

begin at the bottom and climb up. He must be placed in an unnatural or abnormal state, and climb to his natural or normal one.

Indeed I believe that every misfortune or trial that comes to man, is for his development. Death, which many look forward to with dread, is but the means of his final development. Can you think that nature has seemingly worked so hard for his advancement, and then at death, is he to be abandoned? She has always had the supply for his demand, and is she going to fail him? He has been striving all his life to gain what knowledge he could. Following the instinct of his soul which has been planted within him, he has followed her continual cry, "Seek and find." Nay, she will not desert him. Whether I scan her face superficially, or whether I delve into her inmost soul, she cries out to me, "I will not." And when man has reached the other side, there he shall learn as no mortal can. There he shall look upon the expressions of the divine and derive from it knowledge that he has never attained to before. There he shall pick the flower and say, "Now, I understand." And he shall continue to advance there, as his faith shall decrease when he nears perfection, and as his love shall increase, he will look back upon those who are struggling in the rear and sympathize with them in their misconceptions, yet glory in their determination to reach the intent of their creation.



THE STORY OF MY CONVERSION.

HOW I HEARD AND ACCEPTED THE LATTER-DAY MESSAGE.

BY ELDER J. H. LAWN.

SCENES AT NAUVOO AND CARTHAGE; CROSSING THE PLAINS; WILD TIMES AT FORT SUTTER; THE ADVENT OF POLYGAMY; THE MESSAGE OF THE REORGANIZATION.

I WAS BORN the 9th of April, 1839, one mile from Macomb, McDonough County, Illinois, near what was then the Burlington stage road. My father was Scotch, born in the city of Glasgow. His name was John. My mother's maiden name was Eunice Corrinthia Twitchell. She was born in Ohio. They were married in Illinois. I was their second child, the first, a girl, died before I was born. Then followed two brothers. My father was a stone-cutter and drafter by trade. He did some fine work in the Macomb cemetery, which I believe still survives him. He, when a child, was christened into the Catholic Church.

He was employed by the Latter Day Saints, and worked on the Nauvoo Temple about one year, as near as I can remember. He made a large color-painted draft of the baptismal font, resting upon the backs of twelve stone oxen, and helped to execute that part of the work.

My mother kept the draft, with many others of his execution, for many years after we came to California; but, through continued moving from place to place, they, with many other pre-

cious remembrances, have been lost. If the records of the different workmen on the Temple are in existence, you will find his name written John "Long," but he afterwards fought in the Mexican War, and for some unknown (to me) cause, he always wrote home above the name of John "Lawn"; and we boys adopted the latter name right away, because we liked it better. This explains one



ELDER J. H. LAWN.

reason why there are so many different family names, for there surely must be some cause for their origin.

My father was one of the guards, placed by Governor Ford, at Carthage Jail, the day before Joseph and Hyrum Smith were martyred; and heard each of them speak from the stairway to the guard below; and when Hyrum spoke, he told them to take their pencils and note down Revelation, the sixth chapter, from ninth to eleventh verses inclusive; "For," said he, "that is now about to be fulfilled."

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”—Revelation 6: 9-11.

My father made a note of it, at once, and was so much affected by what he had both seen and heard while there, that as soon as he was released from duty that evening, he came home and read those three verses to my mother, and turned the leaf down.

The above incident was told me by my mother, some years afterward, as nearly as I can remember, as related by her; and she showed the Bible to me, with the verses marked, and the leaf down. I have this Bible now, just as he left it in 1847, when he died.

My mother, the two younger brothers, and myself, together with my mother's people, and many neighbors, left Illinois in the summer of 1848, with ox- and mule-teams, to “cross the plains”—yes, and mountains, too, for the land of “Sunshine, and of Gold,” California.

The winter of 1848 and 1849, we spent in what was then called “Brown's Settlement,” on the Ogden Creek, and built five log houses, where, I am told, Ogden City has since been built up.

We had a hard time, through that dreadful, cold winter, to keep from freezing to death, and to procure the necessary things of life; but by trading some with the Indians, who frequently came to our camp in squads, and by all hands, both old and young, both male and female, working round the settlement, wherever they could get employment, we pulled through; and as soon as the snow would permit, in the spring, we resumed our journey. From start to finish, this whole trip was full of hardship, romance, and daring; but by the building of numerous bridges and other road work, and twice ferrying streams in our wagon-boxes, (lashing two large boxes with sides together, and a large stay-rope across the stream, then running a wagon astride the union of the two boxes, and “all ahoy,” we pass over) and after the loss of some of the stock by drinking alkali water, and by Indian raids, and slaughter, we finally crossed the line which separates Nevada from California, on the west side of Carson Valley. We were now in California; and time to strike camp again, in the rough mountains.

I was driving three yoke of oxen to my mother's big wagon, which I had driven from Illinois, on this evening, and after stopping my wagon in its allotted place, I dropped the wagon tongue, or pole, and pulled the bow from the neck of my near wheel ox, at which instant, “whist” came an arrow, just missing me by a few inches, and entered the body of my ox, “old Buck,” before I had lifted the yoke from his neck. He staggered back a few feet and fell; the arrow had entered just behind his shoulder, and touched

his heart. He died in a short time. The moment the arrow struck him, I turned round and saw an Indian standing on a very large rock, upon the side of the hill, which was covered with brush. I immediately called to my uncle, Lorenzo Twitchell, who was next to me in the rear, and pointing, said, "Kill that Indian." In an instant he stepped to my side, with his rifle in hand, and the Indian possibly thinking himself safe, raised his left hand with his bow clutched in it, and beckoned defiance. But at the crack of the gun he threw up both hands, and fell backwards off the rock. I said, "You have got him, and I will go and get his bow and quiver of arrows," and started to run; but my mother, and all the camp, called me back, as they feared there might be other Indians skulking near. Well, that night all the men stood guard, and the next morning I had to yoke a cow into my team.

On the twentieth day of June, 1849, we arrived at what is now the city of Sacramento. It was then a village of tents and canvas houses. There was but one lumber building there, and it was not then quite finished. It was owned by one John Fowler; and, when finished, was named "The California Hotel."

I was ten years old when we finished our long trip, and had driven my mother's team from start to finish, except one time, when we had to travel nearly all night, in order to reach water, I was too tired to walk any farther, and mother got out on the sandy desert, and drove the team while I slept in the wagon.

I took my turn with the "other men" in standing guard at night, when among the hostile tribes of Indians. There were two of our company shot by Indians one night, both men, while in bed. One was killed. Have forgotten his name. The other, a Mr. Ferguson, got well. They were shot with leaden bullets, many of which were fired into the camp within a moment's time. It is marvelous that no others were killed; for balls penetrated other wagons. This occurred after we had passed by Chimney Rock, the second night I think.

Shortly after we got to Sacramento, my mother was married to Silas Beckwith, who had crossed the plains in our train. He clerked in a canvas store for Samuel Brennan, some three months, and then rented the old John Sutter house, out one mile east from what was then called the city. This was a large adobe building, surrounded by many others of like material, and constituted "Sutter's Fort." For this large building and its annexes he paid eight hundred dollars per month rent. We ran it as a hotel, lodging house, and full blast saloon, during the fall and winter of 1849. He paid, at one time, two hundred dollars per barrel for flour. We got one dollar per meal, and the same price for a single bed. He put me in as general bartender, and assistant receiver of moneys. I have "dished out" thousands of drinks at twenty-five cents each, and the same for a cigar. And one time, when it was difficult to renew our stock of liquors, I made them pay, for more than a week, fifty cents a drink, and they took fully as much of it at that price, as when cheaper. There were three large monte banks, one faro bank, a rolette table, and all kinds of chance games with cards.

There were times during that extreme winter, that some nights there would be more than two hundred men in that saloon, playing those games and drinking; I have many times known of some old miner, coming up to the bar, and calling out, "All hands come up and take a drink on me. Set 'em up young man." And I would set 'em up for a string of thirty-five or forty minutes at a time. And he would throw a big bag of gold dust on the counter, and say, "Take your pay out of that"; and many times I would guess at the number of drinks and cigars taken, and then neck the bag with thumb and finger, and guess again at the number of ounces I was pouring from the bag into our large white pitcher which stood on the counter to receive it; and never a word, or even a grunt, from any one of them.

I relate the above incident to show how much more liberal a man is, when paying for whisky at the bar, than he is when paying his grocery-bill, for that which his family has had the privilege of assisting him to consume. Toward spring, my stepfather took a man in with him as partner, and he robbed us of about all we had.

In 1851, we moved to San Juan Bautista (St. John the Baptist), then Monterey County, but now in this, San Benito County. I worked with my stepfather at the carpenter trade for about two years, during which time I went to school a little; after which I had six months' schooling without a break. This, together with five or six months in Illinois, constituted my school education. Nevertheless, a Seventh Day Adventist, by the name of Lamb, twenty-two years ago, in San Juan, after hearing me through two discourses reply to him on his unconsciousness of the soul, after the death of the body, and seeing that the tide of opinion was against him, said to me, aside from the others: "Bro. Lawn, your victory here is because your education is superior to mine. I have only had ten years of schooling, and am now going to Oakland, to finish my education, and when I am ready I will come back here and have it out with you." He then gave me fifty cents to help pay for the hall I had used. I thanked him both for the money and the compliment, and said, "Yes, Bro. Lamb, education is a grand thing, a great blessing, and I thank God for what I have," and further said, "I do not believe any amount of education will ever enable any person to convince another that black is white, or that darkness is light, or *vice versa*." He at once conceded that, and started to school, while I thanked God for the light shed abroad through the glorious gospel, which I had accepted thirteen years before. Have never seen or heard from him since.

I should, before this, have said that although my mother and her people belonged to the Wesleyan Methodist Church, my father had a Catholic priest visit our house and christen me and my two younger brothers, when I was six years old; and when we moved to San Juan in 1851, there was no other religion taught there but the Catholic; and the first two years there I occasionally, with my associates, attended that church, but was somewhat recreant to my duty as a Catholic. I never went to "confession"; but will here confess that it was almost time for me not only to make a con-

feffion, but to make a decided change in my life for the better; because I was "running wild" with "wild boys," as my mother said, and I think she knew what she was talking about, for most mothers do, as will be conceded.

In 1853 there was a Sunday-school organized there by the Methodists and Baptists, as quite a number of those people had moved in, and near the town. I attended that Sunday-school regularly, and will here say, for the benefit and encouragement of all Sunday-school teachers who may read this, that is what led me to begin to investigate the claims of Christianity. I shall ever remember with gratitude, my dear old Mrs. Brown, then a widow, and long since dead, who was my teacher,—full of charity, perseverance, and pleasantness. At the end of each month, she would present each of her class some little token of her remembrance; and to the one committing to memory the most Bible verses, and reciting them in school, she would give a nice little religious book. I was fortunate enough to get three of those books. She was a Methodist lady, but I remember her with respect; as her care for and labor with me has in after years proved to be of great benefit in my ministry. I refer to the numerous passages of scripture she induced me to memorize. And it was but a short time after she moved away, till I had use for some of those verses. I went and heard a Baptist minister preach several times, and although he did not preach the Bible as I seemed to understand it, from my recent schooling, yet he taught baptism by immersion, and I said to my mother, "I want to be baptized."

To this she replied, "All right, Henry, if you think this church is the right one, go on and join it."

Just then they began to sing a closing hymn, and the preacher came down from the pulpit and began shaking hands with the congregation. He and they were all singing. He soon came to me, and I took his hand and said, "I want to be baptized."

He said, "All right, young man, you have found the grace of God, and feel that your sins are pardoned, do you?"

I said, "No, I am astonished to hear a minister of the gospel ask such a question as that of a repentant sinner, as I am. I want to be baptized *for* the remission of my sins, as the Bible teaches baptism is for that purpose," and at once quoted him Luke 3: 3.

Just then the singing ceased, and I heard nothing but my own voice, as I stood before that preacher, in my sins, a boy of fourteen, and in the midst of a church full of people. I stopped speaking, and he then said, "No, young man, I shall never baptize a sinner."

To which I replied, "Well, brother, you surely must know that Peter and the other apostles, on the day of Pentecost, baptized sinners; for who is a greater sinner than a murderer?" I then grew bolder and began to quote the second chapter of Acts; for I then knew it as well as I did my alphabet, while they all stood quiet. I ran it carefully down to the forty-first verse inclusive, and then began to comment on the thirty-eighth verse, when he said, "Young man, you would make a better Mormon than a Baptist."

He then left me and dismissed his meeting. That was the last

of his meetings we attended, and my first sermon. Have often thought of my youthful encounter with that old preacher. Less than a year from this time there was a Mormon elder, William McClellan, came to our town, but could get no public place in which to preach. My grandfather, Joshua Twitchell, had a large house, and let him hold meetings there. He also preached at the houses of other neighbors, and we all attended his meetings. He preached the gospel as we now preach it, so far as he went, but said nothing about the marriage relation, that I remember. I know he said nothing favoring polygamy, as the sequel will prove later on. This man preached there about a month and baptized some fifty, including my stepfather, mother, self, and youngest brother, Lorenzo, my grandfather, grandmother, uncles, aunts, and neighbors; and he organized a branch, with Ephraim Twitchell (my grandfather's brother), president. It was soon announced that a conference would be held in my grandfather's house and doorway.

The time arrived, and a few of the leading men of the church were present, including Parley P. Pratt. He advised and counseled us to sell out as soon as possible, and go either to San Bernardino, this State, or to Carson Valley, Nevada. We were as ignorant and as innocent of polygamy lurking behind, under cover, as new-born babes. This was the summer of 1854; and every member of the church at once began to prepare to leave.

Uncle Ephraim Twitchell, the branch president, and a few other families, left that fall for San Bernardino; and the remainder of us, after sacrificing our homes, left for Carson Valley the spring following. After traveling a month with our teams, and driving our loose stock, we finally drove down the mountain, into the edge of Carson Valley (it was about time to camp for the night); we drove to a house just ahead of us, and my grandfather asked the man if there was a chance to camp near there. He asked, "Where are you moving to?" He was soon told who we were, and that we intended to settle in the valley.

Well, he just jumped for joy, and said, "Thank God; I am a Latter Day Saint, too. Just camp down there close by; so we can have a good talk this evening, and go into the garden there and help yourselves to all the vegetables you wish. They won't cost you a cent."

But we told him we would pay him for such garden truck as we wished.

He said, "No, take all you want, and welcome; *for there are five different gardens here. Each of my wives has her own garden, and I know each of them will want you to take vegetables from her garden.*"

"Your wives?" repeated my grandfather. "Have you more than one wife?"

"Yes," said he, "I am blessed with five." And then he laughingly told us that he had "two whites, two natives (squaws), and one colored woman."

Well, suffice to say, this was Saturday evening, and we laid over

till Monday, then drove to within a mile of Carson City, and made a permanent camp, and the next day some of us went to the town, and there found out, to our regret, that what Polygamist No. 1 had told us, was true: "They all believed in, and many were then living in, polygamy."

We at once decided to return as soon as our stock recruited a little; so, the next Monday morning, we all, with regrets and dire forebodings, because of the financial loss and physical hardship, but more especially the loss of our faith and hope in what we had so recently held to be dearer than life, all through deception, began to retrace our steps. There were five teams of us. We stopped three months near Angels' Camp, Calaveras County, this State, to work, some with teams, others in the gold mines. I worked in the mines. We then came back as near our old homes in the San Juan Valley as was possible, and settled down again.

We were not only discouraged, but heartsick, at the position we now occupied among our old neighbors; and I believe had it not been for them, the greater part of us would have renounced the name of "Latter Day Saint." But they would occasionally nag us with the appellation of "Mormon," and tell us, "The whole thing is a humbug," etc., which to us was a blessing in disguise, in that it renewed the "fire" shut up in our bones, and stimulated us to action (see Jeremiah 20: 7-9); and, although there was not one among us who held the priesthood, we at times had our prayer- and testimony-meetings; and some of us had the power of speech sufficiently to silence our enemies when attacked; for we knew the gospel was from heaven, even though its appendage, polygamy, had its origin from the bottomless pit.

I was married March 12, 1860, to Rhoda Ann Coffman, three weeks before my majority, she being in her fifteenth year. To this union have been added eleven children, five boys and six girls. Our children (those living) are all married except the youngest, he is almost twenty, and is now from home, working with his brother. We are alone, as in the beginning, but older. All our children belong to the church. James, the oldest, is an elder, and now president of the Sacramento Branch. John, the next son, is an elder, and now president of the San Francisco Branch. Fred, the third son, is a priest, and now acting in that office in the San Jose Branch.

In 1867, I, with my family, moved to what is now Mulberry, San Benito County. We ran our farm of one hundred and eighty-six acres.

In the summer of 1873, Bro. John R. Cook came to our house, presenting the claim of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Well, I just swallowed every word of it from first to last. He preached many times in our house, and the schoolhouse; and finally the neighbors opened their houses to him, and he preached there till there were several ready for baptism. And as he at that time held only the Aaronic priesthood, he wrote to Bro. C. W. Wandell, of the seventy, at San Francisco, to come

and help him, and he responded at once, and preached some wonderful sermons.

September 14, 1873, I was baptized by Bro. Cook, as was my wife, and the three eldest children and several of our neighbors. And Bro. Wandell confirmed all of us, and the next Sunday, September 21, others were baptized by Bro. Cook; and he and Bro. Wandell organized the San Benito Branch, and ordained me to the office of priest, and I was chosen as president of the branch of twenty-three members.

HOLLISTER, California.



AN INCIDENT IN LIFE.

None has the power of language to portray
 The beauty of unfolding bloom;
 Nor yet the comprehension of the passing ray
 Of life, between the cradle and the tomb.
 We prate the knowledge of our learned men,
 And feel that they in realms of wisdom move,—
 And yet with all their wisdom and their ken
 They fail the source of life to prove!
 No more have they the power to lengthen life;
 Or palliate its misery and its woe;
 Compared with Him, who, in our strife,
 His blessings on us doth bestow.



WE FEEL that the "incident" clearly portrays the sentiment encouched in the above crude attempt at poetry.

Some years ago two young men were chosen by the appointing power and ratified by church conclave to proceed to a foreign shore and there, in their weak way, undertake to represent the church. We pass by the detail of the long and wearisome journey, first via emigrant train and then across the vast expanse of salt water, some eight thousand miles, via steerage (of which the less said the better) and commence with their landing in the commercial center, on the eastern seaboard of the island continent of Australia.

As a result of having a Chinese crew of stokers (firemen) the steamer was not allowed to go to the wharf, and the disembarking was all done with the help of a small steamer. Strangers in a strange land, these young men first sought a hotel and after dinner sought information as to the time of their starting for a coastal town, something like one hundred and twenty miles to the northward, of which they had been informed by letter brought to the steamer before their disembarking.

Obtaining the necessary information, and learning that they could not leave until the following night, they next hunted up the home of one whose name but not address had been obtained before leaving their native shores. Here they were hospitably entertained until the time of their departure, their host going with them, as it was to be a conference and the organization of a district.

Arrived in due course, they were housed at the home where the incident occurred. After the conference came a few days of rest into which was sandwiched a fishing trip which proved fruitful both