

The Light on the River

Testimonies of John J. Cornish

By Bertha Cornish (daughter)

My father was born in the Township of Usborne County of Huron, Province of Ontario, in Canada, on the 17th day of October, 1854, and named John. However, when he grew to manhood he added J., to distinguish him from other Cornish men who were also named John. He was raised in the above township among the big timber and Devonshire folks who came from England.

In 1871 he was quite ill, which doctors diagnosed as consumption, and said he, had but a few months to live. Since he was unable to work an uncle of his, John Taylor, invited him to make a long visit to his family, whom he had never seen, living out of Bothwell. This he did, driving out from the town of Bothwell with a neighbor of Uncle's who, on the way out, told him his uncle was a Mormon, and painting Mormons as such vicious people that Father was thoroughly frightened. The man told Father when he found out how thoroughly despicable his relatives were to come back to his home; he would keep him overnight, and take him to the train in the morning. However, upon introducing himself to his Aunt and cousin Mary, they received him kindly, kissed him and seemed so nice his fears partly left him.

The usual routine of well-ordered homes went on, supper was announced and eaten. After supper, however, something suspicious started. Chairs and benches were brought in, and someone said: "The elders are coming." These were Elders John H. Lake and J. S. Snively. Everyone seemed so glad to see everyone. Father was introduced to them, and they spoke so kindly to him his fear of Mormons left him forever. This was his first contact with the Restoration Movement, and the first meeting he ever attended, and was very different to anything he ever heard. He continued attending meetings until after a thorough understanding of the work was had. He still hesitated, and then he was told by prophecy through Myron Haskins: "I require obedience at your hands, and I will bless you and you will be the means of doing much good among men, and of bringing many souls to the knowledge of the truth."

He was baptized February 22, 1872, by Elder Arthur Leverton. That spring (1872), he was ordained to the office of priest by the spirit of prophecy through Arthur Leverton and was ordained by Elders Leverton and Robert Davis, at London, where he worked for Mr. J. Magee. Preaching began in London, some were converted and baptized, and Father was ordained an elder in the fall of 1875.

Towards the close of 1875, something wonderful happened that it was indelibly impressed upon the minds of that little group, never to be erased. A Mrs. Polly Taylor and Miss Sarah Lively (afterwards wife of Elder Roderick May) requested baptism. As Father worked through the day, baptisms were performed in the evenings. The baptisms occurred on Wednesday late in the evening of December 29, 1875, after prayer meeting.

The night was dark – intensely so. About thirty people were present to witness these baptisms, when suddenly, with a sound like a rush of wind through the forest, a brilliant light, brighter than the sun, enveloped both the people standing on the bank of the Thames, and those being baptized in the water. Long before it was seen, they could hear the rushing, whispering sound that preceded its coming. It was a shaft of light (as wonderful as the shepherds saw on that first Christmas so long ago) reaching from heaven to earth, and just outside that light black, dense darkness. Looking downward Father noticed that the light had penetrated the water so that he saw pebbles on the bottom of the river.

Looking upward, he raised his hand to say, "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ I baptize, etc. he saw what seemed to be the portals of Heaven, and white robes (he saw no faces) passing to and fro. Had the angels paused a moment in their ministry of love to witness the baptism by one of God's servants, of those who would be heirs of salvation? He was thrilled by the Spirit and indeed commissioned to do this in the name of He whom he served.

Before the light appeared, there had been considerable levity on the way to the river, in which a Mr. William Clow had joined and ridiculed our work. As the light appeared, with a hushed awe the people on the bank fell to their knees, looking upward toward the glorious light of God. As, each sister was baptized, she walked up the bank and fell to her knees also. The joy and adoration in their hearts found vent in words, and Father heard such muted utterances as "Praise the Lord"; We thank Thee, O Lord, for Thy Blessing.," It was not confusing nor loud but as though one were in the presence of Divinity.

Before the baptism there had been a thaw and great chunks of ice were floating down the river which might have been dangerous in the dark, but not in the light of God. Father said he saw no more chunks of ice floating by the spot until the ceremony had been performed and all were safely out of the water. The William Clow, above mentioned, as the light appeared was standing with an entranced look, looking toward the light. A voice was speaking to him, unheard by all the others: "These are my people and you must not laugh at them." Later he was baptized and became an able defender of the Church. At Brother Clow's right hand knelt Brother Augustus Depper on one knee, with both hands clasped, looking at the light, tears flowing down his cheeks, praying: "We thank Thee, O God, that thou hast acknowledged us in the presence of our opposers." The light gradually, slowly went upward until lost to view, and left them in utter darkness, but not in their hearts, for there a flame had been kindled. All in that company who did not belong to the Church were baptized afterward, and having been together when they saw the glory of the Lord formed a tie between them. They never forgot. Most of them have gone to their rewards now. Would it be too much to say that in that pleasant land in which they are sojourning, the tie still holds?

Bertha Cornish

Senlac, Saskatchewan, Canada, December 2, 1943

P.S. An eye witness could have written more convincingly; I was not born at the time, but I have heard Father tell it many times so my account is true to his testimony. In my write-up, I omitted a little item, however, that has not much to do with the light, and is too late, perhaps to insert now. That is, when Father walked up out of the waters of baptism, all the consumption he ever had was gone, not a symptom left, and he never had it afterward.

The Light on the River

Testimonies of John J. Cornish

By James Hunt Stratton

I, James Hunt Stratton, was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, March 8, 1855. At the age of nineteen years I was living in London, Canada, and working at the Perrin and Kenney Cracker Factory. Among the workers at this factory were John J. Cornish, John Dempsey, Albert Dempsey, and John J. Harvey. In London, I boarded with my sister Annie, who kept a boarding house.

The first I heard of The Restoration or Latter Day Saint Church was when John J. Cornish was visiting at my sister's home and had a conversation on religion with an Englishman who boarded at my sister's. I became very interested in the discussion. The Church members sent for a missionary, Arthur Leverton, to come and preach for them. I attended the services and so heard my first Latter Day Saint sermon. There was no elder in London, but John J. Cornish held the office of priest, so the Saints held regular services, at the home of Elijah Sparks. Brother Cornish preached on Sunday nights and we held prayer meeting on Wednesday nights. I was baptized April, 1874, by J. J. Cornish, first candidate in London.

On Wednesday evening, December 27, 1875, two women, Mrs. Mary Taylor and Miss Sarah Lively, wished to be baptized. Miss Lively was visiting in London and wished to return to her home the next day. Arrangements were made for their baptism which was to take place in the Thames River, the customary place for our baptisms.

It was a very dark, misty night, so dark that one could scarcely see a foot ahead. Two of the women folk who started to the baptism ran into a fence because they couldn't see it, and decided to go back home. But most of the members, who were few in number, attended. One of those present has said there were about fifteen members and seventeen non-members present; of the exact number I am not sure, but that number is approximately true.

As we gathered on the bank of the river, Brother Cornish called the meeting to order, and then we sang one or two songs, one of which was: "We will follow none but Jesus". The Brother Cornish walked out into the water to find a suitable depth for baptism, and came back to shore. We could hear the splashing of the water but could not see Brother Cornish. He asked who would go first, and Miss Lively immediately stepped up, and together they started to walk out a little distance. Then a wonderful thing happened!

The first thing I was aware of was that suddenly a very bright light appeared. It was of a golden, mild color, and brighter than anything I know of. It covered the part of the river where Brother Cornish and Sister Lively were standing, and the crowd on the bank. It seemed very wonderful to me and I felt grateful indeed for this acknowledgement by Almighty God of his people. The persecution in London was strong and we needed this additional confirmation to encourage us. The light continued until the baptisms were over and then gradually disappeared. Sister Harrison, who lived one and one-half miles from there, saw the light from the window of her home, and wondered about it.

This experience has been a source of strength and encouragement to me through the years, and I am glad to leave my testimony for the encouragement of others who follow after me. I am now (November, 1943) in my 89th year, and because of the many experiences of my life in the Church, my faith in God shines bright.

James Hunt Stratton

Letter written by J. J. Cornish to Joseph Smith III

London, Ontario, January 5, 1876

Since I last wrote you, I have baptized two more in this city; and here I must tell you that the power of God was manifested in our behalf and to the convincing of those who were unbelievers and some sign seekers. Last Wednesday night Dec. 29th, late in the evening after the prayer meeting, the above two, Sisters Lively and Taylor gave in their names for baptism. We, both saints and outsiders who were at the meeting went to witness the baptism. The night being a very dark and cloudy one, we could scarcely see each other's faces, to discern saint from sinner, and stumbling over hills and valley as we approached the river Thames, south branch, until at last we reached the bank, Then we sang an hymn as usual, had prayer etc. Then as I stepped back and put my foot into the water, a glorious light shone upon us. It was of a beautiful gold color and brighter than the sun; it was straight above us, and was round like a circle from the sky to the ground. Outside this bright circle it was as dark as ever; and as soon as it came the water glistened with its brightness; and with it came a sound as of a rushing wind, and each one was filled with the Spirit and they shouted for joy, and praised the God of heaven. Then one of those who did not belong fell on his knees and asked us to pray for him. "Oh", says he, "this is enough to convince anyone that the Latter Day Saint work is true." He, with three or four more, manifested their desire of uniting with us soon.

O brother, be faithful, put your shoulder to the wheel. We also came across two old time saints, who dug the grave for your father, whose name is Manning. One of them says, "It is the same old sound, the glorious news." His wife bears testimony.

Yours fraternally,
J. J. Cornish

(The above is copied from The True Latter Day Saints Herald, printed, printed January 15, 1876 at Plano, Illinois, also the letter from Sarah Lively below.)

London, Ontario, January 5, 1876

I have been in London for the past three weeks visiting my sister, where I first enjoyed listening to the true gospel as taught by the Latter Day Saints. I was converted under the preaching of Brother. J. J. Cornish and feel rejoiced that I can bear testimony of the truth of the work, fully convinced that it is the work of God; and ever shall I praise God that he has been pleased to lead me from darkness into the light of the gospel. Although a constant attendant of the P. M. C., I was blind to much of the gospel truth, until I was baptized and became a believer in the doctrine taught by the Latter Day Saints. I shall ever bless God for the hour that I submitted to bow in obedience to his commands. I shall never forget the glorious sight witnessed by myself and a number of my brothers and sisters in Christ at once. On entering the water to be baptized, I felt that God was with me and He acknowledged me by shining a beautiful light down upon us from above. The heavens were lighted up with a bright and shining light, which continued to shine until I was immersed in the water; and I rose with the assurance that my sins were washed away and returned home rejoicing.

As yet my parents know nothing of this change, but from my heart I pray that God may he pleased to lead them into the true light that I now rejoice in, and I hope they will very shortly join our number, as I know they never were opposed to the belief and doctrine of the Saints inasmuch as they never heard it.

Praying that we may all continue firm in the strength and power of God, I too am your sister in Christ,

Sarah Lively

I have met ten of the number who were at the baptism mentioned above and their testimony agreed with this testimony of my mother Mrs. R. May whose married name was Sarah Jane May, but at the time of the baptism was Sarah J. Lively.

A copy of a letter written by Mrs. R. May (Roderick) (nee Sarah Jane Lively) to the Saints of the Society Islands Mission. Translated into their language by Sr. Alberta Lake for their Mission paper, November, 1910.

Notwithstanding the thousands of miles that separate us, and the great waves of the deep constantly roll between us, our interest and desires are great for you dear people who live upon the small islands of those distant seas.

We have been especially interested in you since our son, J. Charles May and Brother. Hinman W. Savage, left the land of their birth and their loved ones to answer the call of the Lord to carry the gospel message to you, whose forefathers were scattered upon those islands centuries and centuries ago. In the record written by your ancestors long ago, the Book of Mormon, (chapter and verse not given) says that you shall know of the words spoken by the Lord of your fathers, and that he would remember their posterity, and send his inspired servants to plant in your hearts the true faith, which was given to the saints of former days, and return them to the land of their inheritance.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, there are many great and glorious promises which God has promised to you who receive the gospel. We earnestly pray that you will hearken to the voice of God's servants sent among you from across the seas to teach you the ways of righteousness, that many may be gathered into the kingdom of God, and walk the old, old path wherein they will find peace and rest for their souls. May the love of God and the blessings of heaven abide with you, that you as well as we, might become as one family prepared to meet the Lord, when he comes in all his glory, and hear the midnight cry, "Behold an Lo, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him", and may we be clothed with the wedding garments, spotless and righteous, worthy of entering into the marriage of the Lamb and partake of the supper of the Lord.

And now, dear saints, I desire to write you concerning the wonderful testimony that God has given me as to the truthfulness of this great work established upon the earth in these latter days, for he has given me a knowledge that this is the true church of the living God.

I was born at London, Ontario, Canada in the year 1853, and during the year 1866 my parents lived at Prairie Siding, near Chatham, Ontario. One day during this year my mother and I were alone in the house, when someone came and knocked at our door and asked my mother if he might come in, saying that he was a messenger sent of God to teach us the way of life. We invited him in, and he told us that the true faith had been restored to the earth, that the true church with the fullness of the gospel and the gifts and blessings such as were enjoyed by the church of Jesus Christ in his day and time was again established on the earth, and that this gospel was to be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations and then shall the end come. The beautiful gospel was made so clear and plain to us, such as we had never heard before, and as he told the gospel story, we wondered and marveled at his great knowledge of the purposes and designs of God, which were to come to pass in this the last dispensation of the fullness of times. He then arose making ready to leave, when he turned to my mother and said that he desired to tell us some things that would assure us that the things he had told us were true, and for us to remember this prophecy; that during the year 1870 a war would come to pass between two great nations of Europe, a king would be overpowered and would lose his throne. We took careful note that which he told us, and just four years later war broke out between France and Prussia, and Napoleon was defeated, and lost his power; and thus the prophecy truly came to pass.

He also told us that the day would come when we would hear this gospel preached and that all of the members of our family would become members of the Church of Jesus Christ about which he had spoken. We followed him to the door to get a last look at him, and behold, he was lost to our sight, and we knew of no other person who had seen such a one as he, and we were reminded of the statement of Paul the apostle, wherein he said, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby many have entertained angels unawares." Hebrews 13: 1-2.

Six years following the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the war of 1870, while visiting with friends in London, Ontario, servants of God came preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and as stated by this messenger sent to us, it was the same glorious fundamentals of truth, the same plan of salvation as that which was given to the saints when our dear Lord dwelt here upon the earth among the children of men. After hearing a few sermons preached by Elder J. J. Cornish, the spirit said, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Therefore I asked for baptism on Wednesday night Dec. 29, 1875 at the close of a prayer meeting over which Elder Johnnie Cornish had presided. Twenty members and ten non-members went down to the river Thames to attend the baptism of myself and other lady, whose name is now Sister William Bushnell, now residing here in Independence, MO. It was about ten o'clock when we reached the banks of the river. It was extremely dark that night; so dark that we were not able to see each other. I had a great desire to be baptized first, and suddenly, as Brother Cornish stepped into the water, there descended from above a pillar of light, circular in shape, taking in the portion of the river where the baptism was taking place, also encircling those who were standing on the banks of the river. The light had come down from above as a mighty rushing wind, and was above the brightness of the noon day sun, and the Holy Spirit was poured out upon us in great power from on high. Our hearts were filled with great peace and joy, and we praised and glorified God for this marvelous manifestation of his love and power. All were kneeling and thanking God for this blessing save the man who had been laughing and making fun. And a voice spoke to him saying, "These are my people, do not laugh at them". Then the man turned to Brother Depper and asked him who it was that had spoken, but it was only he, William Clow, the one who had been making fun, who heard the voice. Later, Brother Clow and all his family joined the church, and he is now living here at Independence, Mo.

This pillar of light continued to shine upon us and make clear the water of the flowing river until after the two were baptized. And as Brother Cornish stepped out of the water the light began to ascend gradually until it went out of sight; leaving our hearts filled with an inexpressible joy, and our souls aflame with the spirit of God.

All the non-members present that night became members of the church, and several of them are yet living witnesses as to the truthfulness of the testimony I bear, and the fulfillment of the statement made by the angel to me and my mother that she and all her family would enter into the fold of Gospel, as all her family and all her grandchildren have been baptized into the church.

Dear beloved Saints, this Latter Day Restoration movement is indeed a marvelous work and a wonder, and the work of God as spoken through the prophet Isaiah has come to pass, "They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine." Isaiah 29

I bear this testimony to you in the spirit of truth and soberness, and with the love and fear of God in my heart, and I pray and trust that God will make known to you the truthfulness of this message as you read it. With faith and hope I trust that God will move upon the hearts of the people upon those islands through His spirit, lifting them out of the darkness of this world, from the paths of sin and error, into the true church of the living God, and that this shall come to pass I shall pray continuously.

Your sister in the everlasting covenant,
Sarah Jane May

Sermon by William Clow at St. Joseph, Mo, September 2, 1923, giving an account of his witness of the Light at the baptism in the ministry of Elder J. J. Cornish.

When Paul was making his defense before the multitude and before King Agrippa, he told something of his life before coming to the light; he told who he was and the relations he sustained to the common religion and the people to whom he was talking, before he told concerning his conversion. So I want to say further, that by telling this story tonight I want to illustrate a principle, that of continuous revelation.

If there is one thing that the world disagrees with us on and objects to, it is our thought, our doctrine or claim of continuous revelation. The idea that God can speak to his creatures in this our day, does speak to the, proposes to speak to them, is the great objection to our people from the world's standpoint. I am going to read you a lesson from the 20th chapter of 2 Chronicles. It relates to an incident that; I may explain further:

"It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other besides the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar, which was called En-gedi. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the Lord; even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, And said, O Lord God of our fathers, thou God who art in heaven; and rulest over all the kingdoms of the heathen; and in thy hand thou hast power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee; Thou our God didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend forever. And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying, if, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon, and Moab, and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and destroyed them not; Behold, they reward us not, but have come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee. And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation; And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go ye down against them; behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not go to fight in this day; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem; fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them; for the Lord will be with you.

I have read to the end of the 17th verse. You understand from what was said this morning that I have been more or less interested in Sunday school work from my very early life. The fact is, I learned to read and write in a Sunday school. I didn't go to common day school as you children, most of you have, but in England they gave us poor children who had to work in the fields an opportunity to learn our letters and learn to read and to write during Sunday School. So I have been interested in Sunday school for a long time.

I came to this country in the year 1869. On the way I heard the sailor's first cry, "Land Ho." I was by myself, without a friend on this side of the water, and without knowledge of the people and its conditions. I was going into a strange land and I felt exceedingly strange. So when this cry "Land Ho" went out along the ship, and we were coming near the end of the journey, I felt my loneliness and the need of a friend and I might almost say that my religious experience started from that moment. I went down in the hold of that ship and hid myself from view, and I told the Lord if he would go with me in this strange land I would give him my heart. I intended to do this at the time. I felt that I needed a friend and that I needed God's guidance, I

needed his hand to be with me.

After I got to this side and saw that civilization was as good in this country as in England, I thought I didn't need a friend, I am sorry to say. For the time being I forgot my promise and for a year I paid little or no attention to religious matters. I got curious however, and attended Spiritualist meetings, and got quite wrapped up in spiritualism until I found that departed spirits could tell stories as easily as anybody else could. By watching closely, my mind fixed upon the idea that there was nothing here to lead me to a higher and better life - nothing to stimulate me to purity of conduct, and it didn't fill the necessity of my soul.

Then I became sick for two or three days, so severely sick that I thought I was going to die. I had made the acquaintance of one religious man, and I asked a friend to go and bring him to my bedside. He came and read to me one of the Savior's touching incidents with his disciples just before he was crucified. It touched me very deeply. I recovered, however, in a few days and I attended some revival meetings. I will never forget those revival meetings. Our hymn, "My Faith Looks Up To Thee" was sung by an old gentleman and an old lady. He was the author of that hymn – Dr. Palmer, we called him. I didn't get religion at the mourner's bench, though I prayed earnestly for five weeks. In the following week I began working with a young man I met who also came from England. He started with me to learn the same trade, and we worked side by side. Fortunately he was a very religious man. He frequently went to the attic of a four story building at the noon hour to pray, and sought every opportunity to help me get what was called religion. I am here tonight to tell you tonight that I very distinctly remember when peace came to my soul in that attic, amongst old cast-a-way patterns covered with dust, but peace can come to the seeking soul anywhere. It certainly lifted a load from my sin-sick soul, and for three years I was satisfied with my religious experience in the Methodist Church. I identified myself as closely as I could with the Sunday school work, got married in the meantime, and lived in Detroit, Michigan. They elected me Sunday school superintendent there, in a school with an average attendance of 350 to 375; and the reason I have read this text to you is because it was the occasion of the first real thing that puzzled my mind when called upon to conduct what was called a teacher's class.

One of the lessons that we had was this incident that I have just read. It contained a text that is very frequently used in revival meetings; "Stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord with you." It was very much stressed by evangelists in their work. But in later years I have seen how little, seemingly, the evangelists of the world understand what they quoted and stressed. This king Jehoshaphat was in trouble. He called a fasting. He didn't call the generals of his army. He didn't call his cabinet together, but he simply called the hosts of Judah to fast at Jerusalem before the house of the Lord. He quotes one of the promises the Lord made when Solomon dedicated the temple, "that the time would come when my people will be troubled by pestilence, and the sword, and they will come before his house and confess their sins. Then hear thou Him," Jehoshaphat quotes that prayer in substance. We need an answer to the prayer that God gave promise to when he filled that temple at the end of Solomon's prayer. I want you to catch the thought here; how sublime the faith, how childlike the faith on that auspicious occasion when the nation and the people were liable to be overwhelmed with countless enemies. He didn't do as is done in modern times. He didn't go to the factories and begin purchasing implements of destruction. He went to the Lord, and this story tells us they went out to battle singing and praising God, and they found things just as the Lord told them they would find them. The Lord, it says, set an ambush and made one of the armies fight the other until everyone of the enemy helped to destroy the other. And Jehoshaphat and his people were four days gathering the spoil.

I don't need to stress this thought any more. We all admit that the Lord spoke and directed the forces of mankind in the ages when this history was being made. There is no dispute about that. But the question arises, "Is the Lord the same?" We speak very strongly of the fact that he is unchangeable, and under like circumstances where some need of this character should arise, have we not just as much claim upon God as they had? If we should proclaim a fast and gather the inhabitants of the cities around the house of the Lord and lay our cause before him in childlike simplicity and confidence, would it be strange to you Latter Day Saints that the spirit of the Lord should rest upon a young man in the midst of the congregation? I think you can see that story literally and it isn't strange to you. But at the time we had this incident for a lesson, it was incomprehensible to us. We could not understand

how the Lord could speak through that young man, and all Judah, with their king accept with implicit confidence what was said. There must have been some peculiar power or influence accompanying the message that we then did not sense or understand.

I have been meeting for some years with a Bible class made up of businessmen in Independence. They represent all phases of religion, and some of them no religion at all. They will go home from this study of the Old and New Testaments, and look upon these things as being strange, but to us Latter Day Saints it conveys the thought that those things can be in this day as well as in the past. I want to ask every one of you tonight, what reasonable reason could you give why the Lord should not answer us in the hour of need as he did then? I will leave the question with you.

This principle of continuous revelation - put it in another form, the possibility of God speaking to his creatures - is there anything unreasonable about that? You men in our Bible class this morning all agreed that the creator had made us all in his own image in form, given us the power of speech and the necessity of speech, and why would it be unreasonable that he should continue speaking to his children under any circumstances that might require his direction? You could not give any reason why he should not. And yet, without any exception that I know of, of course, I can't pretend to all of the men who have tried to bring about a reformation, nor all that they have tried to do, for from the earliest dark ages men, good men, arose with their earnestness, and that implies that God has planted in the human heart and intended to bring back the religion of the Old and New Testament into actual operation - not one of the reformers has ever sought to incorporate the idea of continuous and present day revelation in their reformed religion. There may be exceptions but I just simply say that I do not know of any. There have been wise men, good men, men acquainted with their work; why have they not incorporated in their creeds this principle of continuous revelation? I do not know what your answer would be, but I can only give you mine. The Savior said, addressing the Jews, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, and whether I speak of myself." (John 7:17) The writer, in closing up the record we call the Book of Mormon, implies the self same principle. The man who wants to know and who will earnestly and devoutly go before God and ask as to whether the book is true or not, God shall make it known to him. "If ye shall ask with a sincere heart with real interest, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost." (Moroni 10:5) Here is something fundamental. The Savior himself did not ask those Jews to accept his work alone. He called in God as a partner in his proposition. He was willing to risk all that he claimed on the answer of God to those who should make a proper appeal.

The Book of Mormon stands exactly upon that proposition. Any honest man, with the supreme love of the truth, or any man who is really honest and earnest and wants to know whether this book God, the book promises that God will make it known to him. There is the finest chance in the world to prove that the Book of Mormon or the writers of it were false. It is wonderful to me to think that a man could stand before an intelligent civilization and propose to give them a record that has that kind of a promise in it. There have been some people, not members of this church, who have asked me; "Mr. Clow, has there been a real demonstration that God does speak to you or to your people in this age?" That is what I am now going to answer.

In the year 1875, my wife and I returned from Detroit, Michigan to London, Ontario, Canada with the intention of spending the holidays with her father and mother, and having our first born boy, then eight months of age, baptized by the brother who married us. That's very human isn't it? But the first that greeted our ears when we got into Mother's home, one of the girls came up and whispered in my ear: "Pa has joined the Mormons." It was awful, just simply awful. She was a young lady, unmarried, true, but she knew what it mean - that littler terse sentence. It carried the possibility of another woman coming into that house. It was an awful thing, but that is what it conveyed to us. I tell you that I felt that our Christmas holiday wasn't going to be a very pleasant one. I couldn't see how it was possible that my old father-in-law, just as good a Methodist as ever kneeled and shouted, could have gone so far astray as to expect ever to bring some other woman into the home. I assure you it dampened my expectations of a joyous Christmas holiday.

A man lived next door who was a splendid fellow when he was sober, and something else when he wasn't. He had a very nice wife whom we all liked. We had tried to get him to attend the cottage prayer meetings, thinking it

might help him to reform, and thus alleviate his wife's sufferings. There was something good about that man, but when the old spirits got in him the good went out. He was a cab driver and owned his own cab, and started out with his cab and team early each morning. Sometime before we made this visit he had become interested in the teachings of the Latter Day Saints, had joined their church, and dropped all of his drinking habits. He was very much enthused in his new religion.

The next morning after we arrived, as he was ready to start, he saw me and stopped his team to greet me, and began to tell me of his new religion. He began to teach me of the "signs following those believers", "gifts of the Holy Ghost," and "the fullness of the gospel." He was so interested in his talk that he forgot his team standing there, and just talked the whole morning long about the fullness of the gospel. That was a term I had never heard before. The gospel was the gospel, I always understood, but he had this qualifying term, the fullness of the gospel which he said was something we had not been receiving in the Methodist church.

To make a long story short, on the next Wednesday evening he rapped on our window. There had been an accumulation of snow, two to three feet up to that time, but most of it had melted. There had been some rain, and although the river had been frozen over very thickly, it was broken up and a dense fog was over us; the temperature was mild. It was so densely dark that you couldn't see your hand before your face. My mother-in-law had returned from taking care of her daughter, Mrs. Joseph, in Toronto, one hundred miles away. She came in just that evening, and the news was broken to her just as it was to us the night before: "Pat has joined the Mormons." It was an awful situation; yes sir, awful, and we had a quarrel, I might say the whole evening. About half-past ten, possibly eleven o'clock, Brother Depper, the neighbor referred to, rapped on the window and said: "Will, there's going to be a baptism"; and to get out of the atmosphere of that kitchen I put on my hat and coat and hurried out. He was waiting at the gate and the rest of the crowd had gone on toward the river. We could hear them but could not see them. We followed on and when we got to them we found them standing at the river bank. They were at their usual place of baptism, but the water had risen until it had attained a depth of fifteen feet. The ice had broken up and was making considerable noise.

Brother Depper said: "Brother Cornish, you can't baptize here tonight." "Well, what shall we do? One of the sisters who wanted to be baptized wants to return to her home and wants to be baptized tonight before she goes. She lived seventy or eighty mile from there. "Well, let's go up to the Lord," answered Bro. Depper. We turned up the riverside and started towards the ford - Brother Depper took hold of my arm, and two other young men walked along side us. As we walked beside the river, we would sometimes step in a little water or sometimes snow, and jokingly I told Brother Depper every time I stepped in some water, "See; now I am baptized. I will have another wife in a day or two." We went on, walked about two blocks before we got to the ford that crossed the river. We went down into that little wagon road and stood on a gravelly beach; some of the company stood on the grassy bank, which was in a slushy wet condition. There they separated into two companies; the members of the church gathered around Brother Cornish and the two to be baptized, though Brother Depper still kept hold of my arm. We stood off to the east and every minute he kept talking the fullness of the gospel to me, until they got ready to commence, which they did by singing the hymn, "Lo, on the water's brink we stand."

I am very sorry that they did not bring that hymn out of the Old Saints Harp. It seemed to me to carry the sentiment that should exist in our hearts when we go into the water. Brother Cornish would repeat four lines, and they would sing that; he would repeat four more lines and they would sing that. This gave me an opportunity to know just what they were singing, and it certainly was the first thing that impressed me favorably. I thought, "they really are earnest and sincere." When I heard him pray I was still more convinced that they were. I thought to myself, "that man is one whose mind is not corrupted with what is called Mormonism." It seemed to me there was something different about him; he was earnest; there was nothing elegant, nothing scholarly in his manner, yet what he did surely flowed from a humble sincere heart.

I listened. He left the edge of the water and walked out, as we could hear, though we couldn't see, until he got to a reasonable depth and returned, and as soon as he returned he asked which would go first. I remember very distinctly just what occurred. I heard Sister Lively, now Sister Roderick May, speak up quickly, "I will" They

started down to the water, and as their feet went into that shallow water we heard a sound like the sound of the wind off in the distance, which seemed to be keeping time, so to speak, with each of their steps. It increased in volume and nearness until it seemed as if it were going to burst upon us, like a mighty rushing wind. You have been out in the harvest on fields perhaps on a very hot day and no air stirring when suddenly you hear the wind at a distance and expectantly await its arrival; that would give you an idea of the way this sounded. I expected to hear the wind so strongly that it would almost blow me over; but instead of wind it proved to be a cloud-like light, rounded at the bottom, which descended to the water and spread out. Inside of a minute or so we were encircled in a light. I judged it to be about one hundred and fifty to one hundred and seventy five feet in diameter, round in form, and I will describe it as closely as I can. I knew there were some people behind us on the bank. At the very moment this light, came upon us, I for the instant thought these people at our back must have some kind of magic lantern to produce this phenomenon and instantly I turned my head to see, and what a sight met my eyes. There was no lantern, or anything of the kind, and there wasn't a person standing, nor were they kneeling, but prostrate in that wet grass and there were exclamations as of fear, such as "Lord, forgive me; Lord spare me; etc," their faces to the ground with indications of fear and terror. Then I knew it was not produced by any power of man.

As I turned back to face the river I saw this light was different from anything I had ever seen. I want to stop here and say that the word light isn't the proper word. The last few months I have had some correspondence with Brother Cornish about the word light as used in connection with this occurrence, and it does not convey the proper idea.

Whenever you see that word light you have in mind electric light or candle light, or some other artificial light, but there isn't anything I ever saw that can compare with what I saw at the river. Ordinarily a little distance away from light it shows dimmer and dimmer until the darkness and the light blend, but in this case the light extended just as completely to the darkness as this light does to that wall, and the darkness and light were side by side and just as intense in the last half inch as any place. I noticed another peculiar thing about it as I happened to look down into the water at several inches deep I could see the minutest grain of sand and pebbles in the bottom of that river. My Father-in-law and I built a factory within a stone's throw from there afterwards, and I went there many times in broad day light, and I never could see those grains of sand with the brightest sunlight. Another thing, there seemed to be something about this light that was tangible to the touch. It seemed as if it were almost a substance you could feel. If you have read those passages of scriptures in Acts, chapters 9:22, 26 you will have noticed there that the light Paul saw exceeded the sun at noonday. So did this.

Brother Cornish, in his answer to my letter said, "Brother Clow, a few days before that occurrence I was told through the voice of the spirit that if I should remain active, if I should pursue my work in accordance with his light, the Lord promised me I should see his glory. When I was passing through that water, with that light full upon us, I said, O Lord, this is the fulfillment of that promise; I have seen thy glory." I am not surprised when I read that those old Israelites could not look upon the face of Moses when the glory of the Lord covered his countenance.

Turning again to the river, I saw those saints, all of them upon their knees praising and thanking God. Immediately I came to this conclusion, the Lord God is in this matter." As that thought passed thru my mind, a voice spoke to me and said (I shall always remember every syllable of that sentence, it is as clear to my mind's eye tonight as it was that night) "These are my people; you must not laugh at them."

That event was nearly fifty years ago, and that answer and injunction that the Lord gave to me is just as necessary now as it was at that particular time.

We left that river - seventeen people who were not members of the church and fifteen who were, thirty-two in all, after the light went away and it went away with the same noise with which it came. Everybody was engaged with his own thoughts, not a word or whisper, and the only noise was that of their walking. After they had come to the shore and dismissed, we turned away and walked possibly a block and a half before anybody commenced to talk, but as soon as the silence was broken, everybody was talking. I listened to them talking. Now, mind you, I was the stranger among them; I was the mocker, if there was any such thing, and I didn't feel exactly at home. As I

listened I gathered that none of them had heard the voice except myself. The first one I remember speaking about it with was Brother Albert Dempsey, whom you all know. He was walking by my side and I asked him: "Did you hear that voice?" "What voice?" he said. I answered, "A voice spoke." He said, "I never heard it." In those chapters I indicated in Acts, Paul's companions saw the light but heard not the voice. It is parallel with this.

I will venture to tell you another story connected with my own personal experience. That same night after they had changed their clothes, we gathered at Brother Depper's home and had an experience meeting, which lasted until one or two o'clock. One of the young ladies who had been baptized that night had to go two or three blocks on a side street out of the general way, and some of the young men proposed to take her there. After two or three proposed to do this we finally decided that we all take her home, which we did, and then we held a second meeting, and the family next door to them called up out of their bed to hear the story of the light at the baptism. So they came. As it was being told the room was filled with a hallowing influence and power. We prayed, and soon the Spirit of the Lord rested upon one of the members of that little company and he spoke in tongues and in prophecy. It just looked to me before the morning came, that the whole bible was a new book; the experiences related therein were actually ours too; no room for doubt; what had been faintly believed had become a close-up knowledge, and confidence was here established upon a rock so firm that it seemed to me as though life commenced anew.

I am sorry I have not lived in all details up to what I have felt it was my duty to do from that day to this, but notwithstanding the weaknesses of the human will, dear Saints, I must say this principle of continuous revelation is the great thing of the gospel, one of the most potent factors of Christ's teachings to humanity. Yet how little understood and appreciated. It has been the great stay of my religious thought and life. If it were needed I would go down on any corner of your streets and declare it to everybody

It is perhaps needless to say my wife and I were soon baptized, and for over a year we enjoyed many of the gifts and blessings of the gospel and the Savior's promise, "These signs shall follow them that believe" was surely fulfilled.

In May, 1877, under the urge of gathering to Zion, we started for Independence, stopping at Detroit to visit our old friends of the Methodist church and Sunday school of which I had been a teacher and associate superintendent. We were very soon asked to tell our reasons for leaving the Methodists for the Latter Day Saints, which we were very glad to do. The family where we were staying hurried an invitation to our old associates to come. The house was soon filled with these old friends, amongst them Richard Howlett, a lovable man who had been an apprentice with me. We had roomed together, attended the same church and prayed together. He seemed to feel very sad that we had joined the Latter Day Saints. He had gone a block out of his way going to church, apparently to avoid meeting me, and when we did meet he would not so much as lift his eyes as we passed.

We related the story as I have told it to you, and explained the gospel in those features in which it differed from what we were accustomed to hear in the Methodist church. The company was very much interested as we related the many instances in which fasting and prayer had been followed with the signs following administrations. This, of course, was new and as fascinating as strange, but so scriptural that little attempt was made to deny or question. The company broke up about 10:30, a few remaining for further questions. They stayed until nearly 1:00 o'clock when we proposed to have prayer and then adjourn. A spirit of deep solemnity and earnestness pervaded all. In the act of rising, a delightful sensation seemed to fill my being, and without volition of my own I was lifted and carried in front of Richard Howlett, with the message:

"Yea, verily, the Spirit saith unto you, my servant: You shall yet understand my gospel and obey it and shall preach the same unto many, they with you shall rejoice in its blessings and fullness."

This was delivered so unexpectedly and with such power, that all were silent except for an occasional sob and most of them were in tears.

The next day I visited the foundry where Mr. Howlett was working. As soon as he saw me, he left his work, and coming to meet me put forth his hand to clasp mine his eyes full of tears and his voice stopped by emotion. He held my hand in both his until the tears dropped from his face, then turned away, apparently unable to speak, and returned to his work. I went on until I came in sight of the man in whose house we had met. Seeing me, he too, left his work. Coming quickly he grasped my hand in both of his: with upturned face, (he was quite short in stature) and tears flowing, in deep emotion he said: "Brother Clow, there was power in that thing last night."

This event was quite important to me; whatever of doubt or question remained relative to the return of the gifts of the gospel especially that of prophecy, was now dispelled. How wonderful the experiences related in the scriptures appeared, yet how near they appeared now; they are removed from the realm of tradition or his historical statement only, and verified by personal experience; belief in continuous revelation is supported by actuality.