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Transformation of Charisma in the Mormon Church:
A History of the Office of Presiding Patriarch,
1833-1979.

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by

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as "Second Elder." And the only instance of Hyrum being overruled by Joseph was in the case of plural marriage. As late as May 1843 Hyrum was not privy to any official, if secret, disclosures about plural marriage. When he became aware of rumors about the practice he preached against it by stating, "If an angel from heaven should come and preach such doctrine [you] would be sure to see his cloven foot and cloud of blackness over his head."⁴⁶ The Prophet was disturbed by Hyrum's remarks and the following Sunday he issued a rebuttal, referring to the doctrine--however obliquely--in public for the first time. Hyrum was troubled and vowed to trap Brigham Young by confronting him with his own involvement. Instead, Brigham Young convinced Hyrum that it was indeed a revelation from God. Hyrum "went to Joseph and told him what he had learned, and renewed his covenant with Joseph, and they went heart and hand together while they lived. . ."⁴⁷ And it was Hyrum who insisted that the revelation on eternal and plural marriage be put in writing.⁴⁸ Yet when Hyrum took it upon

⁴⁶Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question." Unpublished Master's Thesis (BYU, 1981) p.57. The expose concerning John C. Bennett's sexual misconduct had alerted Hyrum to the practice and led him, along with William Law and William Marks, to initiate "a crusade to purify Nauvoo of all such immoralities." Ehat, pp.46-47.

⁴⁷Ehat, p.59. Hyrum had two wives sealed to him in August, 1843, Catherine P. Smith and Mercy Thompson. See Danel Bachman, "Mormon Plural Marriages Before the Death of Joseph Smith." M.A. Thesis (Purdue University, 1975).

⁴⁸Ehat, p.71. As late as May 24, 1845, in The Prophet, a Mormon newspaper in New York, church leaders were issuing public denials of the practice of polygamy.

emerge later.

Wilford Woodruff wrote to Brigham Young in October, 1844, complaining that William, along with others on a mission in the East, had been "crowding their spiritual wife claims. . . until some of the strongest pillars were shaking. . . ." ⁸² (William Smith and George Adams had been advocating plural marriage indiscriminately during their stay in the East, and it had caused some disaffection among the Saints). Yet appreciation was expressed also. Parley P. Pratt, just three months later in New York, wrote in the January 14, 1845 issue of The Prophet, "I highly approve of the course pursued by Elder Wm. Smith and the presiding officers in general in this region. . they have preserved the church in union by the aid of the Spirit of God." ⁸³ Almost nine months later Parley would object to William being sustained as Patriarch because of his conduct in the East. One can only conjecture about the basis for the change in Parley P. Pratt's publicly-stated rosy view of William's activities there. Just two weeks

lack of delicacy typical of their environment.

⁸²Wilford Woodruff to Brigham Young, Boston, 9 and 14 October, 1844, Manuscript History of the Church, LDS Church Archives. Woodruff includes George Adams and Samuel Brannan in his complaint. Brannan had preferred a charge of slander against Elder John Hardy in Boston, for saying they had been "engaged in the spiritual wife business." Woodruff advised them to let the matter alone. The secrecy surrounding the practice of plural marriage led to many such problems.

⁸³Parley P. Pratt, The Prophet, January 18, 1845. New York Public Library Newspaper Collection.