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# Almon Whiting Babbitt

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1812–1856

D&C 124:84

Almon was a university graduate and a licensed attorney. His acceptance of the Restoration, subsequent missions, and the march to Zion's Camp suggests that he had the talent to be an outstanding Church leader. The Prophet Joseph told him of "much good he would do in preaching the gospel, and how the hearts of people would be drawn towards him, and the greatness to which he would attain."<sup>1</sup>

Yet each time Almon was called to a leadership position, his argumentative nature got the best of him. For example, while serving in the First Quorum of Seventy, he was called before the Kirtland High Council to answer charges of "not keeping the Word of Wisdom; for stating the Book of Mormon was not essential to our salvation, and that we have no articles of faith except the Bible." He was also charged with "traducing" the character of Joseph Smith.<sup>2</sup> Almon argued that "he had taken the liberty to break the Word of Wisdom,

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin F. Johnson, *My Life's Review* (Independence, MO: Zion's Printing and Publishing, 1947), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Minute Book, 97. Joseph Smith Papers.

from the example of President Joseph Smith, Jun., and others, but acknowledged that it was wrong.”<sup>3</sup> He was found guilty and disfellowshipped.

Within days, Almon expressed remorse and was back in the Church. On October 19, 1840, he was called to be president of the Kirtland Stake. Contrary to counsel, he encouraged the Saints traveling to Nauvoo to settle in Kirtland. On July 22, 1840, the Prophet Joseph wrote to Oliver Granger,

When I think that others who have lately come into the Church should be led to Kirtland instead of to this place [Nauvoo], by Elder Babbitt, ... I must say that I feel grieved in spirit, and cannot tolerate such proceedings. ... If Brother Babbitt and the other brethren wish to reform the Church, ... they must use other weapons than lies.<sup>4</sup>

On September 5, 1840, charges against Almon were brought before the Nauvoo High Council—

First. For stating that Joseph Smith, Jun, had extravagantly purchased three suits of clothes while he was at Washington City, and that Sidney Rigdon had purchased four suits while at the same place, besides dresses in profusion for their families

Second. For having stated that Joseph Smith, Jun., Sidney Rigdon and Elias Higbee had said that they were worth one hundred thousand dollars each, while they were at Washington. ...

Third. For holding secret councils in the Lord’s House, in Kirtland, and for locking the doors of the house, for the purpose of prohibiting certain brethren in good standing in the Church, from being in the Council, thereby depriving them of the use of the house.<sup>5</sup>

On January 19, 1841, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith—

With my servant Almon Babbitt, there are many things with which I am not pleased; behold, he aspireth to establish his counsel instead of the counsel which I have ordained, even that of the Presidency of my Church, and he setteth up a golden calf for the worship of my people. (D&C 124:84)

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<sup>3</sup> History, 1838–1856, volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838], 606. Joseph Smith Papers.

<sup>4</sup> History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842], 1084. Joseph Smith Papers.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:187–188.

On March 13, 1843, Almon was called to be the presiding elder of the Ramus Illinois Branch. On June 20, 1844, the Prophet Joseph sent word to Almon to bring men and defend Nauvoo. Instead of complying with the request, Almon advised brethren in Ramus, "If any of you go, not one will ever get to Nauvoo alive."<sup>6</sup> On June 26, 1844, Uncle John Smith conveyed a message to Almon from the Prophet Joseph: "Tell Almon W. Babbitt I want him to come and assist me as an attorney at my expected trial." Almon replied, "You are too late, I am already engaged on the other side."<sup>7</sup>

In 1846 Almon was appointed a Church trustee with responsibility for Church financial and temporal affairs in Nauvoo. Heber C. Kimball reported, "My house sold for seventeen hundred dollars, intended to be used to help to gather the Saints, but Almon W. Babbitt put it in his pocket."<sup>8</sup>

On July 5, 1849, Almon was elected a delegate to the US Congress from the provisional state of Deseret. Of his service in Washington, DC, Thomas L. Kane advised Brigham Young, "Mr. A. W. Babbitt has proved himself unfit to be trusted with the care of any of your interests and this alike by an abasement of his personal character, and an unfaithfulness to his trusts."<sup>9</sup> In 1852 Almon was appointed by US President Franklin Pierce to be the secretary of the Territory of Utah. In 1854 Thomas L. Kane wrote to President Pierce stating, "It becomes my duty to warn you against this individual, known by me as an entirely untrustworthy and unprincipled person, whose word should in no extremity be relied upon."<sup>10</sup>

Almon was killed by members of the Cheyenne tribe on September 7, 1856, about a hundred miles from Fort Kearney, Nebraska.

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:515.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:598, 600.

<sup>8</sup> Heber C. Kimball, "Gathering of the People of God in the Last Days—Return to Jackson County, etc.," *Journal of Discourses*, 8:350.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas L. Kane letter to Brigham Young, Willard Richards, and Heber C. Kimball, February 21, 1851. Church History Library.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas L Kane letter to President Franklin Pierce, September 3, 1854. Church History Library.