
Vinson Knight

1804–1842

D&C 124:74, 141

At age twenty, Vinson inherited a large estate in Perrysburg, New York. He worked on the estate, creating a coveted farm and building a large frame house. His housekeeper was heard to “complain of a large sack of money that was always in the way on the top shelf of the cupboard.”¹

In March 1834 Joseph Smith and Parley P. Pratt came to his home to share the message of the Restoration. Vinson and his wife were convinced that Joseph Smith was “no false prophet but an instrument in the hands of the Lord.”² They entered baptismal waters in the spring of 1834. Wanting to be with the Saints in Kirtland, Ohio, they sold their estate to the highest bidder and moved.

After arriving safely in Kirtland, Vinson wrote to his mother on June 24, 1835,

I feel that the Lord has blessed me in all my undertakin[g]s since I left there both in spiritual and temporal blessings. Our children are blessed with the privilege of school and are blessed with the privilege of going to meetings such as we never had before. I can say to you that I am strong in the faith that I have embraced. ... I am willing to stand and proclaim it to all that I see.³

¹ “Biographies of Vincent Knight and Abigale Meade McBride and Copies of Letters obtained from a Descendant of Rispah Lee Knight,” typescript, 1962, 1. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

² “Biographies of Vincent Knight and Abigale Meade McBride,” 3.

³ Letter of Vinson Knight to Rispah Knight, June 24, 1835. Church History Library.

Vinson and his family resided in Kirtland for two years. He supported his family as a local druggist. Most of his time, however, was spent in Church service, which was in harmony with his patriarchal blessing: "The Lord loves thee; he has looked upon all thy ways and brought thee thus far that He might make thee useful in His church. ... Thou art a chosen vessel unto the Lord, and if thou art faithful before Him, thou shalt be sanctified and enjoy a fullness of glory."⁴

On January 2, 1836, Vinson was ordained an elder. Less than two weeks later, he was ordained a high priest and set apart as a counselor to Bishop Newel K. Whitney. The Prophet wrote on that occasion, "This has been one of the best days I ever spent. There has been an entire union of feeling expressed in all our proceedings this day and the spirit of the God of Israel has rested upon us in mighty power."⁵

Vinson's wholehearted commitment to the Church was evidenced by his attendance at the School of the Prophets, his assistance with building the Kirtland Temple, and his willingness to be a charter member of the Kirtland Safety Society. When an apostate was heard in 1837 to exclaim that he was going to throw Joseph Smith out of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph turned to Vinson and said, "Brother Knight, take this man out."⁶ Vinson grabbed hold of the man, flung him over his shoulder, and carried him out of the temple.

In the summer of 1838, Vinson served as an "acting bishop" in Adam-ondi-Ahman. When religious persecution raged in northern Missouri, Vinson joined other Latter-day Saints in fleeing from the state. In his redress petition, Vinson claimed the state of Missouri owed him ten thousand dollars for his losses. Of his suffering, he wrote:

I was at Far West while the troops were there and I did not go home as they threatened my life. ... What the final end will be I am not able to say. ... Now sir, I ask you and every republican in these U. States how you would like to be brought up and compelled to lay down your arms. I think that you would feel the same as I did, that death would be a welcome messenger. ... I was placed in as good a situation as any man in this state to get a living, but now am deprived of it all except my

⁴ "Biographies of Vincent Knight and Abigale Meade McBride," 4.

⁵ "Biographies of Vincent Knight and Abigale Meade McBride," 6.

⁶ "Biographies of Vincent Knight and Abigale Meade McBride," 8.

health and the faith I have in that God that has created and preserved me thus far through life.⁷

In 1839 Vinson was residing in Quincy, Illinois, and serving as a Church agent authorized to purchase acreage in Illinois and Iowa Territory in behalf of the Church. On May 4, 1839, he assumed the “full title” of bishop and served as bishop of the Lower Ward. In addition to his Church responsibilities, Vinson was a member of the Nauvoo City Council, the Nauvoo Agricultural and Manufacturing Association, and a regent of the University of Nauvoo.

The Prophet Joseph Smith wrote on July 31, 1842, “In council with Bishops Miller and Whitney, Brigham Young, John Taylor, &c., concerning Bishop Vinson Knight’s sickness. Brother Knight has been sick about a week, and this morning he began to sink very fast until twelve o’clock when death put a period to his sufferings.”⁸ He was age thirty-eight. Joseph Smith spoke at his funeral and declared, “There lies a man that has done more for me than my own brother would do.”⁹

⁷ Letter of Vinson Knight to William Cooper, Esq., 8 February 1838, Spencerburg, Missouri. Church History Library.

⁸ Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:84.

⁹ “Biographies of Vincent Knight and Abigale Meade McBride,” 15.