

CORNISH TO EVANS

An Open Letter to R. C. Evans



By J. J. CORNISH

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Cornish to Evans

NEW WESTMINSTER, BRITISH COLUMBIA.

MR. R. C. EVANS,
TORONTO, ONTARIO.

Dear Brother: Your letter and papers came to this place about three months ago. I was many miles away at the time of their arrival. The letter was forwarded, but the papers remained here until I returned a few days ago.

In your letter you say, "There is no man living that I would sooner see come out of the Mormon delusion than Johnnie Cornish." You also say, "I have had my eyes opened to the fact that Joseph Smith was an adulterer, liar, polygamist, false prophet, etc." Now, Richard, you and I have had to meet such assertions for many years, and we met them successfully, and all agreed that if Joseph Smith, who had been an instrument in the hands of the Almighty in restoring the everlasting gospel, had fallen, it would not prove that the gospel was not true, but that he had proven false to the gospel and God.

In your letter of February 26, 1919, you say, "Johnnie, I have not left a single principle of the gospel that you taught me." Why, Richard, I taught you that the Scriptures said the gospel as formerly taught was lost and had been restored, with all its gifts and blessings, by the hand of an angel; that the record containing a history of the aborigines of this country, also the gospel as taught in the Bible, had been restored and translated by the gift and power of God, through Joseph Smith, the latter-day prophet. You now tell me that "the gospel will save without the Book of Mormon." The gospel will save without the Bible, Book of Mormon, or any other book. Holy men of God in ancient times who never had the Bible or Book of Mormon. "spake

as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and were saved through obedience to the principles, although they never saw a Bible or Book of Mormon. But now these books are given that the gospel might be preached in all the world by the power of the Holy Spirit, to convince both the Jew and the Gentile that Jesus is the Christ. This you have taught for nearly forty years, and now you deny the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and all inspiration revealed as in former ages. Is this not going back on the principles I taught you? In this, are you not inconsistent? Faith, repentance, and baptism are only the initiatory principles into the church.

Your assertions regarding Joseph Smith are not proof of what you say. If he was as bad as you say, and as many as you mention knew of it and left the church because of his wickedness, and became his bitter enemies, why did they not have him arrested, brought before the authorities of his country, bring forth those witnesses who claimed to know so much, and have him tried before a lawful tribunal? This they could have done either before the courts of the church or the country. Would they not have done so if they had had the proof? See how many witnesses were brought before Judge Philips to testify in the Temple Lot Case, and they brought forth the best they had, and some when examined were clearly proven to have borne false testimony. Richard, if Joseph Smith could not be proven an adulterer, liar, polygamist, false prophet, etc., while he was living, it is useless for you to attempt to prove it now seventy-five years after he is dead.

It was safe for you to challenge President Frederick M. Smith to debate on polygamy when you knew he would not lower the dignity of the church by debating on a question already settled by Judge Philips in the United States Circuit Court. Debating and quibbling could never alter that decision, which reads as follows: "Certainly it [polygamy—J. J. C.] was *never promulgated, taught, nor recognized*, as a doctrine of the church *prior* to the assumption of Brigham Young." (Temple Lot Case, pp. 20-26.)

As collateral with the decision of Judge Philips I wish

to add the statement made by a bishop (?) residing in Toronto, Ontario, thus: "There is not a single word in all the sermons, lectures, editorials, books, or other literature published during the lifetime of Joseph Smith wherein he, by a single word endorsed the doctrine of polygamy." (Evans versus McKenzie, p. 9.)

In your letter to me of the year before you say: "All we can say is, God revealed to us the truthfulness of the gospel and has confirmed it to us in a thousand ways," all of which knowledge you obtained many years after the prophet's death. Now all at once when your official actions are called in question by the authorities of the church, whose duty it is to regulate and set in order, your thousand evidences regarding the divinity of the gospel *suddenly* become false.

You call me your father in the gospel because I preached to you and baptized you over forty years ago. Will you tell me then, my son, how it is that you with joy received the teaching, with gladness obeyed it, and being called and ordained from one office to another in which you defended the prophet and the message the angel brought to him, and his successors in office, right up until May of last year, 1918, and did not get your eyes open until June, 1918, when an investigation of affairs in Toronto was taking place? This work being true, according to your own attestation—both verbal and written, in public and in private for forty years—can you tell me how it could become false all at once in June of last year?

My son Richard, you say, "I was wrapped in glory" and saw those men "in vision"—those men whom you now slander—dead men who cannot now answer for themselves. You give the names of "Joseph the Seer" as well as "Hyrum Smith, his brother." Will you explain how that prophet and patriarch could be in such a "most gorgeous park or garden with majestic trees, pretty flowers, verdant slopes, and murmuring waters," if they were such wicked men as you now represent them to be? You also say that with those two men were "our Joseph, Alexander, and David." Those men all lived and died in our time. They were known to be good, honorable men all their lives and died honored and respected

by all who knew them. Also in that vision you say you saw Jesus "in their company." Will all of those men "be known by the company they keep," too, or will Jesus be judged (in your estimation) by the company he keeps? Perhaps you can tell me now you have "your eyes opened."

You say, "I know that in London, and at different times since, your faith has been rudely shaken in many things, and were it not for the power of God that attended your gospel administrations, you would have denied Mormonism long ago." Oh yes! I remember well when Mr. Stephen Post, about the only elder left of the Rigdonite faction when it broke up, claimed that when Joseph and Hyrum were killed Sidney Rigdon was the only one left alive of the presidency and he should have been acknowledged as the head of the church until young Joseph came to the proper age to take his father's place as prophet, seer, and revelator. This looked good to me and it caused me to think. When I explained to him the wonderful manifestations I had received and asked how those blessings came if this was not the right church, Mr. Post talked kindly to me and reasoned to the effect that God would bless me in the manner in which he did, to keep me in the faith until such time as in the mind of God he would send some one to get me in the true church. But, dear brother, do not forget that at that time I was young, uneducated, and had no experience with men or their way of working. I looked to men who had years of experience to know more than I who had had no experience. But I did not leave the church; I worked away and continued to receive blessings from the Lord, and I labored with all the faith I had.

Again my faith was tried when Wingfield Watson presented the claims of J. J. Strang, viz., "The very day and hour and minute that Joseph Smith was shot, the angel laid hands on J. J. Strang and ordained him prophet, seer, and revelator," but I did not leave the church.

When William Carleton Irish came through London, Ontario, which you no doubt very well remember, my faith was also tried. This man was ordained by Brother Joseph and H. A. Stebbins to the office of priest, at Plano, Illinois. Brother Irish would have us believe that the resurrection was going

on all the time; that every now and then God would raise one of the old prophets, etc., until many of us believed he was a great man. Some said they felt sure he was one of the old prophets raised from the dead, he wore long hair as they did.

There were many things said by him that we believed, and there were other things said that caused us to wonder. But there were six points of difference between us, which I, being president of the branch, refused to allow him to preach as the doctrine of the church, until we heard from the president of the church. The majority, in opposition, voted that he be allowed to go on. These six points of difference were written, Brother Irish placing his name favoring each point and I signing my name as opposed to those teachings. When word came back from Brethren Joseph Smith and W. W. Blair, saying I was right, Brother Irish ceased to preach and left the city.

Richard, while these trials were going on, I tried to know the facts and stand by them, as Brother Blair at that time said, "Brother John, be sure you are right, then stick to it if the heavens fall." I did not leave the church and start one of my own. I at that time said many hard things against the church (see Joseph Luff's autobiography), but I fasted and prayed to God to lead and direct me and give me good assurance. I obtained it and kept the faith.

This, dear Brother Eyans, should have been your attitude, and when the time of the investigation of your work in Toronto came, you should have stood by the truth and in humility acknowledged whatever you might have done that was irregular or out of order, and have moved along in harmony with the authority God has placed in the church for the directing and regulating of the affairs of the same, instead of turning around and denying the truth of the angel's message. But when things did not come your way, you state in your letter to me, "the church shall tremble." O my son, how cruel! You, who for nearly forty years was a preacher of that gospel—the truthfulness of which had been "revealed to you in a thousand ways"—could not humble yourself enough to say before that committee (who were working for your

good and that of the church) three little words, "*I was wrong.*" But because you did not agree with the investigating committee you not only pour out a tirade of abuse and slander against them, but against the honorable dead, even him whom you called "our Joseph," "Joseph the Just"—whom you say never went to bed with you a night in England, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Wales, or the United States that he did not kiss you good-night—and against the church in general.

You then left the church, drew all you could with you and had the audacity to ask me to leave this beautiful restored gospel, which I love so much and know to be true, to join one of your making. When Satan left heaven he drew about one third part of the angels with him. When you left, how many Saints did you draw away after you? Those angels kept not their "first estate." I am sorry that you and those who followed you could not have kept your second estate. My boy, if you had only remembered your boyhood days and the game of ball, that "over the fence is out," you would have been more careful how you struck that ball.

Over a hundred thousand people, in and out of the church, wonder why such a change should come, and just at a time when your official acts were being investigated. Let Jesus answer it: "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased." If I ever saw the spirit of exaltation in any man in my life, I saw it in you when you attended our conference in South Boardman, Michigan. You boasted of what a great man you were, and of what you were doing and then displayed a long railway ticket, entitling you to go through Michigan, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, then in United States, Washington, through Utah, etc., and back to Toronto (this and more as I remember it).

Then repeatedly in your letters written to many, you told how you were ordained to this office and then to that, up to the First Presidency; how many countries you had preached in; how you had dared and defied the world to meet you to prove this is not the work of God. What can they now conclude but that if you are telling the truth now, you were not telling the truth before the public for the last forty

years. But the gospel being the truth for forty years (you cannot now prove it false), if you continue in your present work against that forty years' work of truth, you will, no doubt, using your own words, be accused of "perambulating around the suburbs of veracity and economizing the truth."

In your letters to me a spirit of exaltation has been constantly manifest. Jesus' words are true: "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased."

There is a sin for which, if men commit and repent not, "they will deny the faith." My son, where hast thou been? What have you done? How art thou fallen! Had you lived up to the requirements of the gospel brought by the angel, being "humble and full of love," you would have been in the church yet. There is no cause for men or women to fall and deny the faith when they are willing to keep the covenants and commandments with an eye single to the glory of God. He will make a way for their escape.

The changes you speak of in the Book of Mormon are all published in the *Herald* with full explanations. Everything was done in good faith, open and aboveboard, by the authority of the body. The corrections made were only of such words as *and, the, which, who, etc.* This you very well know.

You are unfair, Richard, in your manner of criticism. You bring up things done by apostates like yourself—unreliable evidences—compiling and publishing them against an innocent people, to carry out your wicked designs.

Why boast of what you have done and how high you had gone in authority, and of the honors which had been placed upon you, using your own words of March, 1917: "This honor has never been conferred upon another and it hurts some of them." Had you gone on in faithfulness, being humble and full of love, those honors would have remained. When your actions were called in question and you had full opportunity to explain and defend yourself, you were not able to do so, and could not bring one thing against the president of the church, who had conferred such honors upon you. You then turn around and abuse him and the church, both the living and the dead. What an eye opener! Then, after speaking so disrespectfully of him, both in pub-

lic and private and by correspondence all over the country, you send him by telegraph, that "Christmas Greeting," December 24, 1917. O consistency! It is said "thou art a jewel," but thy name is not R. C. Evans.

Say, Richard, I wish you would tell me at about what time you got your eyes opened. Was it when the president was conferring such honor upon you, or when you were slandering him so; or did it occur the morning you sent him that Christmas greeting; or was it a few months later when your official actions were called in question? Please answer.

Sidney Rigdon claimed to be a prophet and leader, but his work went down. J. J. Strang claimed that he saw angels and the "very day and hour and minute that Joseph was shot," the angel laid hands on him and ordained him "prophet, seer, and revelator." But it all fell to the ground. David Whitmer said, "Brethren, if you believe me when I tell you I saw the angel and heard the voice of the Lord commanding me to bear testimony," etc., "believe me when I tell you I heard the voice of God telling me to come out from among the Latter Day Saints," and that he was "called to hold the priesthood," but he went down to the grave without conferring it on any one else. (I quote from memory.) John Zahnd also claims that he had visions, etc., but it will likewise go down. Your institution cannot stand now nor in the day of accounts.

That the wonderful truths you taught for nearly forty years, how that God did "scatter the people," from the time of the building of the city and tower, "upon the face of all the earth" when some came upon this continent, must now become a falsehood the minute you "got your eyes opened," is wonderful! Then the other colonies who came over later and who inhabited this continent 600 years before Christ, which you were successful in proving hundreds of times, up until the last of May, all at once, in June of the same year, becomes a fable. What an eye opener! The "other sheep" that Jesus had over here that did not belong to that fold at Jerusalem and "they shall hear my voice," and whom he did visit and preach to, and amongst whom he established his church, was a fact from 32 A. D. until the last of May, 1918,

when it suddenly becomes a delusion. These four brothers who came over from the old world, of whom history as well as the Book of Mormon says the younger became the leader, is "rot." All of those roads, caves, mounds, and cities which have been unearthed and which confirm the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon do not now exist because R. C. got "his eyes open." Can this be? No! They still exist. The Book of Mormon proven by the Bible and archæology, and R. C. and thousands of others for many years cannot now be false. Moses and other prophets, including David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, etc., who declared the book must come and before "Lebanon" should become a "fruitful field" and "our land" (Jerusalem) shall "yield her increase," must not be considered untrue because the "Bishop" (?) R. C. has got his "eyes opened." When Adam and Eve transgressed they got their "eyes opened," too. They saw their shame. Can you see yours?

Do not be angry, Richard. I am just giving you a little medicine of your own mixing. You are mistaken in your idea that by your manner of procedure "the church shall tremble." It is you who are trembling. That other fellow who was the "accuser of the brethren," trembled, too.

Now, after all this you say, "Help me in this great work." Did you think that I was one altogether as thou, Richard? I have a great work to do and I cannot come down. Again you say, "Help me." Please go back with me to our early days in the church. Shortly after you came into it you were acting with a theatrical company on the stage, and when the officials of the London Branch were urging me to appoint a court to try your case I hung back, thinking that at that time if a court were held you would likely be expelled. When you were in our conference at South Boardman, you told them that I was your father in the gospel and had saved you to the church, for if they had attempted to try you at that time you would have said to them, "Go to hell." I would like to save you now, but I fear that it is too late.

You will likewise remember that I advised the brethren to give time and God would bring you back, and that you would yet "stand in the Quorum of Twelve, and perhaps in

the Presidency." You have repeatedly said that while upon the stage the hand of power was placed upon your shoulders and God called you back.

Before you went into the Quorum of Twelve, I told you that it was revealed to me that you were going there and at the time of your call, you, in your statement of acceptance, referred to me as giving proof of your calling. Your statement was published in the *Herald* at the time.

You and I roomed together in Detroit, Michigan, while I was laboring there and I told you that you would soon be put in the First Presidency. Then said I, "Look out! I fear your fall, and if you fall you will fall heavily." This has all come to pass.

After you got Brother George Mottashed out of the church, he revealed to me the vision God gave him of you about thirty-five years ago. It was that you would go into the Quorum of Twelve, then in the First Presidency, and that you would fall from it, and he said, "John, I will not live to see it, but you will." It came to pass.

My son Richard, if what we have preached all of our lives was a delusion, how did it happen that in answer to prayer, God revealed to me that this was his work, and that he would and did heal my affliction? That manifestation is still with me. I cannot doubt it. How can you condemn that which has been revealed to you in "a thousand ways"? What kind of a manifestation have you had, anyway? Will you take that one as superior to the "thousand" and it directly opposite? Has your light entirely gone out?

Can you look back to the time when we were baptizing in London, in December of 1876, when that light, with a sound like a rushing, mighty wind, came down from heaven and encircled about thirty people, members and nonmembers, also taking in the portion of the river where we were baptizing? A voice spoke to Brother Clow telling him, "These are my people. You must not laugh at them." When standing in that brightest and most brilliant light I ever saw, and raising my hand to perform that ceremony, to me came the words (not audibly), "Yes, you have been commissioned." Oh, Richard, my son! Never shall I forget it! That Spirit

thrills my body as I write to you. Those words, "These are my people, you must not laugh at them," are true and never can be false. The church acknowledged of God then is his church now though thousands fall. Tempt me not to leave it, dear brother. I never can.

Can you or I discard the power that healed that Mr. Ray (not a member), who fell backward into the kettle of boiling glue, which burned him so that part of his intestines came out, and pieces of skin and flesh came off? By the administration of Brethren Harrington, Mottashed, Luff, and myself, God healed him. New skin and flesh grew on and he became strong and able to work as before. You knew of it.

Then Brother Harvey who had two fingers cut off—the blood stopped and he was healed by administration, which is according to the pattern of the gospel of Christ and as restored in these last days, to Joseph Smith the prophet, and "his seed and his seed's seed, forever," as saith the Prophet Isaiah. O Richard, think of scores of cases under our administration, there and elsewhere. It is just the same today, and the power of God, as we live nearer to him, will be greater by and by.

You say, "Write to me," and "as you profess to love me." I did love you and do yet, but I am sorry that you have fallen so low and now try to slander the men God sent, and who were instruments in his hands in restoring the gospel and making it possible for salvation to come to us.

In your "Epitome of the faith and doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ," you have nothing we did not have, and we have all the balance God sent in restoration which you cannot have. If you can be saved by that part (without the authority to administer it), I will not be "damned" by keeping all.

My son, Richard C. Evans, and (once) brother in Christ, (now fallen), I do not know that you saw an angel because you say so, but I know no angel sent from God would tell you to leave the church of his planting and start one of your own. (I do not know how much the Devil had to do in that matter.) If there was anything between you and the

officers of the church, God would assist you to get it right, and if they were so far wrong that he would need to take a hand in rectifying and had to send an angel to do it, that angel would have told you to stay in the church, go before the proper quorums or the General Conference and assist in correcting the error. God will never reject over 80,000 Saints because you refuse to have your official acts corrected.

J. J. CORNISH.

NEW WESTMINSTER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, July 3, 1919.

MR. R. C. EVANS,
TORONTO, ONTARIO.

Dear Brother: Your letter of June 20, 1919, is at hand and its contents are fully noted. The first thing I read was the printed heading, "Church of Jesus Christ," then in the corner at the end of the word *Christ*, the impression of a seal, "The Church of the Christian Brotherhood." As you gave me no explanation as to how your church could be the "Church of Jesus Christ" and at the same time "The Church of the Christian Brotherhood," I was left to ponder. Then reading your statement in your spiritual manifestation where you say "your messenger" said, "And now I am commissioned to command you to organize the Church of Jesus Christ"—caused me to wonder greatly.

It seems when you could not get the church incorporated by the name your messenger commanded ("The Church of Jesus Christ"), you deliberately broke the command of God(?) given by that commissioned messenger(?) and christened it by another name ("The Church of The Christian Brotherhood") without either God or Jesus Christ in at all. R. C., do not boast about getting your eyes opened.

That you were for over forty years a member of a church organized according to the pattern given by Christ and his apostles, and lived without openly breaking any special commands, and then start a church of your own and within a few months break the first command your messenger gave you, is beyond my comprehension. Richard, what is the name of your church, anyway? Is it "The Church of Jesus

Christ," "Church of Jesus Christ," or is it "The Church of the Christian Brotherhood," or do you know? If it is the latter then it is not either of the other two.

You seem to be much disturbed in your imagination that my letter to you was the "work of other minds." You say, "I am sorry that much of your letter is the work of other minds, why resort to such, Johnnie, is it fair?" and, "So much for the silly arguments made by the real author of the letter before me." Also, "The point you try to make, or your master does for you." Your letter is filled with twice as much more of the same kind. Richard, I framed it all. No man or woman ever knew that I was writing such a letter until I arranged to have it typewritten.

Again you say, "Johnnie, you must not try to make me believe that you wrote all those insulting statements." Nothing insulting, Richard; I was just treating on facts. The Devil drew away one third and I asked you how many you drew away. You did not tell me but said, "Johnnie, do not play the echo on that again."

Just look at some of your contradictory statements following: "Johnnie, wake up"; "but, John, take the wool off your eyes and look." Then the following: "Your heart has rebelled and your eyes have been opened," also, "Johnnie, if you wish to stand by Mormonism do so, but your eyes are opened." Then you turn right around and say, "The thick darkness of Mormonism is still upon you"; "you are still under the cloud." R. C., you are of course the "real author." The above statements are not "the work of other minds," are they? You wrote them.

I refuse to answer your slanderous statements about murder, Danites, polygamy, liars, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, also "those manuscripts," etc., which have been answered and settled long ago by judges and ministers, the latter including yourself. I will, however, make reply to the following: "Your framer makes it appear that the vision showed Joseph Smith and the rest with Christ in paradise now. That is a lie free and full." Now, just read that part of my letter over again. I did not say so. I simply quoted your own statement and never mentioned paradise. It looks

to me that in this you are willful, making up that false statement and then saying I lied.

You explain then, "The facts are that vision showed me what would be in eternity, not now in paradise, but in the future." Ah, yes, I see! That man who lived and died before you were born, whom you represented for forty years as a pure, prayerful prophet of God, and who all at once in June, 1918, became a murderer, liar, polygamist, adulterer, etc., for which they that do such things could not inherit the kingdom of heaven or of God at all (Matthew 5: 20; 7: 21; 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10; Galatians 5: 21; Ephesians 5: 5, etc.), is now seen in your vision to be in such a good place "in eternity, not now in paradise, but in the future." Yes! how singular! Is that the gospel I taught you forty years ago?

You make one statement very positive. You say, "John, I am sorry that you have added to the story of your knowing that I was going into the Twelve and Presidency. You did bear testimony to that, but the part about my falling I never heard till I read it in your letter." I am glad you did not deny my whole statement. Now, my son, I cannot be mean to you, neither do I wish to add one thing that is not true. Our Father in heaven knows that there is enough against you already. If I did not make that statement I am very sorry that I should have so written. We were in Detroit, Michigan, rooming together that night, and I very well remember that at the time you cried and said, "I have enough on my shoulders now, and if more is put upon me I do not see how I can stand up under it." (Words to that effect.) But if those words which you deny were not uttered by me I am very much mistaken. Let it pass. I will give you the benefit of the doubt.

You say, "Your statement about Mottashed is both false and silly." I reaffirm Brother Mottashed did tell it to me, and he told it to many others and several have asked me if I ever heard of it. No doubt many who are yet living know of it. You admit my statement that you were going into the Twelve and then the Presidency, all of which came to pass.

Jesus had an apostle in his day who turned traitor. "He

was a devil," and yet we do not read of him turning around and trying to drag others down with him, as you have tried to do. He "went and hanged himself." Peter, another apostle, "denied him," but repented, "went out and wept bitterly." (Your weeping time will come.) Also, "all the disciples forsook him and fled." It was their hour of trial, but they did not slander and abuse, and charge all manner of crimes against the church as you have done and are doing against over eighty thousand people, and boast that "When I speak the church shall tremble and the world shall feel the power." Oh, how cruel! How inhuman to try to make a church of over eighty thousand innocent people "tremble" just because you did not agree with two or three of its leading members.

I say unto you as Peter said to his son in the gospel: "Repent therefore of this wickedness and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." (Acts 8:22.)

Oh, Richard, I have prayed that God would help you and have mercy, but then the words come back to me, "Mercy cannot rob justice."

You have my best wishes.

J. J. CORNISH.