

The Book Brigham Young Tried to Destroy

In the October, 1845 Conference of the Mormon Church, Lucy Smith announced that she had finished writing her book concerning the history of her son Joseph Smith. In 1853 Orson Pratt (the Mormon Apostle) published this book in England. In 1854 the Mormon newspaper, the *Deseret News*, recommended Lucy Smith's book, *Joseph Smith the Prophet*:

Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith, the Prophet, and his Progenitors for Many Generations: by Lucy Smith, mother of the Prophet.

This new and highly interesting work **should be possessed by all saints** who feel in the least degree interested with the history of the latter day work. Many facts which it contains, and never before published, are of great importance to the world, and the work constitutes a valuable acquisition to the libraries of the saints. (*Deseret News*, November 16, 1854)

By the year 1865, however, Brigham Young (the second President of the Mormon Church) was trying to suppress the use of this book by the Mormon people:

The President then made some remarks on the book entitled "Joseph Smith and his Progenitors," requesting those **who had copies to let him have them**, and receive value for them if they desired it. (*Deseret News*, June 21, 1865)

In the *Millennial Star* for October 21, 1965, Lucy Smith's book was severely condemned by the First Presidency of the Mormon Church:

Happening lately, while on a preaching trip to Cache Valley, to pick up a book which was lying on a table in the house where we were stopping, we were surprised to find that it was the book bearing the title, on the outside, of "Joseph Smith, the Prophet;" . . . Our surprise at finding a copy of this work may be accounted for, by the fact of our having advertized some time ago that the book was incorrect, and that it should be **gathered up and destroyed, so that no copies should be left**; and, from this, we had supposed that not a single copy could be found in any of the houses of the Saints.

. . . It is sufficient to say that it is utterly unreliable as a history, as it contains many **falsehoods** and mistakes. We do not wish such a book to be lying on our shelves, . . . we, therefore, expect . . . every one in the Church, male and female, if they have such a book, **to dispose of it** so that it will never be read by any person again. If they do not, the responsibility of the evil results that may accrue from keeping it will rest upon them and not upon us.

Many of the Saints may not know that the book is inaccurate; but those who have been instructed respecting its character, and will still keep it on their tables, and have it in their houses as a valid and authentic history for their children to read, need **rebuke**. It is transmitting **lies to posterity** to take such a course, and we know that the **curse of God** will rest upon every one, after he comes to the knowledge of what is here said, who keeps these books, for his children to learn and believe in lies.

We wish those who have these books to either hand them to their Bishops for them to be conveyed to the President's or Historian's Office, or send them themselves, **that they may be disposed of**; and they will please write their names in the books, with the name of the place where they reside, and if they wish to hand them over without pay in return, state so; and if they wish to get pay for them, state whether they desire it applied on Tithing, or wish the value returned in other books. (*Millennial Star*, vol. 27, pages 657-658)

After Brigham Young ordered the first edition of Lucy Smith's book to be destroyed, he decided to change it and put out another edition. Joseph F. Smith stated:

Subsequently, a committee of revision was appointed by President Young consisting of President George A. Smith and Judge Elias Smith, cousins of the Prophet, men personally familiar with the family and thoroughly conversant with Church history. They were instructed carefully to **revise** and correct the original work throughout, which they did, reporting their labors to President Young to his entire satisfaction. (*History of Joseph Smith by his Mother*, 1954 edition, Introduction)

Elias Smith, who was a member of the "committee of revision" wrote the following in his journal under the date of May 2, 1866:

Wednesday 2 got through with the session of court today as soon as I could and the remainder of the day or some part of it I spent at the Historian's office assisting George A. Smith—Church Historian—in the revision of a book written by Lucy Smith mother of the Prophet Joseph and by some mistake misunderstanding or other consideration published in England in [blank space] as the history of "Joseph the Prophet" which was [word illegible] suppressed by the "First Presidency," in consequence of certain errors that had been in [word illegible] in the work. It has been resolved by President Young to revise and republish it and my services have been solicited in the revision of the book or manuscript (Journal of Elias Smith, microfilm copy at the Utah State Historical Society)

When Brigham Young told the "committee of revision" to "revise and correct" this book, he did not mean to put in footnotes where there was an error (as any honest historian would do) but rather to make actual changes in the text.

In comparing the first edition of Lucy Smith's history (that is the edition Brigham Young tried to destroy) with the edition printed in 1954, we have found that 436 words have been added 1,379 words have been deleted and 220 words have been changed. This is a total of 2,035 words

(Continued on page 2)

No time for God?
What fools we are, to clutter up
Our lives with common things
And leave without heart's gate
The Lord of life and Life itself—
Our God.

—Norman L. Trott

❖ NEW BOOK ❖

Joseph Smith's History, by his mother. This is a photo reprint of the original 1853 edition (the book Brigham Young tried to destroy). Contains a 15-page introduction by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. This introduction explains how the book was suppressed by Brigham Young, and also how the Mormon leaders changed it in later editions. Plastic binding. PRICE: \$4.00 — 2 for \$7.00 — 5 for \$15.00 — 10 for \$24.00. ***Senate Document 189***. Photo reprint of the "testimony given before the judge of the fifth judicial circuit of the State of Missouri on the trial of Joseph Smith, Jr., and others for high treason, and other crimes against that State." Gives very interesting testimony on the Danite band. Very revealing. Plastic binding. PRICE: \$1.50 — 3 for \$4.00 — 5 for \$6.00 — 10 for \$9.00. ***Mormonism Exposed, Being a Journal of a Residence in Missouri from the 28th of May to the 20th of August, 1838***, by William Swartzell. Photo reprint of the original 1840 edition. Plastic binding. PRICE: \$1.50 — 3 for \$4.00 — 5 for \$6.00 — 10 for \$9.00.

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added, deleted or changed without any indication. In addition, 736 words have been deleted with the omissions properly indicated.

On page 101 of the first edition Lucy Smith described the Urim and Thummim:

I knew not what he meant, but took the article of which he spoke into my hands, and **upon examination, found that it consisted of two smooth three-cornered diamonds set in glass, and the glass were set in silver bows, which were connected with each other in much the same way as old fashioned spectacles.** He took **them** again and left me, . . .

In the 1954 reprint (page 104) her description of the Urim and Thummim has been deleted:

I knew not what he meant, but took the article of which he spoke into my hands and examined it. He took **it** again and left me, . . .

On page 107 of her book Mrs. Smith stated that she could see the glistening metal of the breast-plate; in the 1954 edition of this book this statement has been removed. She also makes a statement concerning the value of the breast-plate which has been deleted.

On page 225 of the first edition Lucy Smith stated:

Here I shall introduce a brief history of our troubles in Missouri, given by my son Hyrum, before the Municipal Court, at Nauvoo, June 30, 1843, **when Joseph was tried for treason against the state of Missouri:**—

In the 1954 reprint (page 259) this has been changed to read:

Here I shall introduce a brief history of our troubles in Missouri, given by my son Hyrum, **when Joseph was** before the Municipal Court, at Nauvoo, June 30, 1843, **on a writ of Habeas Corpus:**

On page 216 of the first edition Lucy Smith told of the arrest of her husband:

He was taken for marrying a couple; **and as Esquire Cowdery, and the mob, did not consider that he was a minister of the gospel, they disputed his having the right to perform this ceremony, and so fined him the sum of three thousand dollars, and, in case he should fail to pay this amount forthwith, he was sentenced to go to the penitentiary.**

The Mormon Historians evidently felt that Lucy Smith told too much. In the 1954 reprint (page 248) 57 words were deleted, and 4 words added:

He was taken for marrying a couple **without being licensed.**

In the first edition (page 216) Lucy Smith continued the story as follows:

Luke Johnson bustled about pretending to be very much engaged in **preparing to draw writings for the money,** and making **other** arrangements, . . .

In the 1954 reprint (page 248) this has been changed to read:

Luke Johnson bustled about, pretending to be very much engaged in **drawing the bonds** and in making arrangements, . . .

On page 216 of the first edition Lucy Smith continued:

The first opportunity that offered itself, he went to Hyrum, and told him **to** take his father into a room, which he pointed out **to him,** and, said Johnson, “I will manage **to get the window** out, which will set him at liberty to **jump out,** and go where he pleases.” **Mr. Smith and Hyrum, who had been together all the time, then retired from the company, who were kept from following them by Luke Johnson, who told the mob, that the prisoner had gone to consult about raising the money.** In this way **they were stilled, until Mr. Smith,** help of Hyrum and John Boynton, **escaped** from the window.

In the 1954 reprint (page 248) many words have been deleted, and others have been changed:

The first opportunity that offered itself, he went to Hyrum and told him **he would** take his father into a room, which he pointed out, and, said Johnson, “I will manage **so that he can get** out, which will set him at liberty to go where he pleases.” In this way **he escaped,** by the help of Hyrum and John Boynton, from the window.

Many other changes have been made in this book, however, lack of space prevents us from mentioning them in this issue.

It has been a hundred years since Brigham Young ordered the first edition of Lucy Smith’s book destroyed, and since that time it has become quite rare. We are happy to announce, however, that a collector of rare Mormon books has allowed us to use his copy of the first edition, and that we have made a photomechanical reprint which we are now selling for \$4.00 each. The quantity prices are: 2 for \$7.00 — 5 for \$15.00 — 10 for \$24.00. This book has a plastic binding, and it also includes a 15-page introduction which we have written showing many of the changes and facts concerning the suppression of this book. This should be very interesting to all students of Mormonism.

*Have you been trying to serve God
by halves or some other fraction?
God asks total commitment.*

—Selected

CUT THEIR THROATS

David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, stated as follows:

In June, 1838 at Far West, Mo., **a secret organization was formed.** Doctor Avard being put in as the leader of the band; a certain oath was to be administered to all the brethren to bind them to support the heads of the church in everything they should teach. **All who refused to take this oath were considered dissenters from the Church and certain things were to be done concerning these dissenters, by Dr. Avard’s secret band.** (*An Address to All Believers in Christ,* by David Whitmer, pages 27-28)

Mormon historians admit that the Danite band did exist, but they are unwilling to admit that Joseph Smith was connected with it. William E. Berrett (Vice President of the Brigham Young University) stated:

Such a band as the “Danites” **did exist,** as historians affirm; . . . The organization had been for the purpose of **plundering and murdering** the enemies of the Saints. (*The Restored Church,* 1956 edition, pages 197-198)

Dr. Hugh Nibley, of the Brigham Young University, admits that the Danites did exist, but he claims that Joseph Smith was not responsible for them. David Whitmer, however, claimed that Joseph Smith and Sydney Rigdon were responsible. In an interview, which was published in the *Kansas City Daily Journal,* David Whitmer stated:

. . . they issued a decree organizing what was termed the “Danites, or Destroying Angels,” who were bound by the most fearful oaths to obey the commandments of the leaders of the church. **The Danites consisted only of those selected by Smith and Rigdon.** They threatened myself, John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery and Lyman Johnson with **the vengeance of the Danites** . . . (*Kansas City Daily Journal,* June 5, 1881)

It is very interesting to note that Orson Hyde, one of the Twelve Apostles in the Mormon Church, became very upset at Sydney Rigdon after Joseph Smith's death, and accused him of teaching murder when the Mormons were in Far West. The following statement by Orson Hyde appeared in the Mormon newspaper, the *Nauvoo Neighbor*:

Elder Rigdon has been associated with Joseph and Hyrum Smith as a **counsellor to the Church**, and he told me in Far West that it was the imperative of the Church to obey the word of Joseph Smith, or the presidency, without question or inquiry, and that if there were any that would not, **they should have their throats cut** from ear [to] ear. (*Nauvoo Neighbor*, December 4, 1844)

This was a very damaging admission to make. Since Sydney Rigdon was a counsellor to Joseph Smith in the First Presidency, it would be almost impossible to believe that Joseph Smith was not aware of what was going on.

There is a great deal of evidence to show that Joseph Smith approved of the Danite band. We have just finished making a reprint of a book which should throw a great light on this subject; that is, *Senate Document 189*, 26th Congress 2nd Session. Showing the testimony given before the judge of the fifth judicial circuit of the State of Missouri, on the trial of Joseph Smith, Jr., and others, for high treason, and other crimes against that State. This book has a plastic binding and will sell for \$1.50 each. The quantity price are: 3 for \$4.00 — 5 for \$6.00 — 10 for \$9.00.

Juanita Brooks stated:

Some of the Danite leaders had turned state's evidence; others had scattered. (*On the Mormon Frontier, The Diary of Hosea Stout*, vol. 1, Introduction)

Sampson Avard was one of the Danite leaders that turned state's evidence. He stated:

Sampson Avard, a witness produced, sworn, and examined on behalf of the State, deposed and saith: That about four months since, a band, called the Daughters of Zion, (since called the Danite band,) was formed of the members of the Mormon church, . . . I consider Joseph Smith, jr., as the prime mover and organizer of this Danite band. The officers of the band, according to their grades, were brought before him, at a school-house, together with Hiram Smith and Sidney Rigdon: the three composing the first presidency of the whole church. Joseph Smith Jr. blessed them, and prophesied over them: declaring that they should be the means, in the hands of God, of bringing forth the millennial kingdom. It was stated by Joseph Smith Jr., that it was necessary this band should be bound together by a covenant, that those who revealed the secrets of the society should be put to death . . . Instruction was giving by Joseph Smith, jr., that if any of them should get into a difficulty, the rest should help him out; and that they should stand by each other, right or wrong. This instruction was given at a Danite meeting, in a public address. (*Senate Document 189*, pages 1 and 2)

John Corrill testifies as follows:

I was afterwards invited to one of these meetings, where an oath, in substance the same as testified to by Dr. Avard, was administered. The society was ultimately organized into companies, and captains of tens and fifties were appointed. I took exceptions only to the teaching as to the duties of that society, wherein it was said, if one brother got into any kind of difficulty, it was the duty of the rest to help him out, right or wrong. At the second, or at least the last meeting I attended, the Presidency, (to wit: Joseph Smith jr., Hiram Smith, and Sidney Rigdon,) and also George W. Robertson, was there. (*Senate Document 189*, page 12)

John Cleminson testified as follows:

John Cleminson, a witness, produced, sworn, and examined, in behalf of the State, deposed and saith: Some time in June, I attended two or three Danite meetings; and it was taught there, as a part of the duty of the band, that they should support the presidency in all their designs, right or wrong; that whatever they said was to be obeyed, and whoever opposed the presidency in what they said, or desired done, should be expelled from the county, or have their lives taken. The three composing the presidency was at one of those meetings; and to satisfy the people, Dr. Avard called on Joseph Smith, jr., who gave them a pledge, that if they led them into a difficulty he would give them his head for a foot-ball, and that it was the will of God these things should be so. The teacher and active agent of the society was Dr. Avard, and his teachings were approved of by the presidency.

Speaking of a Danite meeting, Reed Peck testified:

I was present at one meeting when the officers of the society were presented and introduced to the presidency, each officer receiving a blessing from them. Avard stated that he had procured the presidency to come there, to show the society that what he had been doing was according to their direction or will; and while there, the presidency approved of Avard's course in the society. (*Senate Document 189*, pages 17 and 18)

Burr Riggs testified as follows:

Mr. Rigdon said that the last man had run away from Far West that was a going to; that the next man who started, he should be pursued and brought back, dead or alive. This was put to a vote, and agreed to, without any one objecting to it. He further said, that one man had slipped his wind yesterday, and had been thrown aside into the brush for the buzzards to pick, and the first man who lisped it should die. (*Senate Document 189*, page 30)

William W. Phelps and many others testified in this investigation. There are 47 pages to testimony which is very revealing.

We have also reproduced another book which tells some things concerning the Danite band. The name of the book is *Mormonism Exposed, Being a Journal of a Residence in Missouri for the 28th of May to the 20th of August, 1838*, by William Swartzell, published in 1840. This is also in a plastic binding and sells for \$1.50.

In the book *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we have included much information on the Danite band and the doctrine of blood atonement. As yet, however, we have not included a sermon by Jedediah M. Grant (who was a member of the First Presidency in the Mormon Church) which was printed in the Mormon paper, the *Deseret News*, on July 27, 1854. Since most of our readers have not seen this sermon before, we will quote from it in this issue:

“What disposition ought the people of God to make of covenant breakers” . . . I say what ought such a people to do with covenant breakers? “Why,” says one, “forgive them to be sure.” Very good, but what else ought they to do? What does the Apostle say? He says they are **worthy of death**. . . I am inclined to believe his decision was a correct one.

Then what ought this meek people, who keep the commandments of God do unto them? “Why” says one, “they ought to pray to the Lord to kill them.” I want to know if you would wish the Lord to come down and do all your dirty work . . .

When a man prays for a thing, he ought to be willing to perform it himself. . . .

Then there was another odd commandment—The Lord God commanded them not to pity the person whom they killed; but to execute the law of God upon persons worthy of death. This should be done by the entire congregation showing no pity. I have thought there would have to be quite a revolution among the Mormons, before such a commandment could be obeyed completely by them. The Mormons have a great deal of sympathy. For instance, if they can get a man before the tribunal

administering the law of the land, and succeed in getting a rope round his neck, and having him hung up like a dead dog, it is all right; but if the Church and Kingdom of God should step forth and execute the law of God, O! what a burst of Mormon sympathy it would cause. I wish we were in a situation favorable to our doing that which is justifiable before God, without any contaminating influences of Gentile amalgamation, laws, and traditions, that the people of God might lay the axe to the root of the tree, and every tree that bringing not forth good fruit might be hewn down.

“What! do you believe that people would do right and keep the law of God, by actually **putting to death** the transgressors?” **Putting to death transgressors would exhibit the law of God**, no difference by whom it was done; that is my opinion.

You talk of the doings of different governments, the United States if you please. What do they do with traitors? . . . Do traitors to that Government forfeit their lives? . . . But people will look into books of theology, and argue that the people of God have a right to try people for fellowship, but they have no right to try them on property or **life**. **That makes the devil laugh**, saying, I have got them on a hook now; . . .

But if the Government of God on earth, and Eternal Priesthood, with the sanction of High Heaven, in the midst of all his people, has passed sentence on certain sins when they appear in a person, has not the people of God a right to carry out that part of his law as well as any other portion of it? It is their right to baptize a sinner to save him, and it is also their right **to kill a sinner to save him**, when he commits those crimes that can only be atoned for by **shedding his blood**. If the Lord God forgives sins by baptism, and there is another law that certain sins cannot be atoned for by baptism, but by the **shedding of the blood of the sinner**, . . . We would not **kill a man**, of course, unless we killed him to save him . . .

. . . If you shall thus advance, and then turn and trample the holy commandments of God under you feet, and break your sacred and solemn covenants, and become traitors to the people of God, would you not be **worthy of death? I think you would**.

Do you think it would be any sin to **kill me** if I were to break my covenants? . . . Do you believe you would kill me if I broke the covenants of God, and you had the Spirit of God? Yes; and the more Spirit of God I had, the more I should strive to save your soul by **spilling your blood**, when you had committed sin that could not be remitted by baptism. (*Deseret News*, July 27, 1854)

In the book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* we show that some of the most powerful sermons on blood atonement were preached by Brigham Young himself.

I'M WARNING YOU

Several years ago we were sitting in the office of the Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards, when he threatened us as follows:

I'm warning you! Don't start anything against this church!

Since that time people have asked us such questions as: “Do you have a gun to protect yourself?” or “Do you have fire insurance on your equipment?” One man stated: “I would like to see you succeed, but I know they will burn you out.”

Fortunately, the Mormon leaders have not tried to destroy our press (as they did the *Nauvoo Expositor*), nor have they sent the Danites in the night (as Brigham Young used to do). Except for a few treats to sue or arrest us, and one man who threatened to punch Sandra “in the nose,” things have been rather peaceful. The Church has not used violence against us, as many people thought they would, but instead they have used silence as their chief weapon against us. But why silence? It is our sincere belief that the Church leaders have no satisfactory answers to the charges of fraud and deceit that we have brought against them, and therefore they have used the “silent treatment” on us. This treatment seemed to work fairly well for the first few years, however, it is becoming less effective as time goes on. Many members of the Church are beginning to wonder why the Church leaders are so silent. Our mailing list is growing constantly, and there seems to be more interest than ever before. We are beginning to receive a great deal of help from members of the Church who are very disturbed with the way their leaders have used deceit to preserve the

image of the Church. Some have offered to help us obtain microfilms and photocopies of rare documents, and others have given us information which will be very helpful to us.

One man spent a great deal of time trying to find an addressing machine to help us put out our mailing list faster. After finding the proper machine, he paid half the cost of it. This will be a great help to us.

We hope to receive many new names for our mailing list; the *Messenger* is sent free to those on our mailing list.

LETTERS

“Thank you sincerely for sending the revised edition of your excellent work on *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* I am amazed at the tremendous amount of work and research it represents.

“You have done the community an excellent service in making this material available. I wish you every success in your difficult work.” (Letter from Utah)

“I want to commend you on your *Changes in J. S. History*: it is a great piece of work.” (Letter from Illinois)

“Inclosed please find my order for four more of your very stimulating books. I thoroughly enjoy them and hope you continue. I have a great many of your publications and will not be satisfied until I have them all . . .

“May I congratulate you on your research and your ability to ferret out these many materials. I don't know how you do it, especially when you meet with so much opposition. Keep up the good work.” (Letter from Arizona)

“Could you send me 15 more copies of the advertisement for your book, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* . . . At the seminary I posted the ad for your book & also a list which the students could sign. I got 30 names of people who want the book.” (Letter from Minnesota)

OUT OF PRINT?

In the first issue of the *Messenger* we proved that the Mormon Church leaders are trying to suppress Wilford Wood's photo-offset reprint of the first edition of the *Book of Commandments, Doctrine and Covenants* and *Book of Mormon*. We reproduced a letter from the Deseret Book Store in which the following statement appeared:

Thank you for your letter ordering *Joseph Smith Begins His Work* Vol. 1 & 2 by Wilford Wood. We are sorry to inform you that these two books are no longer available.

We also quoted an employee of the Deseret Book Store as saying: “President David O. McKay won't let us sell that anymore.” The same employee also stated:

We've had several people leave the Church because of those books. The priest and ministers of the other churches are using these books to confuse people. Because of the confusion we can't sell them anymore. President McKay has taken them out of circulation.

The reason the Mormon Church is trying to suppress these books is that the *Book of Mormon* and Joseph Smith's revelations have been changed. On May 8, 1965, we called the Deseret Book Store on the phone to find out if they were still suppressing the sale of these books, and also to find out if they were giving the same reason for not selling them. The answer was that they are “out of print.” Of course, this statement is completely untrue. In a letter dated October 27, 1964, Wilford Wood stated: “There are plenty of books, both volumes and always will be.”

Modern Microfilm Company will continue to sell these books as long as they are available to us.

It would be very interesting if a large number of our readers would write or phone the Deseret Book Store concerning the suppression of these books. Their address is 44 East South Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah, and their phone number is 328-8191.