



Alpheus Cutler

1784–1864

D&C 124:132

Alpheus Cutler, a stonemason by trade, was taught the gospel of Jesus Christ by elders David W. Patten and Reynolds Cahoon in Chautauqua, New York. When his daughter Lois Cutler was healed by the laying on of hands, word spread through his neighborhood. Many listened to the missionaries and were baptized, including Alpheus on January 20, 1833.

He and his family moved from New York to Kirtland, Ohio, to be with the Saints of God. In Kirtland, Alpheus used his talents to help construct the Kirtland Temple. During the dedication of the temple, he claimed to see “a gold chain, suspended or draped, across the room and saw the Lord descending on a long strip, which resembled a carpet. This Being seemed to move toward him and he spoke to him.”¹ On April 29, 1836, Alpheus was ordained a high priest by Joseph Smith.

¹ Daisy Whiting Fletcher, “Alpheus Cutler and the Church of Jesus Christ,” (1970), 8. Church History Library.

In 1836 he and his family moved from Kirtland to Richmond, Missouri. By 1838 they had settled in Caldwell County, Missouri. A government-sanctioned extermination order against Latter-day Saints caused Alpheus and his family to flee out of the state. Alpheus summarized his personal losses in a Missouri Redress Petition:

A Bill of Damage Sustained By Alpheus Cutler in Consequence of the Unlawful Conduct of the Inhabitants thereof & the Unconstitutional Decrees of the Governor

Damage on Land	\$600.00
Do. Do. on Personal Property	400.00
Do. Do for being obliged to remove with a large family & an old aged mother the Inconveniences & the Exposure to the weather & being thrown out of Business &c &c.	350.00
Do. Do. Expenses for Journey	100.00
	\$1,450.00

Alpheus Cutler

I do hereby Certify the within Statements to be true according to the Best of my knowledge.²

Although living in safety in Illinois, Alpheus returned to Far West, Missouri. In the minutes of a Twelve Council Meeting held on April 26, 1839, it is recorded that

Elder Alpheus Cutler then placed the [foundation] stone [of the temple] ... in its regular position, after which, in consequence of the peculiar situation of the Saints, he thought it wisdom to adjourn until some future time, when the Lord shall open the way, expressing his determination then to proceed with the building, where upon the conference adjourned.³

² Clark V. Johnson, ed., *Mormon Redress Petitions Documents of the 1833–1838 Missouri Conflict* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992), 181–182.

³ History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842], 930. Joseph Smith Papers.

In Nauvoo, Illinois, Alpheus served on the temple building committee. He journeyed to the pineries in Wisconsin to obtain lumber needed for constructing the Nauvoo Temple. He also served on the Nauvoo High Council (D&C 124:131–32).

Alpheus joined the Latter-day Saint exodus from Nauvoo to the Territory of Iowa. He led a company of Saints to Nebraska. They settled at Cutler's Park, named in his honor. Alpheus then chose the site of Winter Quarters as the gathering place of the Saints.

He withdrew from the Church, claiming to be the successor of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He formed the Church of Jesus Christ (Cutlerites). On September 19, 1853, Father Cutler, as he was known by his followers, was "chosen our head or chief Councilor and sustained by a unanimous vote."⁴ As leader of the Cutlerites, he denounced tithing and the law of plural marriage. He professed that he was given "all the rights, keys, powers, privileges, and blessings" and that "he would not sever the tie between himself and Joseph Smith, or in other words the authority which now rested upon him alone."⁵

As he aged, Alpheus suffered from a stroke which left his legs paralyzed and his speech blurred. Since he was "a large heavy man, nursing care for him was a burden that required strength and stamina."⁶ When his health was nearly gone, he confessed to his grandson Abraham Kimball—

I know that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God, and I know that Brigham Young is his legal successor and always did know it. But, the trouble with me was, I wanted to lead, and could not be lead and I have run my race and sealed my doom, and I know what I have got to meet. ... One favor I wish to ask of you namely—that you will not divulge this confession to those whom I lead while I live.⁷

Alpheus died on August 10, 1864, in Manti, Iowa, at age eighty.

⁴ Fletcher, "Alpheus Cutler and the Church of Jesus Christ," 32.

⁵ Fletcher, "Alpheus Cutler and the Church of Jesus Christ," 36–37.

⁶ Fletcher, "Alpheus Cutler and the Church of Jesus Christ," 42–43.

⁷ "Alpheus Cutler's Testimony bore to Grandson Abraham Kimball who recorded it as Follows," 1. Church History Library.