith, who died October 13, 1837, were the parents of six children. Those six children—Lovina, Mary, John, Hyrum, Jerusha, and Sarah—were born within a period of ten years and one month. The youngest was less than two weeks old when Hyrum’s wife, Jerusha, died.

Shortly after Jerusha’s death, Hyrum married Mary Fielding. Their first child, Joseph Fielding (Joseph F.), was born November 13, 1838. A daughter, Martha, was born May 14, 1841. She celebrated her third birthday May 14, 1844. Her father, Hyrum, was assassinated the next month (see Lucy Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and His Progenitors for Many Generations*, 35).

If Hyrum had married plural wives, he would have fathered children by them as he did with Jerusha and Mary. Yet, there were none!

Presiding Patriarch Hyrum Smith was Joseph’s primary witness against the doctrine of plural marriage. He stood with Joseph—head and shoulders above all other men in the Church in proclaiming against it. Hyrum worked constantly with Joseph in denouncing polygamy as a doctrine and supporting Joseph. No apostle defended Joseph’s innocence, or fought to keep plural marriage out of the Church, as did Hyrum. He continued to remain Joseph’s primary witness in their fight against polygamy for the last six months of his life.

### **Hyrum Was Righteous—Called to Be a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator**

In 1841 the Prophet Joseph received a revelation in which the Lord called Hyrum to also be a prophet, seer, and revelator. Hyrum accepted the revelation as being of the Lord and was ordained to the office of Presiding Patriarch (see RLDS *History of the Church* 2:512). The revelation stated:

**and from this time forth, I appoint unto him [Hyrum] that he may be a prophet, and a seer, and a revelator unto my Church, as well as my servant Joseph, that he may act in concert also with my servant Joseph, and that he shall receive counsel from my servant Joseph . . . that my servant Hyrum may bear record of the things which I shall show unto him, that his name may be had in honorable remembrance from generation to generation, forever and ever. (RLDS DC 107:29d, f; LDS DC 124:94, 96)**

If Hyrum was a righteous prophet, he would not lie—not even about spiritual things that people could not understand, nor “for the greater good.” And he would not have gone about Nauvoo secretly teaching an alleged plural marriage document, which threatened Emma Smith with death and contradicted existing scripture, as the Utah LDS Church would have people believe.

The Utah LDS Church has woven a false narrative wherein they have accused Joseph and Hyrum of teaching and practicing plural marriage in secret, which is in direct opposition to what both men did. Their historians’ secrecy version is also in direct conflict with the scripture which asserts:

**And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all Churches of the saints. (1 Corinthians 14:32–33)**

Like the rest of us, Joseph and Hyrum were subject to the laws and commandments given by the prophets of old, just as all people are—in both their public statements and private lives.

**Major Utah LDS Claim  
That Hyrum Secretly Taught  
Polygamy Is Based on a Dubious Tale**

Utah LDS Church President Joseph Fielding Smith worked diligently to collect stories supporting the view that Joseph and Hyrum secretly introduced polygamy into the Church. Chief among those stories was a dubious tale offered by LDS Bishop S. A. Woolley in 1887 regarding an event that supposedly happened forty-four years prior in 1843. As shall be seen, Woolley's story is riddled with problems, yet Joseph F. Smith nonetheless had it published by historian Andrew Jenson to further the narrative that Hyrum secretly taught polygamy (see Andrew Jenson, *The Historical Record* 6 [Salt Lake City, Utah, May 1887]: 219, 220, 231–232).

According to Woolley's distant memory, in 1843 he was bed-ridden with an illness so debilitating that he could hear friends at his bedside lamenting how he would soon surely die. He said he was "so far gone that I did not recognize any one" of them. While suffering such delirium that he could not even recognize friends, Woolley nevertheless claimed to have had an out-of-body experience in which his conscious self was rendered extraordinarily capable and transported from the upstairs sickbed to the downstairs parlor. While his physical body still lay prostrated and incoherent upstairs, Woolley's invisible spirit evidently was able to walk up behind Hyrum who was supposedly in the downstairs parlor. His spirit peeked over Hyrum's shoulder and closely inspected a document Hyrum held in his hands. Eight years after Woolley's illness, this document would finally be made public as LDS Doctrine and Covenants Section 132.

Woolley further claimed that Hyrum held and audibly read what would later be known as Section 132 to others in the parlor (including Woolley's sister-in-law, Mary). Woolley's spiritual self likewise silently read Hyrum's copy of Section 132 while peering over Hyrum's shoulder.

Forty-four years after this supposedly happened, Woolley's account was published. According to this statement, after recovering from his illness, he decided to discuss his out-of-body experience with his sister-in-law, Mary, whom he believed his spirit had also seen in the downstairs parlor at the event. According

to Woolley, Mary did not seem to know what he was talking about when he described Hyrum's Section 132 parlor reading. Woolley also bemoaned that Mary seemed "very incredulous" regarding his entire story. Nevertheless, Joseph F. Smith was so taken with Woolley's story that he had it published as official proof that Hyrum Smith secretly taught polygamy!

**Hyrum's Stand against Polygamy  
During the Last Six Months of His Life  
Diametrically Opposes Secret-Teaching Theory**

Hyrum never wavered in his fight against polygamy. It is amazing that the writers of Mormon history assert that Hyrum secretly promoted polygamy after July 12, 1843, in spite of the recorded facts that he fought that doctrine publicly and gave every indication of being honest and forthright in his battle. Some of his statements against polygamy are printed below, as well as reports by others, of his antipolygamy battle. Hyrum, as a member of the First Presidency, acted as a watchman and spokesperson in directing the priesthood in their special role of bringing charges against those who were guilty of practicing and teaching polygamy.

**Hyrum Disfellowshipped Elder Hiram P. Brown for Teaching Polygamy.** Joseph and Hyrum started the year of 1844 by fighting polygamy. By February 1, 1844, they had cut off Elder Hiram Brown from the Church for, among other things, "preaching Polygamy." They published the following announcement to Church members:

**NOTICE.**

**As we have lately been credibly informed, that an Elder of the Church of Jesus Christ, of Latter-day Saints, by the name of Hiram Brown, has been preaching Polygamy, and other false and corrupt doctrines, in the county of Lapeer, state of Michigan.**

**This is to notify him and the Church in general, that he has been cut off from the Church, for his iniquity; and he is**

**further notified to appear at the Special Conference, on the 6th of April next, to make answer to these charges.**

**JOSEPH SMITH,  
HYRUM SMITH,  
Presidents of said Church.**

*(Times and Seasons 5 [February 1, 1844]: 423)*

**Hyrum Sent a Letter Condemning Polygamy to Church Members at China Creek.** As was previously described in chapter 8, Richard Hewitt, who lived about ten miles south of Nauvoo, rode his horse to Nauvoo to meet with Joseph Smith. Since Joseph was in a meeting, Hyrum met with Hewitt and heard him report that some elders were preaching polygamy and declaring that it was being taught at Nauvoo. Hyrum immediately wrote a letter denying polygamy was being taught at Nauvoo by Church leaders. He threatened to bring before the Nauvoo Stake High Council anyone found teaching it. He also threatened to take their ministerial license from them and cut them off from the Church.

**Hyrum Preached against Polygamy at Church Conference.** The biggest question on the minds of many who attended the April 1844 Church conference was whether there was any truth to the rumors that Joseph and Hyrum and other Church leaders were practicing polygamy. Hyrum no doubt addressed those concerns when he included the following in a sermon he delivered at the conference:

**A certain good sister came to my house and she was troubled because she heard so many big things; she thought it weakened her faith. I told her she had too much faith; she believed too much; I will tell you how you may know whether the thing is true or not. When any come to you with a lie, you feel troubled; God will trouble you and will not approbate you in such belief; you had better get some antidote to get rid of it. Humble yourself before God, and ask him for his spirit; and pray to him to judge it for you. It is better not to have so much faith, than to have so much as to believe all the lies. Before this conference closes I want to get all the elders**

**together. I shall make a proclamation: I want to take the line and axe, and hew you, and make you as straight as possible; I will make you as straight as a stretched line. Every elder that goes from Nauvoo to preach the gospel, if he preach any thing else we will silence him through the public print; I want all the elders to meet and to understand, and if they teach any thing but the pure truth we will call them home.**  
*(Times and Seasons 5 [August 1, 1844]: 598)*

Many of the Saints at that conference were like the lady that Hyrum referred to—they believed too much. They believed the “big things” (the false rumors that Joseph and Hyrum were secretly practicing polygamy). Many Church members had knowledge that several of the apostles had plural wives. That made it easier for the members to believe the false rumors of Joseph and Hyrum also having plural wives.

The above account of Hyrum’s conference sermon—taken from *Times and Seasons*, August 1, 1844—was published over a month after his death. Naturally, there was no explanation that Hyrum was referencing his opposition to polygamy. After all, he was dead. Editor John Taylor—as well as the other apostles who were living in polygamy—would not have wanted to confirm Hyrum had opposed plural marriage so vehemently. With Joseph and Hyrum no longer alive to condemn its practice, polygamy escalated at Nauvoo.

**Hyrum’s Sermon against Polygamy at Church Conference Was Witnessed by Elder Levi Graybill.** Elder Levi Graybill joined the Church in 1833. He was at Kirtland, Independence, Far West, and Nauvoo. He testified that he heard President Hyrum Smith speak against polygamy at the April 1844 Church conference. Elder Graybill wrote:

**I was present at the April conference in Nauvoo in 1844. . . .**

**I was well acquainted with Joseph and Hyrum Smith, and most all of the early leaders of the Church. . . . At the conference of April, 1844, Hyrum Smith said from the stand**

**that some had been teaching spiritual wifery, which meant polygamy, and addressing the sisters he said: “If any man makes such a proposition to you, if you will put a dagger to his heart I will plead your cause in the day of judgment.”**  
(*Journal of History* 4 [January 1911]: 108)

It is the opinion of the authors that these certainly are not the words of a man who supported polygamy! Most often, when a guilty party is asked about their participation in any controversial matter, they do not talk like this. They instead use smooth words to slide out of the confrontation and change the subject. Hyrum did not equivocate, but instead confronted the issue.

**Hyrum’s Sermon against Polygamy at Seventy’s Hall Was Witnessed by Thomas A. Lyne.** In 1885 President Joseph Smith III went to Utah and there met Thomas A. Lyne. He was an actor and a member of the Church who Joseph III had known at Nauvoo before and after his father’s death. Lyne shared some very important information with Joseph III regarding what he had witnessed at Nauvoo just prior to the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum. Joseph III recorded:

**There was at Nauvoo for some two to four years during the lifetime of my father, an actor by the name of Thomas A. Lyne. He came from the East, united with the Church, and was one of a dramatic company formed in Nauvoo. . . .**

**I was very well acquainted with Thomas Lyne and entertained for him a very cordial friendship which I have reason to believe he reciprocated. I had not seen him since 1847 and had understood that he had gone East to engage in his profession. I was not aware that he was in Utah until on the 29th of June I met him on the street in Salt Lake City. We exchanged a few brief greetings, and made appointment for a later visit, at which time he came to see me, and we had a long and pleasing interview. I learned considerable of his history some of which I had not known before. Among the items of information he volunteered, the following was interesting to me.**



He was among the group of brethren who started to escort my father, Uncle Hyrum, and others to the county seat when they were summoned in arrest to answer for the destruction of the printing plant of the *Nauvoo Expositor*. He proceeded five or six miles upon the road to Carthage, when a halt was called and a division of the party ensued. Father had decided it was unnecessary for so many to go with them, and Lyne was one of those requested to return to Nauvoo. To this he strenuously objected, but his objections were overruled by Father, who beckoned him to one side and told him to return and to be especially wary, wise, and watchful, adding:

“Most probably I shall not return. I want you to live, so that you may help to correct the illusions, misunderstandings, and misstatements that will follow after my death—if I die. You will live to pass through many scenes of difficulty and danger, and you will also bear a strong testimony to the truth.”

Upon hearing this charge from Father, he consented to return. He made up his mind to keep quiet, to have little to do with the stirring events of the time, and to faithfully carry out the instructions and charge given him by Father concerning misstatements which would be made about him.

Mr. Lyne went East first for the practice of his profession, but finally drifted to Utah where for a number of years he had been engaged in theatrical affairs. He refrained from participation in the practice of polygamy and did not uphold it as a doctrine.

Among other things he told me was that three weeks before the tragedy at Carthage he had attended a meeting in Seventy's Hall, ostensibly for high priests and elders. At this meeting Uncle Hyrum was a principal speaker and there strongly denounced the theory of polygamy, or plural marriage, and its practice, stating specifically and emphatically that such a doctrine was no part or parcel of the message they had been called to preach to the world, and he earnestly warned them against it.

This disclosure on the part of Thomas Lyne considerably

surprised me, and I asked him to put it in writing or to make, in the presence of others, a restatement of that which he had given me. I told him I wished it as an aid to set my mind at rest, that his testimony could be added to that of others, since he had freely stated that he knew nothing of polygamy or plural wifery being practiced in Nauvoo before Father's death, and that what he had seen or heard of it had occurred thereafter.

We parted with the understanding on my part that he would consider the matter of this written statement and, if he found he could do so consistently, would comply with my request. I received a note from him some weeks later, stating that he had been taken ill after his visit with me, that he did not expect to live much longer, and felt that the statement I desired him to give would be of little value to me since he had been of no particular importance to the Mormon Church, was known only as an actor, and few would likely be influenced by his testimony in the matter.

He was well past his eightieth birthday at the time, he said, and would soon be called "over the river," and preferred not to get into any further trouble or arouse any fresh antagonisms. He had for a long time been fighting against untoward conditions, though doing all that lay in his power to defend the memory of my father from the unjust charges that had been made against him. He disclaimed all knowledge of there having been anything like polygamy or plural marriage in Nauvoo prior to my father's death, or of anything that could connect my father with the doctrines or institution, either in teaching or practice. He stated plainly that from his intimate acquaintance with my father's family there could have been nothing of the kind in existence without his having knowledge of it at the time.

It was not long after my last visit with Mr. Lyne that he passed on to the "Great Majority." He had been very unfairly used by the Mormons, advantage having been taken of him a number of times; but he persisted in staying with them in order, as he said, to do what he could to refute the unjust and untrue aspersions which had been placed upon

**the character and memory of his friend, Joseph Smith the Prophet.** (Mary Audentia Smith Anderson, *The Memoirs of President Joseph Smith III (1832–1914)*, 224–225)

**Hyrum’s Sermon against Polygamy at Seventy’s Hall Was Confirmed by Teacher John Taylor.** As previously mentioned in chapter 8, while visiting later in Salt Lake City, Joseph III met and conversed with John Taylor (not Apostle John Taylor). Taylor held the office of teacher in the Church at Nauvoo. This is also the same John Taylor who testified as a witness for the Reorganized Church in the Temple Lot case.

Taylor testified to Joseph III that he was present at a meeting against polygamy at the Seventy’s Hall in Nauvoo. Hyrum was the principle speaker and spoke against polygamy. Joseph III recalled:

**The statements of Thomas Lyne were called forcibly to mind during a subsequent visit to Utah when I became acquainted with Brother John Taylor, who corroborated what Mr. Lyne said about the meeting in the Seventy’s Hall. Though at that time only a teacher, he (Taylor, though not to be confused with the John Taylor who was once President of the Utah Church) gained admission to that meeting by accompanying a neighbor, a high priest, who vouched for him at the door by saying, “Brother Taylor is with me, and he is all right.” Brother Taylor’s recollection tallies exactly with that of Thomas Lyne as to the time when the meeting was held, the reason for its being held, and the denial and denunciation of the dogma of plural marriage there made by Uncle Hyrum.**

**Brother Taylor lived at a place west of Ogden. . . . He had become strongly obnoxious to the polygamous portion of the Utah people for whenever occasion permitted he vigorously and vehemently denounced their doctrines and practices in unmeasured and scathing terms. . . .**

**This John Taylor was a young man when the Saints under Father and Uncle Hyrum were camped near his father’s farm on Fishing River, in Missouri. That was the time when cholera attacked the immigrants and they were in**

**such dire straits. By a personal appeal to him Father secured the services of this young man to help care for the sick. . . . He finally became a member before the Church left Missouri.**

**This additional testimony of Uncle John Taylor, stated to me some four years after my interview with Thomas Lyne and fully corroborating the testimony of the latter in regard to Uncle Hyrum's attitude, strongly confirmed me in the position I had taken in declaring that my father had had no connection with plural marriage. (ibid., 225)**

**Hyrum Ordered the President of the Teachers' Quorum to Report Polygamists to Him.** Teacher John Taylor testified in the Temple Lot case (as a witness for the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints). Taylor joined the Church in 1832 and was with the Church in Independence, Far West, and Nauvoo. He then migrated to Utah. However, when RLDS missionaries went to Salt Lake City, he joined the Reorganized Church. Taylor testified under oath in the Temple Lot case that he and other teachers were told to report anyone practicing polygamy to the President of the Teachers' Quorum. He would then report the facts to Hyrum Smith. The full text of his testimony in this regard appears in chapter 8.

### **Eyewitness Dr. Josiah Ells's Dying Testimony Topples Important Polygamy Accusation against Hyrum**

The testimony of Dr. Josiah Ells is very important, for the Utah LDS Church has officially alleged that Dr. Ells's sister, Hannah Ells, was one of Joseph's plural wives. Joseph, of course, denied he had plural wives, and Hannah Ells never claimed to have been Joseph's wife. Yet the Utah LDS Church continues to list her as one.

Doctor Ells was one of Joseph's trusted friends, and was one of the men who accompanied Joseph and Hyrum to Carthage to surrender to civil authorities. On the way to Carthage, Dr. Ells heard a conversation between Joseph and Hyrum that made a great impression upon him. The home of Dr. Ells and his wife, Eliza, was very close to the Mansion House, and according to Josiah the two couples visited frequently.

Andrew Jenson of the Utah LDS Church published that Josiah's sister, Hannah Ells, was one of Joseph's plural wives (see Andrew Jenson, *The Historical Record* 6 [Salt Lake City, Utah, May 1887]: 234). However, Dr. Ells's dying testimony was that Joseph Smith was not a polygamist, and that those who said he was were not telling the truth. Dr. Ells died at the home of RLDS Apostle Gomer T. Griffiths. Apostle Griffiths wrote of Dr. Ells's deathbed testimony:

**Brother Ells was ordained an [RLDS] apostle in April, 1865, at Plano, Illinois, and he continued in said office for over twenty years. He prosecuted many important missions, went to England, was sent to the Utah Mission, and traveled in all the Eastern States, as well as the Central and many of the Western States.**

**During his last sickness Brother Ells told me that his family were next-door neighbors of Joseph the Prophet, and that they were very intimate with each other, visiting back and forth almost every day among the families, and he himself was closely associated with the Seer in Church affairs. "He [Joseph] came into my house very often, and I visited him in his house. Therefore, do you suppose if he taught and practiced polygamy that my family and I would not have discovered it?" said Brother Ells. He told me time and again that there was not a word of truth in the statement made by the Utah people that Joseph Smith was the author of polygamy and that Emma Smith knew it to be a fact.**

**Brother Ells was one of the brethren who accompanied the party consisting of the Seer, his brother Hyrum, and a few others, to Carthage. The heat being intense, the party stopped at a well by the roadside for a cool drink of water. On his deathbed, he told me of the following conversation between the Prophet and his brother [Hyrum]. The Seer said, "We must go and lay our heads on the sod, or they will go into the city and murder the women and children," adding that it would not be necessary for his brother Hyrum to die and for him to return to the city. But Hyrum answered him, "But I must die, for the mob will not be satisfied until they**

**shed my blood. Brother Joseph, if you die I will die, too. I am going with you, and if they kill you they will have to kill me.” Brother Ells returned to the city [of Nauvoo] that same day and it was the last time he saw the two brothers alive, whom he loved so dearly. (*The Saints’ Herald* 68 [August 2, 1921]: 738–739)**

Brother Ells’s statement above “that there was not a word of truth in the statement made by the Utah people that Joseph Smith was the author of polygamy and that Emma Smith knew it to be a fact” exonerates Hyrum Smith. If Joseph and Emma were not involved in polygamy, neither was Hyrum.

### Summary

The contrast is wide between the original Church’s published 1844 accounts of Hyrum’s brave, fearless fight against polygamy, and the Utah LDS Church’s version of history. Their records omit and discount many original records and instead show a bias toward promoting only those statements that accuse Hyrum of practicing polygamy and teaching it in secret. Fortunately, valuable documents still exist in the files of the *Times and Seasons*, the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, and other sources that establish the fact that Hyrum openly fought against polygamy as long as he lived.

While rightly portraying Hyrum as a strong, forthright, brave man on all other matters, the Utah LDS Church portrays him as weak, secretive, and cowardly when it comes to the subject of polygamy. Their cowardly version of him does not fit with everything else about Hyrum that we know. The most logical explanation for this glaring incongruity is that their polygamous version of him is false.

The truth-seeking scholar may rightly conclude that Hyrum Smith did not teach polygamy in public, nor in secret!

The Utah LDS Church has depicted Joseph and Hyrum Smith as lying predators who exploited other men’s wives and even their under-age daughters. But Joseph (when summoned to Carthage to face that prejudiced court) said, “We must go and lay our heads on the sod, or they will go into the city and murder the women and children.” Those are not the words of a self-absorbed predator, nor of an immoral man who corrupted women and abused children!