

EXAMINING *the* FIRST VISION

The Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards made this statement:

On the morning of a beautiful spring day in 1820 there occurred one of the **most important** and momentous events in this world's history. **God, the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph Smith** and gave instructions concerning the establishment of the kingdom of God upon the earth in these latter days. (*A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, 1966, page 7)

Joseph Smith published this story in the Mormon publication, *Times and Seasons*, in 1842. The following is the description of the vision as written by Joseph Smith:

... there was in the place where we lived an **unusual excitement** on the subject of religion. It commenced with the Methodists, but soon became general among all the sects in that region of country, indeed the whole district of country seemed affected by it, and **great multitudes** united themselves to the different religious parties, ... I retired to the woods ... It was on the morning of a beautiful clear day, early in the spring of eighteen hundred and twenty ... I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, ... When the light rested upon me I saw **two personages** (whose brightness and glory defy all description) standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said, (pointing to the other) "This is my beloved Son, hear him."

... I asked the personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right, ... I was answered that I must join **none** of them, for **they are all wrong**, and the personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt, ... He again forbade me to join with any of them: and many other things did he say unto me which I cannot write at this time. (*Times and Seasons*, vol. 3, pages 727-728, 748-749)

To the Mormon people the First Vision is extremely important. They use this story to prove that God and Christ are two distinct personages and that they both have a body. In other words, they use it to prove that God, Himself, is only an exalted man. George Q. Cannon, who was a member of the First Presidency, made this statement in 1883:

This revelation dissipated all misconceptions and all false ideas, ... The Father came accompanied by the Son thus showing that there were two personages of the Godhead, ... Joseph saw that the Father had a form; that He had a head; that He had arms; that He had limbs; and He had feet; that He had a face and a tongue ... (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 24, page 372)

STRANGE ACCOUNTS

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe made this comment concerning Joseph Smith's First Vision:

The First Vision of 1820 is of first importance in the history of Joseph Smith. **Upon its reality rest the truth and value of his subsequent work.**

Professed enemies of Joseph Smith and his work, have felt themselves **helpless in their efforts** to destroy the reality of the First Vision and have said little about it. (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, page 19)

For years the Mormon leaders have publicly maintained the Joseph Smith told only one story concerning the First Vision. Preston Nibley made this statement: "Joseph Smith lived a little more than twenty-four years after this first vision. During this time **he told but one story**—..." (*Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 1944, page 30).

At the very time that Preston Nibley made this statement the Mormon leaders were suppressing at least two accounts of the First Vision, which were written prior to the account which Joseph Smith published in the *Times and Seasons*.

Levi Edgar Young, who was the head of the Seven Presidents of Seventies in the Mormon Church, told LaMar Petersen that he had examined a "strange" account of the First Vision and was told not to reveal what it contained.

After hearing LaMar Petersen's account of his interview with Levi Edgar Young, we wrote to Joseph Fielding Smith, the Mormon Church Historian, enclosing \$1.00 and asking for a photocopy of this "strange" account. Unfortunately, this letter was never answered, and we had almost given up hope of ever seeing this document. To our great surprise, however, two "strange" accounts have now come to light. The first appeared in the thesis, "An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith's Early Visions," by Paul R. Cheesman. Mr. Cheesman was a student at the Brigham Young University—a Mormon university. He evidently wrote his thesis in rebuttal to statements we had made concerning the First Vision in our writings. Although he tries to support the First Vision story, he has reproduced a document dictated by Joseph Smith himself which not only proves that he did not see the Father and the Son in 1820, but also casts a shadow of doubt upon his entire story of the origin of the church. This document was reproduced in Appendix D of Mr. Cheesman's thesis.

James B. Allen, Associate Professor of History at Brigham Young University, made this statement concerning the document:

One of the most significant documents of the period yet discovered was brought to light in 1965 by Paul R. Cheesman, a graduate student at Brigham Young University. **This is a handwritten manuscript apparently composed about 1833 and either written or dictated by Joseph Smith.** It contains an account
(Continued on page 2)

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of the early experiences of the Mormon prophet and includes the story of the **first vision**. While the story **varies** in some details from the version presently accepted, enough is there to indicate that at least as early as 1833 Joseph Smith contemplated writing and perhaps publishing it. The manuscript has apparently lain in the L.D.S. Church Historian's office for many years, and yet few if any who saw it realized its profound historical significance. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn, 1966, page 35)

The "strange" account of the vision reads as follows:

... a pillar of light above the brightness of the sun at noon day come down from above and rested upon me and I was filled with the Spirit of god and the Lord opened the heavens upon me and **I saw the Lord** and he spake unto me saying Joseph my son Thy Sins are forgiven thee, go thy way walk in my statutes and keep my commandments behold I am the Lord of glory I was **crucified for the world**, that all those who believe on my name may have Eternal life behold he won't lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it was written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father ... ("An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith's Early Visions," Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, by Paul R. Cheesman, May, 1965, page 129)

Notice that in this account Joseph Smith said, "I saw the Lord," whereas in the printed account he said, "I saw two personages." This is definitely a contradiction. In the first account Joseph Smith told that the Lord said he was "crucified for the world." This would mean that the personage was Jesus Christ. Therefore, we see that Joseph Smith did not include God the Father in his first account of the vision. James B. Allen stated:

In this story, only one personage was mentioned, and this was obviously the Son, for he spoke of having been crucified. (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn 1966, page 40)

Paul R. Cheesman tries to excuse this by saying:

As he writes briefly of the vision, he does not mention the Father as being present; however, this **does not indicate that he was not present**. ("An Analysis of the Accounts Relating Joseph Smith's Early Visions," page 63)

This explanation by Paul Cheesman does not seem reasonable. Actually, in the first account Joseph Smith quotes the Lord as saying more words than in the printed account. Why would he not mention the most important part of the story?

If God the Father had appeared in this vision, Joseph Smith certainly would have included this information in his first account. It is absolutely impossible for us to believe that Joseph Smith would not have mentioned the Father if He had actually appeared.

The only reasonable explanation for the Father not being mentioned is that Joseph Smith did not see God the Father, and that he made up this part of the story after he dictated the first manuscript. This, of course, throws a shadow of doubt upon the whole story.

Although Mr. Cheesman evidently wrote his thesis in defense of Joseph Smith's story of the First Vision, by including the "strange" account he has probably done more to destroy the story than he could ever imagine. It not only shows that Joseph Smith was a deceiver, but it also shows that the Mormon leaders have been suppressing vital information from their people.

After this "strange" account came to light, a Mormon Seminary teacher told us that there was still another account of the First Vision which the Mormon leaders were suppressing. To our great surprise, this second account was published in the Autumn, 1966, issue of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*. Although this magazine is published by Mormons, it has "no official connection" with the Mormon Church, and therefore the Mormon leaders cannot dictate what can or cannot appear in this publication. This account appeared in an article by James B. Allen, Associate Professor of History at the BYU, and bishop of the BYU Sixteenth Ward. Mr. Allen made this statement concerning the document:

Another document of almost equal importance has recently been brought to light by a member of the staff at the Church Historian's office. It is located in the back of Book A-1 of the handwritten manuscript of the History of the Church (commonly referred to as the "Manuscript History") . . . In short, it is almost certain that the document in the back of the book comprises the original notes from which the "Manuscript History" was later compiled, and is actually a daily account of Joseph Smith's activities in 1835, as recorded by a scribe. The importance of the manuscript here lies in the fact that the scribe wrote down what Joseph Smith said to his visitor, and he began . . . with an account of the first vision. Again, the details of the story vary somewhat from the accepted version, . . . (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn, 1966, pages 35-36)

On page 40 of the same article, James B. Allen quotes from the document:

Being wrought up in my mind respecting the subject of Religion, and looking at the different systems taught the children of men, I knew not who was right or who was wrong but considered it of the first importance to me that I should be right in matters of so much moment, matter involving eternal consequences. Being thus perplexed in mind **I retired to the silent grove** and there bowed before the Lord, under a realising sense (if the Bible be true) ask and you shall receive, knock and it shall be opened, seek and you shall find, and again if any man lack wisdom, let of God [*sic*] who giveth to all men liberally & upbraideth not. Information was what I most desired, at this time and with a fixed determination to obtain it. **I called on the Lord** for the first time in the place above stated, or in other words, I made a fruitless attempt to pray My tongue seemed to be swollen in my mouth, so that I could not utter, I heard a noise behind me like some one walking towards me, I strove again to pray, but could not; the noise of walking seemed to draw nearer; I sprang upon my feet and looked around, but I saw no person, or thing that was calculated to produce the noise of walking. I kneeled again, my mouth was opened and my tongue loosed; I called on the Lord in mighty prayer. A pillar of fire appeared above my head; which presently rested down upon me, and filled me with unspeakable joy. **A personage appeared** in the midst of this pillar of flame, which was spread all around and yet nothing consumed. **Another personage soon appeared** like unto the first; he said unto me thy sins are forgiven thee. **He testified also unto me that Jesus Christ is the son of God. I saw many angels in this vision.** (*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Autumn, 1966, pages 40-41)

Earl E. Olson, who is now the Assistant Church Historian, has confirmed the fact that James B. Allen has accurately reproduced this document. In a letter dated October 26, 1966, he stated:

The quote which you referred to in your letter of October 21 pertaining to Joseph Smith's first vision which is recorded in Book A-1 of the Documentary History appears in the issue of *Dialogue* on page 40. We have compared the account in *Dialogue* with the original recording as we have it here and find that it is **identical word for word and has been accurately copied**. (Letter from Earl Olson, to W. P. Walters, dated October 26, 1966)

In this account of the First Vision there is absolutely nothing to show that the personages were God and Christ. The statement, "He testified also unto me that Jesus Christ is the son of God," would seem to show that the personages were not the Father and the Son. If Joseph Smith had intended to show that the personage who spoke was Jesus, he probably would have said something like this: "He testified also unto me that He was the Son of God." On the other hand, if he would probably have said something like this: "He testified also unto me that Jesus Christ was His Son."

Joseph Smith's statement that the second personage did not appear until after the first contradicts the version that he later published. In the published version he stated that "when the light rested upon me I saw two personages, . . ."

As if this was not bad enough, he states there were "many angels in this vision." Neither of the other versions indicated that there were "many angels."

Now we have three different accounts of the First Vision, and every one of them is different. The first account says there was only one personage. The second account says there were many, and the third says there were two. We would, of course, expect some variations in any story told more than once, but we feel that there are so many variations in Joseph Smith's story and they are of such a nature that they make it impossible to believe.

NO REVIVAL IN 1820

In Joseph Smith's published account of the First Vision he tells that a revival was taking place in his neighborhood at the time he had his vision. This would mean that the revival was going strong in the spring of 1820. Joseph Smith states that "great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties" at the time of this revival. The Mormon writer Preston Nibley stated that there are "several accounts of the religious revival which took place at Palmyra in the spring of 1820" (*Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 1944, page 21). We have checked the references which Preston Nibley gives and have found them to be spurious (see *The Case Against Mormonism*, page 111-112). Mr. Nibley gives two references from a publication which are supposed to refer to the 1820 revival. We have found, however, that these references do not refer to a revival in 1820, but rather to one in the years 1824-25. These references have been found in the *Wayne Sentinel* under the date of March 2, 1825.

In briefly looking over the *Palmyra Register* (the local newspaper) we have found no evidence of a revival in Palmyra in 1820.

Wesley P. Walters, of Marissa, Illinois, whom we consider to be one of the best authorities on Mormon history, had made a very thorough study of the revivals in Palmyra and vicinity and has come to the conclusion that there was absolutely no revival in 1820. In a letter to us dated July 6, 1966, Wesley P. Walters states:

In the light of the historical records of the day, it is clear to see that there was **no revival** in either **Palmyra** or in its immediate neighborhood in the year **1820**, in either the Methodist, Baptist or Presbyterian churches. To maintain such an idea is to fly in the face of every piece of contemporary historical information. In fact, Smith could hardly have chosen a poorer year in which to locate his revival story. **All the churches in all the denominations seem to have been in a slump and barely struggling to maintain their existence.**

Wesley Walters has written an article entitled, "New Light on Mormon Origins From the Palmyra (N.Y.) Revival." This article will be published in the near future. Mr. Walters has kindly given us permission to quote from his manuscript. In this manuscript he states:

. . . the point at which one might most conclusively test the accuracy of Smith's story has never been adequately explored. A vision, by its inward, personal nature, does not lend itself to historical investigation. A revival is a different matter, especially one such as Joseph Smith describes, in which "great multitudes" were said to have joined the various churches involved. Such a revival does not pass from the scene without leaving some traces in the records and publications of the period. In this study we wish to show by contemporary records that the revival, which Smith claimed occurred in 1820, did not really occur until the **fall of 1824**. We also show that in 1820 there was no revival in any of the churches in Palmyra or its vicinity. In short, our investigation shows that the statement of Joseph Smith, Jr. can not be true when he claims that he was stirred up by an 1820 revival to make his inquiry in the grove near his home. ("New Light On Mormon Origins . . ." typed copy, pages 1-2)

The Mormon historian B. H. Roberts claimed that both Rev. Stockton and Rev. Lane were present at the revival, which he claims occurred in the spring of 1820:

In the spring of 1820 the ministers of the several churches in and about Palmyra decided upon a "union revival," in order to "convert the unconverted." . . . the Reverend Mr. Stockton of the Presbyterian church was the leading spirit . . . The Reverend Mr. Lane of the Methodist church preached a sermon on the subject, "What church shall I join?" He quoted the golden text of James— . . . The text made a deep impression on the mind of the Prophet. (*A Comprehensive History of the Church*, 1930, vol. 1, pages 51-53)

Wesley Walters, however, shows this could not have occurred in 1820:

The records, however of both the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, to which Mr. Stockton and Mr. Lane respectively belonged, make it clear that **neither of these men were assigned to the Palmyra area until 1824**. Rev. Benjamin B. Stockton from March 4, 1818 until June 30, 1822 was serving as pastor of the church at Skaneateles, N.Y. While he did visit Palmyra for a speech

to the youth missionary society in October 1822, the Palmyra newspaper still describes him as "Rev. Stockton of Skaneateles." The earliest contemporary reference to his ministering in the Palmyra area is in connection with a wedding November 26, 1823, just a week after Alvin Smith's death. Following this date there are several references to his performing some service there, but he was not installed as pastor of the Presbyterian Church until February 18, 1824. It is in this latter year, 1824, that Rev. James Hotchkiss, in cataloging the revivals that occurred in the churches of Geneva Presbytery, writes, under the heading of the Palmyra church, that a "copious shower of grace passed over this region in 1824, under the labors of Mr. Stockton, and a large number were gathered into the church, some of whom are now pillars in Christ's house."

In the summer of 1819 Rev. Mr. Lane, whom Mormon writers have correctly identified as Rev. George Lane, was assigned to serve the Susquehanna District in central Pennsylvania, over 150 miles from Palmyra. He served this area for 5 years and **not until July of 1824 did he receive an appointment to serve as Presiding Elder of the Ontario District in which Palmyra is located**. This post he held only until January of 1825 when ill health in his family forced him to leave the ministry for a while. Any revival, therefore, in **which both Lane and Stockton shared**, as the accounts of Oliver Cowdery and William Smith both indicate, has to fall in the **latter half of the year 1824**, and not in the year 1820.

An even more surprising confirmation that this revival occurred in 1824 and not in 1820 has just recently come to light. While searching through some dusty volumes of early Methodist literature at a near-by Methodist college, imagine our surprise and elation when we stumbled upon **Rev. George Lane's own personal account of the Palmyra revival**. It was written, not at some years distance from the event as the Mormon accounts all were, but while the revival was still in progress and was printed a few months later. Lane's account gives us not only the year 1824, but even the month and date. By the aid of this account, supplemented by numerous additional references which we shortly thereafter uncovered, we are able to give nearly a month-by-month progress report on the spread of the revival through the community and surrounding area, and it was indeed an outstanding revival. ("New Light On Mormon Origins From The Palmyra (N.Y.) Revival," typed copy, pages 4-5)

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe maintained the Palmyra was "swept in the winter and spring of 1820 by a religious revival" (*Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, page 1). He claimed that Reverend Lane took part in this revival. On page 22 of this book he stated that Oliver Cowdery "in his letters confirms the story of Reverend Lane and the **date of his work in Palmyra**."

Actually, Oliver Cowdery did not confirm the date as 1820. Instead he insisted that the correct date should be "1823" (see his letter in the *Messenger and Advocate*, vol. 1, page 78). In footnote 10 on page 22 of his book, *Joseph Smith—Seeker After Truth*, John A. Widtsoe stated:

Reverend Lane himself confirms the dates of the revival. **It was in 1820, not 1823.**

Notice that John A. Widtsoe gives no source for this statement. When Wesley P. Walters wrote the LDS Church Historian's office asking for documentation of the Apostle Widtsoe's statement, he received a letter from Lauritz G. Petersen, Assistant Librarian. In this letter Lauritz Petersen stated:

The letter that you sent to Mr. Earl Olson was handed to me to answer. I checked all the footnotes or found the footno[t]es for Mr. Widtsoe's book on Joseph Smith.

The reference made by Mr. Widtsoe on page 22 in n. 10 **could not be verified. I asked Mr. Widtsoe not to insert it in the book, but he did anyway.** (Letter from Lauritz G. Petersen, Assistant Church Librarian, to Wesley P. Walters, dated December 7, 1824)

From this it would appear that the Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe used deception in order to try to prove that the revival occurred in 1820.

Wesley P. Walters shows beyond any question that the revival did not start until 1824:

By September 1825 the results of the revival of Palmyra had become a matter of record. The Presbyterian church reported 99 admitted on examination and the Baptist had received 94 by baptism, while the Methodist circuit showed an increase of 208. Cowdery's claim of "large additions" and Joseph Smith's statement that "great multitudes united themselves to the different religious parties" was certainly no over-statement.

When we turn to the year 1820, however, the “great multitudes” are conspicuously missing. The Presbyterian Church in Palmyra certainly experienced no awakening that year. Rev. James Hotchkin’s history records revivals for the church as occurring in the years 1817, 1824, 1829, etc, but **nothing for the year 1820**. The records of Presbytery and Synod give the same picture. Early in February 1820 Presbtery reported revivals at Geneva (summer 1819), and Junius 1st and Cayuga (“lately”) all a considerable distance from Palmyra, with “prospects of a revival” at Canandaigua and Phelps, 15 and 25 miles distant. While the “effects” of these revivals were reported in September 1820 as continuing, the remainder of that year and the next showed “no distinct mention of a revival,” “no special revival in any of our congregations,” “no general revivals of religion during the year.” Since these reports always rejoice at any sign of a revival in the churches, it is inconceivable that a great awakening had occurred in their Palmyra congregation and gone completely unnoticed.

The Baptist Church records also show clearly that they had no revival in 1820, for the Palmyra congregation gained only 5 by baptism, while the neighboring Baptist churches of Lyons, Canandaigua and Farmington showed net losses of 4, 5 and 9 respectively. An examination of the figures for the years preceding and following 1820 yields the same picture of no revival so far as the Baptist Church of the area is concerned.

The Methodist figures, though referring to the entire circuit, give the same results, for they show **net losses** of 23 for 1819, 6 for 1820, and 40 for 1821. This hardly fits Joseph Smith’s description of “great multitudes” being added to the churches of the area. In fact the Mormon Prophet could hardly have picked a poorer year in which to place his revival, so far as the Methodists were concerned. . . .

Another significant omission lies in the area of the religious press. The denominational magazines of that day were full of reports of revivals, some even devoting a separate section to it. These publications carried over a dozen glowing reports of the revival that broke out at Palmyra in the winter of 1816-1817. Likewise, the 1824-1825 revivals is covered in an equal number of reports. These same magazines, however, while busily engaged in reporting revivals during the 1819 to 1821 period, **contain not a single mention of any revival occurring in the Palmyra area during that time**. It is unbelievable that every one of the denominations affected by a revival such as Joseph Smith described as happening in 1820 could have completely overlooked the event. **The only reasonable explanation for this massive silence is that no revival occurred at Palmyra in 1820.**

. . . We believe that the firmness of the revival date as the fall of 1824, the features of Smith’s story as fitting only that date, and the absence of any revival in the year 1820 are established beyond any reasonable doubt, and will force upon Mormon writers a drastic re-evaluation of the foundation of their church. (“New Light on Mormon Origins From the Palmyra (N.Y.) Revival,” typed copy, pages 8-10 and 15)

In a summary to his study, Wesley P. Walters stated:

Shall we suppose that Prophet Smith really had a vision as he claimed but that his mind had merely become fuzzy on the date of the happening? Since the revival is a matter of historical record and that date can’t be changed, will it help any to move Smith’s vision to the spring of 1825 instead of the spring of 1820? We believe not. Smith claimed that he was told about the Book of Mormon plates September 21, 1823. This was his second vision. If we move his first vision to the spring of 1825, however, then he would already know about the plates before he ever asked for heavenly guidance. The only way, then, to make his story hang together would be to reshuffle all of his dates. This, however, would complete[ly] change the character of his story. Instead of being the naive boy of 14, he would in 1825 be a young man of 19 who in less than a year and a half will find himself a married man. Such a change would only emphasize more clearly that he must have made his story up out of whole cloth.

Joseph made his great mistake when he tried to alter the course of history by moving a whole revival back some 4 years. This defect places his entire movement upon a crumbling foundation. For our part we agree that “life is too short to follow something false, when we can follow what is true” (Richard Evans). We urge all to find in Christ alone “the way, the truth and the life.”

In *The Case Against Mormonism* we devote 43 pages to Joseph Smith’s First Vision. All of our readers should have a copy of this book. See the front page for further information.

A PERSONAL GOD?

To all those who will send us their address and zip code we will send a FREE COPY of *Is There a Personal God?* This is a 56-page pamphlet by Jerald Tanner.

FRAUDULENT ACTS

The Mormon Apostle John A. Widtsoe made this statement concerning Joseph Smith:

No reliable evidence of dishonesty has yet been uncovered. There is no evidence that he at any time attempted to escape his financial obligations. Instead, the evidence is that he sought to meet every honest obligation. For example, after leaving Kirtland where his life was in jeopardy, he made a list of his creditors and the amount the owed each. That was the method of an honest man. There was no subterfuge. . . . Sooner or later, his honest debts were paid. (*Gospel Interpretations*, page 141)

Now, while it is true that Joseph Smith made a list of his creditors, he apparently did not intend to pay them, for in 1842 he tried to take out bankruptcy. The Mormon writer John A. Stewart states:

In summer of 1842 he had reluctantly availed himself of the bankruptcy law passed by Congress, to dispose of a staggering debt load, . . . (*Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet*, page 183)

Shortly after Joseph Smith petitioned to be declared a bankrupt, John C. Bennett published his book, *History of the Saints*. In this book he charged that Joseph Smith fraudulently transferred some of his property to others to avoid losing it. J. Butterfield, United States Attorney for the District of Illinois, saw John C. Bennett’s charges printed in the *Sangamo Journal* on July 15, 1842. He felt that an investigation should be made to see if Bennett’s accusations were true. Joseph Smith and four others had signed a promissory note to the United States Government for \$4,866.38 in 1840 which they had not paid off. Therefore, Butterfield proceeded to Nauvoo to make his investigation. After making the investigation, he wrote a letter to C. B. Penrose, Solicitor of the Treasury, in which he stated:

Upon my arrival at Nauvoo I made a very full examination into the transfers of property made by Joseph Smith upon the eve of his application for the benefit of the said act, and I succeeded **beyond my expectations**; I found that after the passage of the Bankrupt Act, and after he had contracted the debt upon which the judg’t. in favor of the United States was rendered against him, he made voluntary conveyances of real estate of an amount much more than sufficient to satisfy the judgement to **his wife** and to his **infant children** and friends, without any consideration whatever: I found that all the statement made by Gen’l. Bennett in relation to **Joseph Smith’s fraudulent transfers of his property were true**; and that there were **several other fraudulent conveyances** not mentioned by him. . . . I shall be ready to establish **such fraudulent acts on the part of Joseph Smith** as will prevent his discharge. (Letter by J. Butterfield, U.S. Attorney for the District of Illinois to C. B. Penrose, Solicitor of the Treasury, dated October 13, 1842, found in the National Archives of the United States, Records of the Solicitor of the Treasury, Record Group 206, microfilm copy)

The attempt to stop Joseph Smith was successful, for on August 6, 1844, Butterfield wrote Penrose a letter in which he stated: “I defeated Joseph Smith the Mormon Prophet from obtaining the benefit of the Bankrupt Act.” Since Smith died in 1844, the matter was not settled until after his death. In a “Reference Service Report” from the National Archives, dated September 23, 1963, we find that a judgment “was rendered against the widow of Joseph Smith and 104 other defendants . . . in which the decree of the court was satisfied by sale of the defendant’s lands.”

For many years anti-Mormon writers have accused the early Mormon leaders of fraud, treason, stealing, counterfeiting, murder and many other crimes. We have made a very thorough study of these charges, and, like Butterfield, we have succeeded beyond our expectations. In our work, *The Mormon Kingdom* we will deal with all of these subjects. See the front page for further information concerning this work.

Everyone Welcome!

We are now holding a Bible study in our home at 1350 S. West Temple, every Thursday evening at 8:00 pm. Everyone is welcome. This is not connected with any particular group or church. Attendance is open to everyone.