

## Salamander

"Nutrisco et extinguo"

--Legend of Francis I of France

"God's people are true salamanders  
that live best in the fire of affliction."

--Thomas Brooks (1670)

When Alvin come back from the hill  
he was all in a sweat and tremblin'.  
He says he looked in a box and saw  
a salamander all alive in fire,  
and the fire was in his eyes  
like small summer suns and it  
come out and went into mine,  
burning like God's own glory  
and I was afraid.

*And I saw sylphs of flame  
archangels of the sun, who came to  
Cumorah, ministering to the night  
their salamandrine fires illuminating  
and purifying the darkness.*

This was out by the barn, and  
I said, Alvin, show me the box,  
'cause I saw it in a dream  
full of gold; and so we run  
all the way to the hill and  
was all out of breath, and  
when we got to the place  
Alvin says, look Joseph,  
it's right there, under that bush!  
And I looked and saw the fire, and  
then the bush was burning and the  
trees was burning and the whole  
mountain was on fire, the river  
was on fire too, flames all over  
the water, joining and  
crossing one another, but  
none of it was burned.

*And I saw them standing in the fiery  
heat, like the furnace of noonday  
white as lightning, and beside*

*them was another, like the heart of the  
sun, blazing with holiness and light  
and the fire didn't harm their hair  
nor singe their sleeves.*

Then Alvin was taken sick with a bilious  
colic and was burnin' with a fever and  
said many strange things, some of them  
wonderful. And then he held me by the  
hand real strong and tight and said,  
Joseph, get the plates, whatever you do,  
get the plates, and I said, Alvin, don't go!  
don't go! And then he was gone, his eyes  
still ablaze till father put his hand  
on them and closed the lids.

*I saw him in the realms of glory  
his whole body white and luminous as  
the stones in the box. I saw Adam and  
Abraham, and Alvin was with them, and  
I saw the transcendent beauty of the gate  
through which they entered and it was like  
circling flames of fire and the blazing  
throne of God ascending into light.*

And then it was dark and I  
didn't dream for a long time,  
and I said, Mother, the plates . . . and  
she jest looked at me and didn't say a  
word, and I turned to father, but he  
wouldn't talk neither, and when I  
looked at him, he jest shook his head  
and tears come in his eyes.

All summer we worked the fields, and  
when fall come we brought the harvest  
in, but always I was thinking of  
what Alvin said about the plates. In the  
night I couldn't sleep and when the  
new moon come I begun dreamin' again, and  
then one night an old spirit come to me  
three times and says, Dig up the gold.

I woke in a sweat and it was still dark.  
I got out of bed real careful so's not to  
wake Hyrum. I put some of mother's cornbread

in my pocket and took father's shovel and  
went up the hill to find the plates.  
I heard a owl way off in the trees and  
was scared to go on 'cause it might  
mean bad luck for me, but the words  
of the spirit kept hauntin' me so I went on.

When I found the bush that before was  
burning, I put the shovel in and dug  
till I struck the stone box, and when I  
took off the lid, light come burstin' out  
and I saw the white salamander and then it  
was gone but the old spirit was there and  
he touched me three times--once on the  
eyes and once on the ears and once on the  
lips, and his fingers was like fire.

*And I saw that everything was on fire:  
eyes and images seen by the eyes were  
on fire; ears and sounds heard by the ears  
were on fire; lips and tongues and voices that  
came out of them were on fire, and the Word  
itself was a fire within a fire--everything  
burning, burning, consumed by fire  
and born again.*

When I reached down to pick up the  
plates the spirit struck me three times again--  
jest like before, and he said, Bring your  
brother Alvin, and I said, How can I bring  
him, his bones are buried in the ground?  
He said again, Bring your brother Alvin, and  
I said, Should I bring his remains? but  
the spirit didn't answer me.

*I saw a valley full of bones, dry and  
white, and a wind from the north and from  
the night blew on the bones and they  
were cold, and a wind from the south  
and from the sun blew on the bones  
kindling the fire shut up in them, and the  
fire became the word out of the mouth of the  
prophet and it consumed all who heard it, but  
the bones danced to life and rose like  
flames into the air, burning and turning  
like a great fire bird circling.*

When I reached into the box and  
touched the plates, a shock went through me  
like a sword of fire, almost melting my  
bones' marrow it was so hot, and I cried  
in agony of soul, Why can I not take them?  
and the spirit said, You have not kept the  
commandments, you have given in to temptations.  
Get up and see the signs in the heavens,  
and learn from the mouth of God.

*And I looked and saw the heavens like an  
endless sea of light--the sun, a glorious  
luminary of the skies, and also the moon  
rolling in majesty through the heavens, and  
also the stars shining in their courses. And  
then all around me darkness grew into trees  
whose black branches shut out all the light  
and I was left alone in the very heart and  
soul of darkness, and the branches were  
burning all around me, and their flames  
black as night began to burn my flesh.*

And I cried aloud, O God, forgive me, I  
am just an ignorant and wicked boy. Why  
did you let Alvin die? He was the most  
righteous one. I don't know, I don't know  
about the sun and the salamander; I can't  
see, it is so dark, and my mind is on fire!  
And then I saw the fire turn to blood  
and I was falling from a high window  
and as I looked up the summer sun fell  
into blackness and I cried, O Lord, my God!

*And I heard a voice like pure flame  
pierce the burning darkness and it said  
I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction  
I will destroy you with a consuming fire or  
I will purify you with a refiner's fire,  
your heart must choose.  
If you will burn away  
your sins, I will make my words in your mouth  
fire that you may warn the nations,  
I will make your words a flaming sword  
that you may slay the black dragon,  
the fire drake of darkness, and touch*

*the hoard of gold  
that it will come alive in your hands  
to call my people  
to the endowment of light.*

And I awoke and was cold and afraid.

(Sunstone 13:4/28 (Aug 89))