



Samuel Harrison Smith

(1808–1844)

D&C 23; 52:30; 61:35; 66:8; 75:13; 102:3; 124:141

Samuel was eight years old when his family moved to Palmyra, New York. At age thirteen he joined the Western Presbyterian Church in town. His attendance at church worship services ended because of his belief in the visions of his brother Joseph and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Samuel entered baptismal waters about a year before the Church was organized. On May 25, 1829, he was baptized by Oliver Cowdery in Pennsylvania and “returned to his father’s house, greatly glorifying and praising God, being filled with the Holy Spirit.”¹

Samuel was one of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon and one of the six original members of the Church. At the first conference of the Church, in June 1830 at Fayette, New York, Samuel was ordained an elder. Following the conference, he set out on a journey to share copies of the Book of Mormon along his route. He was discouraged

¹ History of the Church (Manuscript), book A-1, 19. Church History Library; see Joseph Smith Papers.

with his missionary labors, not realizing that copies of the Book of Mormon led to the baptisms of Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball.

Samuel, who is viewed as the first missionary of the Church, literally preached the message of the Restoration from Maine to Missouri, journeying mostly on foot over four thousand miles. His mission call to serve with William McLellan began when Samuel “heard a voice in the night that said, ‘Samuel, arise immediately, and go forth on the mission which thou wast commanded to take. . . .’ He arose from his bed and took what clothing he had in readiness, and set off without further delay.”²

Samuel served a challenging eleven-month mission with Orson Hyde (see D&C 75:13). The mission resulted in baptisms and Church meetings from Ohio to Maine. Of their mission Orson Hyde wrote, “This was one of the most arduous and toilsome missions ever performed in the Church. To travel two thousand miles on foot, . . . often sleeping in school houses after preaching—in barns, in sheds, by the way side . . . was something of a task.”³ Samuel wrote, “Went from House to House and many during that day rejected us. We shook off the dust from our feet as a testimony against them.”⁴

From 1832 to 1836 Samuel and his family resided in the Kirtland vicinity. He labored on a farm to support his family. He did not neglect his Church duty during these years. He was an agent for the Literary Firm established to print Church publications and served on the Kirtland high council (see D&C 102:3). His father, Joseph Smith Sr., pronounced a blessing upon him two days after he was called to the high council: “Samuel, I lay my hands upon thy head, and pronounce the blessings of thy progenitors upon thee, that thou mayest remain a Priest of the Most High God, and like Samuel of old, hear His voice, saying, Samuel, Samuel. Amen.”⁵

Samuel received a patriarchal blessing from his father in December 1834 and was promised, “The just shall rise up and call thee, a perfect man. . . . The testimony which thou hast borne and shall bear, shall be received by thousands, and thou shalt magnify thy calling and do honor to the Holy Priesthood.”⁶

² Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1845, 214. Joseph Smith Papers.

³ Orson Hyde, “History of Orson Hyde,” *Millennial Star* (December 3, 1864): 776.

⁴ “Events in the Life of Samuel Harrison Smith including His Missionary Journal for the Year 1832.” Church History Library.

⁵ Minute Book 1, 37. Joseph Smith Papers.

⁶ Patriarchal Blessing of Samuel Smith, in H. Michael Marquardt, comp., *Early Patriarchal Blessings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007), 5–6.

In January 1836 Samuel and his family moved from Kirtland to Far West, Missouri. In 1838 they were subjected to mob violence. Samuel's wife was "taken by the mob from her house (they took her by picking up the feather bed and carried her with her babe out into the sleet and rain and placed the bed on the ground). [Then they] burned the house down to the ground." His wife never fully recovered from the persecution. One lasting effect of the violence was that "she never spoke above a whisper" after her days in Missouri.⁷

Samuel fled with his family from violence in Missouri to Quincy, Illinois, and then to Nauvoo. In the last blessing Samuel received at the hands of his father, he was told, "The Lord has seen your diligence. . . . There is a crown laid up for you, which shall grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."⁸

In 1844 events that led to the martyrdom of his brothers Joseph and Hyrum Smith greatly impacted Samuel's life. As he attempted to come to the aid of his brothers, a mob interceded and prevented him from journeying to Carthage. Samuel then purchased a fast horse and rode to Carthage. When he neared the town, he heard that his brothers had been shot by assassins. His daughter Mary B. Norman penned, "The terrible shock was too much for him, and for an instant he reeled in his saddle and they expected him to fall. . . . He steadied himself, saying, 'God help me! I must go to them.'"⁹ The mob was hiding in a thicket. When they saw Samuel approach, they gave chase but could not catch him.

Samuel escorted the bodies of his deceased brothers from Carthage to Nauvoo. After the family viewed their remains, Samuel said to his mother, Lucy Mack Smith, "Mother, I have had a dreadful distress in my side ever since I was chased by the mob, and I think I have received some injury which is going to make me sick."¹⁰ He suffered from bilious fever until his death on July 30, 1844, at age 36. His obituary stated, "If ever there lived a good man upon the earth, Samuel H. Smith was that person."¹¹

⁷ Letter of Mary B. Norman to Sue Beattie, October 21, 1915, as cited in Dean Jarman, "The Life and Contributions of Samuel Harrison Smith," MS thesis, Brigham Young University, June 1961, 78.

⁸ *History*, 1838–1856, volume F-1 [1 May 1844–8 August 1844], 292. Joseph Smith Papers.

⁹ *Journal History of the Church*, July 25, 1844. Church History Library.

¹⁰ Lucy Mack Smith, *History*, 1845, 313.

¹¹ Smith, *History of the Church*, 7:222.