
Heman A. Bassett

1814–1876

D&C 52:37

Seventeen-year-old Heman was the youngest contemporary of the Prophet Joseph Smith named in the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 52:37). In 1830 he was residing on the Isaac Morley farm in Kirtland with a group known as “The Family.” In October 1830, at age sixteen, Heman was baptized by one of the missionaries to the Lamanites who had stopped on their journey to Missouri in Kirtland, Ohio.

When the missionaries left Kirtland to continue their westward journey, false spirits were detected among their new converts—one being Heman Bassett. According to historian Josiah Jones, Heman had a vision that called him to “go into the world and preach.”¹ Levi Hancock observed his preaching: “Bassett would behave like a baboon. He said he had a revelation he had received in Kirtland from the hand of an angel, he would read it and show pictures of a course of angels declared to be Gods, then would testify of the truth of the work and I believed it all, like a fool.”²

Levi Hancock was not only deceived by Heman Bassett, he was robbed:

While I was in the room at “Father Morley’s” . . . this same [Heman] Bassett came to me and took my watch out of my pocket and walked off as though it was his. I thought he would bring it back soon but was disappointed as he sold it. I asked him what he meant by selling my

¹ Josiah Jones, “History of the Mormonites, Kirtland, 1831,” *Evangelist* 9 (June 1, 1841): 135–136.

² Autobiography of Levi Ward Hancock, typescript, 18. L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.

watch. "Oh," said he, "I thought it was all in the family." I told him I did not like such family doing and I would not bear it.³

Heman was ordained an elder in the spring of 1831. At the June 1831 conference held in Kirtland, the Prophet Joseph Smith said to him, "Heamon Basset you sit still the Devil wants to sift you."⁴ Apparently, Heman did not give much credence to the prophetic warning. Three days after the June conference, Symonds Ryder, a wealthy resident of Hiram, Ohio, was told to receive the missionary calling intended for Heman: "In consequence of transgression, let that which was bestowed upon Heman Basset be taken from him, and placed upon the head of Simonds Ryder" (D&C 52:37).

Heman remained with the Church for many years. He was a member of the Prairie Branch in Jackson County, Missouri. He suffered persecution in Gallatin, Missouri, and fled with the Saints to Quincy, Illinois. By 1848 he was a resident of Keokuk, Iowa. At this point it is assumed that his faith in the leadership of Brigham Young had waned. On October 8, 1849, Heman was ordained an elder in the Strangite Church. After being excommunicated from the Strangites in 1850, he journeyed to the Salt Lake Valley. By 1860 he had moved on to Petaluma, California, where he managed a hotel for years before migrating across the country to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Heman died in 1876 in Philadelphia at age sixty-two.

³ Autobiography of Levi Ward Hancock, 18

⁴ Revelation, 6 June 1831 [D&C 52]. Joseph Smith Papers.