

Experience and Testimony of Samuel Hall, 1843

In 1843, a man named Samuel Hall came from Montreal, Canada, to see the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. This is his story:

Born of devout Catholic parents, he looked forward to becoming a priest with great hope and expectancy, and was happy when he was at last pronounced qualified of God and the church to enter the hallowed walls he had been taught to revere. He was set to work with older priests in Montreal, Canada, and here he says,

"None but God could know of the terrible and soul-crushing disappointment I was doomed to suffer, for suffer I did, both day and night, as the hot scalding tears wet my pillow." He appealed to the "aged and venerable bishop" for a solution of his problems, but received no help. It was a "stunning blow." He tried to "stop all thoughts." He prayed for death, and asked time and again if God's church had been taken from the earth.

One day while walking down the street in this despondent mood, he picked up a small leaflet. Going to his room as soon as he could, he took it out and read it, then reread it. In his sheltered life, he had never heard of Joseph Smith. It was all new and strange to him. Here, with "bated breath," he read of a great Apostasy, of the restoration of the gospel at the hands of an angel, with all its gifts and powers.

He threw himself upon his knees and asked God if it were true. On the little pamphlet was the announcement of a conference to be held in Nauvoo, Illinois. Joseph Smith would be there. All lovers of truth were invited to be there and judge for themselves. They were advised to ask of God as the Apostle James had recommended.

He prayed earnestly and felt the message to be true, but the decision that he now faced was momentous. Once it was made, whether this strange restored church proved true or false, he could not turn back. If it were true, he would find happiness; if not, his lot would be a sad one, for then he must flee to some remote corner of the earth and drag out his days unknown to his friends and family, for he dared not return.

At length he obtained leave of absence to visit New York, and from there quietly made his way to Nauvoo, bidding a mental farewell forever to all the past. Whatever happened from henceforth, he must begin life anew. In his valise were the few scant pieces of clothing he had obtained, his Bible, his Catholic prayer book, and a few dollars in money. He was not long on his way before he began to hear terrible tales of Joseph Smith. His heart sank within him, but he must go on.

Conference was already in session. He left his valise at the hotel and inquired for the church. Directed to the large assembly in a grove, he found service already in progress. The speaker was an "earnest, plain-spoken man." He pressed his way into the crowd until near enough to hear, and as it is recorded:

"to my utter astonishment and delight I heard, as I had never heard before; aye it was as a living stream of life and light. It seemed as if every word came from the very bosom of eternity to my inmost soul; yes, *every word to me!*"

When the speaker finished, Hall turned to a man near him and said, "That is Joseph Smith." "Yes," was the answer, "and he is a prophet of God." "I know he is," Hall heard himself saying.

Hall waited patiently in the crowd that gathered about the speaker, until he could get a word with him, then without parley asked for baptism. The answer was breathtaking, in its simplicity. The Prophet did not stop to ask his name, his qualifications for membership, or from whence he came. Instead he said, "This is the Lord's doings; come with me." Down to the river

they went, and Hall was baptized, and coming out of the water, he was confirmed and ordained an elder on the banks of the river.

As he arose, Joseph said, "Brother Hall, you are now a legally qualified servant of Jesus Christ, a minister of life to this generation; go and preach the gospel, and you will be blessed in blessing many." "When shall I go?" asked Hall. "Go now," was the answer.

"Shall I stay until the close of the conference, and then go?"

"No," he said, "go now."

"Very well. I will go and get my things at the hotel and start off."

"No, no," urged the Prophet, "go *now*, just as you are. Your things are safe, you will not need them, and you will lack nothing. Go right along down south and tarry not by the way until you preach the gospel. I bless you. Good day!" and he walked away, leaving the newly baptized Hall gazing after him in bewilderment. Was man ever in a stranger situation, but he had set his feet on a path upon which there was no return. He put his coat and vest across his arm and started at a brisk walk in a southerly direction, as directed.

Here he was a fugitive from the Catholic Church, the only church of which he knew anything, in a strange country, having heard but a portion of one short sermon, not a cent in his pocket, his clothing wet. The sun dried his clothes, and as night approached he put on his coat and vest. About sundown he approached a crossroad just as two men in a wagon came long the other road and overtook him. They offered him a ride, which he accepted. All the time they were eyeing him sharply. "Your pants look as if you had been in the water," said one. "Yes," Hall admitted. "I have been baptized by Joseph Smith for the remission of my sins, and I never felt so well satisfied in my life as I do now."

"Oh, so you are a Mormon," said the other, eyeing him curiously, "I never saw one before. What do you think of Joe Smith? How does he look and act? What is he doing? Where are you going? What are you going to do?" Hall told them freely of his life and recent experiences, and they were intrigued.

They were going to stay at a small town a few miles farther on on business, and would pay his fare at a hotel if they could hear him preach. On arrival, they did as they agreed, hired a hall, and even went through the streets, as the custom was, ringing a bell and calling out, "Come out and hear a late Catholic priest on Mormonism at the hall."

The meetings lengthened out to a week's stay, then a month, and at the end of that time Samuel Hall baptized thirty-four persons, and organized a branch of the church. Best of all, he had found peace. "I was no longer a friendless stranger, alone in the world, but at home in my Father's house."

(Quoted from [The Story of the Church](#) by Inez Smith Davis, [pages 311-314](#).)