



Alvin Smith

1798–1823

D&C 137:5

Alvin Smith, son of Joseph Smith Sr. and Lucy Mack, played a prominent role in the Smith family economy in the Manchester/Palmyra area. Although a young man in his early twenties, he jointly articulated with his father for a 99.5-acre farm in Farmington (later known as Manchester). When the second payment for the farm came due, Alvin took menial farmhand work to raise the money “and after much hardship and fatigue, returned with the required amount.”¹

On the morning of September 22, 1823, Alvin was reaping in the family wheat field with his young brother Joseph. “Joseph stopped quite suddenly, and seemed to be in a very deep study. Alvin, observing it, hurried to him, saying, ‘We must not slacken our hands or we will not be able to complete our task.’” Father Smith, assuming that his son Joseph was ill, told him to return to the family log cabin. As Joseph walked toward the cabin, he became overly fatigued and fell on the ground. He lay for a time until an angel appeared

¹ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1845, 69. Joseph Smith Papers.

to him and, as Joseph wrote, “Commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the vision and commandments which I had received” the night before (JS—History 1:49).

When the angel departed, Joseph returned to the same field where he had last seen his father. Finding his father gone, he turned to his brother Alvin and asked him “to go straightway and see his father, and inform him that he had something of great importance to communicate to him, and that he wanted him to come out into the field.” Alvin complied with Joseph’s request.

That evening the Smith family was all abuzz with talk of the angelic visitation. When Alvin observed how tired his brother Joseph was, he said,

Now, brother, let us go to bed, and rise early in the morning, in order to finish our day’s work at an hour before sunset, then, if mother will get our suppers early, we will have a fine long evening, and we will all sit down for the purpose of listening to you while you tell us the great things which God has revealed to you.²

Although Alvin was a vital part of the family evening conversations about the angel, ancient inhabitants, and gold plates, he had other matters on his mind. He wanted “his father and mother once more comfortable and happy [in a well-constructed home]. He would say, ‘I am going to have a nice, pleasant room for father and mother to sit in, and everything arranged for their comfort, and they shall not work any more as they have done.’”³ To ensure that his plans for the farmhouse materialized, Alvin began building the house for his parents near the Smith log cabin.

At ten o’clock on November 15, 1823, Alvin took suddenly ill. Mother Smith wrote,

He came to the house in much distress, and requested his father to go immediately for a physician. He accordingly went, obtaining one by the name of Greenwood, who, on arriving, immediately administered to the patient a heavy dose of calomel. ... Alvin at first refused to take the medicine, but by much persuasion, he was prevailed on to do so. [The calomel] lodged in his stomach, and all the medicine afterwards freely administered by four very skillful physicians could not remove it.⁴

² Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, 85.

³ Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, 89.

⁴ Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845, 90.

By the third day of his illness, Alvin was no better. He now believed that he would not live to see his parents in their farmhouse or his younger brother in possession of the gold plates. Alvin called his brother Hyrum to his bedside and admonished him to finish the farmhouse. He said to young Joseph,

I am now going to die, the distress which I suffer, and the feelings that I have, tell me my time is very short. I want you to be a good boy, and do everything that lies in your power to obtain the Record. Be faithful in receiving instruction, and in keeping every commandment that is given you.⁵

Alvin spoke to other family members before uttering his last words on November 19, 1823: "Father, mother, brothers, and sisters, farewell! I can now breathe out my life as calmly as a clock." The loss of Alvin to the Smith family was immeasurable. Mother Smith wrote, "Alvin was a youth of singular goodness of disposition—kind and amiable, so that lamentation and mourning filled the whole neighborhood in which he resided." His brother Joseph later wrote,

He was the oldest and noblest of my father's family. He was one of the noblest of the sons of men. ... In him there was no guile. He lived without spot from the time he was a child. From the time of his birth he never knew mirth. He was candid and sober and never would play, and minded his father and mother in toiling all day. He was one of the soberest of men, and when he died the angel of the Lord visited him in his last moments.⁶

Thoughts of Alvin never dimmed for the Smiths. On January 21, 1836, in the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph saw him in vision:

I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof. ... I saw ... my brother Alvin, that has long since slept; and marveled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed this life before the Lord had set his hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of sins (D&C 137:1, 5–6).

As Father Smith lay dying in September 14, 1840, he said, "I can see and hear, as well as ever I could. ... I see Alvin."⁷

⁵ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1845, Document Transcript, Chapter 20.

⁶ *Reflections and Blessings*, 16 and 23 August 1842, p. 180. Joseph Smith Papers.

⁷ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1845, p. 301.