

WHY I AM A LATTER DAY SAINT

Evan A. Fry, Radio Director
Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ
of Latter Day Saints
Independence, Mo.

Sunday, June 27, 1943
10:00 p.m. KMBC, 980 KC
Kansas City, Mo.
All Rights Reserved

The summer after my graduation from university, I one day struck up a conversation with a minister of another faith. As ministers are very apt to do, he inquired about my church affiliation. When I told him that I belonged to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, he expressed a mild surprise that anyone who looked even moderately intelligent, as I did, should be content with such a faith. But he tried magnanimously to be tolerant, and concluded that portion of the conversation with the comment, "Oh well, when you get a little older, and learn more about it, you'll be glad to give up that sort of foolishness."

A good many years have gone by since then, but I am still devoted to that "foolishness", still committed to and satisfied with and growing in appreciation of the faith of my fathers. But I regard with tolerance the honest, inquiring people who sometimes are tempted to ask, "Why ARE you a Latter Day Saint?" Sometimes they ask from a sincere desire to know what kind of a hold this faith has on its adherents sometimes they ask with a kind of supercilious wonder that anyone could be so foolish as to believe in and maintain allegiance to such an impossible and preposterous religion. By some, Latter Day Saints are viewed with a sort indifferent tolerance; by some with a sort of scornful disdain. Just why should any intelligent, thinking man of modern ideas give allegiance to this church? It is a fair question. We shall try to answer it fairly, and as completely as possible in the limited time available.

Firstly, I am a Latter Day Saint because it seems to me that the beliefs and doctrines of this church are more logical, more scriptural, more unified and complete than in any other church. It is characteristic of many of us that we have accepted traditional interpretations of scripture for so long that we are often drawn into quite illogical beliefs and situations. We read that God is unchangeable, the same yesterday, today, and forever. We read that he is no respecter of persons, but that he has equal love and concern for men of all races, all nations, all ages, in proportion as they serve him and keep his commandments. We read that he is omnipotent; his power never faileth. We read that he is not far from any one of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being. Yet when the interpreters of scripture tell us that God does not reveal himself to prophets today, and that no scripture is being written today, we see no break in the chain of logic.

Latter Day Saints believe in a God who is unchangeable, impartial, omnipotent, and yet approachable. They believe that he speaks to men today; that scripture is being written in this generation, as it was written long ago. We can find no verse in the Bible which tells us that the canon of scripture is closed. The Book of Revelation, whose closing verses are often quoted in support of such a theory, was NOT the last book of the Bible to be written, according to many eminent Bible scholars, but was followed by the Gospel of St. John, written by the same author. We believe in a God who is active, loving, creative, revealing, NOW, TODAY.

Latter Day Saints believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world. In him the sin of Adam was cancelled -- not by appeasing an angry and vengeful God with a bloody and painful death, as old fashioned theology taught it; but by living so perfect a life that sin and evil and death had no power to hold him. The saving mission of Jesus extends to ALL men, in all ages of the world -- to the heathen nations who had no opportunity in this world to accept him -- to infants who died before the days of their accountability, as well as to the men and women who have heard him and accepted him. His universal mission of salvation extends even

beyond the grave, and will continue to the end of time. He is a Christ who is alive forevermore, who is working with and in and through his church, which is his body on earth. He is the head of that church, its directing, unifying, vitalizing power.

Latter Day Saints believe in a literal and complete New Testament church organization, with apostles, prophets, evangelists, elders, bishops, priests, teachers, deacons, seventies, etc. That belief strikes me as being logical. First of all, Christ directed the organization of his original church that way. Second, the "body" of Christ should logically be composed of many members, with divergent and differentiated functions, but in well defined relationship to each other, and all subject to one unifying spirit or head. Just as a human body would be incomplete and decreased in efficiency if some of its organs or members were eliminated, so the church of Christ will be incomplete if all the officers set therein are not maintained there. And just as there must be a definite line of cleavage drawn between what is and what is not MY body, or your body, or anyone's body, so that must be a definite line drawn between those who are Christ's, and those who are not. Just as there are certain laws and principles which govern the addition of cells to my physical body, so there are laws and principles which govern the addition of cells to the body of Christ. Some of those principles, to mention them briefly, are faith, repentance, baptism, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. They are a **logical part** of Biblocal teaching; they are a part of Latter Day Saint belief.

I am a Latter Day Saint because I find that when proper conditions are met, and men obey God's commands, results do follow. Confirming signs do follow the believer, as promised by Jesus in the closing verses of Mark's gospel. In this church we enjoy not only the gifts of knowledge and wisdom, but the gift of prophecy, the gift of tongues, gifts of healing, etc., as outlined in 1 Corinthians 12. If God is still a God of power, if he keeps his promises, if he treats all men alike when they approach him in like ways, if he is unchanged and unchangeable, if he is impartial, it is illogical NOT to expect such gifts and blessings today. Latter Day Saints DO expect them, and when they have complied with the prerequisites, they DO receive them, accompanied by light, and truth, and wisdom, and restraint, and control. Such EXPERIENCE is worth hours and hours of theorizing.

I am a Latter Day Saint because the philosophy and organization of this church are potentially capable of supplying every human need. Under its social program, it is designed to offer security of food, of clothing, of shelter, in an economy where each will contribute according to his capabilities, and will receive according to his just wants and his needs. In the church are found wisdom, skill, and spiritual help for physical healing. In this church is found an educational program which comprises all good books, and embraces every science -- a twofold program which involves not only study and reading and research, but prayer, and spiritual discipline as well. In this church are found the facilities for meeting every spiritual need -- a divinely called and authorized priesthood whose ministry brings release from sin -- whose pastoral ministry helps each member to grow, to learn, to perfect himself in physical and temporal, as well as spiritual aspects of the law.

I am a Latter Day Saint because this church has a three-fold witness of Christ, rather than a single witness, the Bible. We believe the Bible, of course. The Bible is basic to our belief. By its teachings we test each new revelation of God's will that comes to us as a church. But the Bible contains the religious history of an infinitely small part of the world's inhabitants -- an important part, we admit -- but none the less small. Even a large part of the chosen race of Israel is lost to history, and to the Bible. The Bible is silent altogether, (or at least so people believe) on the history of the peoples who lived on this continent during Biblical times. But Latter Day Saints have the Book of Mormon, which is the religious history

of the inhabitants of pre-Columbian America. Its teachings and its historical facts agree with the findings of science, and with archeology. Its code of ethics and morality is almost identical to the code of the New Testament. It records the history of Christ's visit to the American continent, and bears witness of his divinity. Its appearance is foretold in the Bible.

But in still another book, regarded as Scripture, do we have a witness of the divinity of Jesus. In our collection of modern revelations, you will again find the same code of ethics and morality, the same doctrine, and a reiteration through modern prophets, of the testimony as to Christ's divinity. It is the right and the privilege of any generation -- yes, of any man in any generation, to have that witness, and perhaps to record it for posterity. Because of their belief in continued and continuous revelation, Latter Day Saints have a threefold witness of Christ's divinity. A threefold cord is not easily broken.

I am a Latter Day Saint because this is the only church that I know which has a definite, concrete plan, with blueprints, for the building of the Kingdom of God on earth -- which we label ZION. Some of us impatient ones would be first to admit that we have not made too great progress in reading our blueprints, or translating them in terms of action; but the plan is still there, a challenge to all who desire to work creatively and cooperatively with God and man for the building of a better world. We preach social and economic and political and industrial reform FIRST, through individual regeneration -- a cleansing from sin, a changing of human nature by the power of religion. SECOND, through a practical organized application of the principle of STEWARDSHIP, which will provide means for making secure to each man his home, and his business or other means of livelihood, as his stewardship of material wealth. Adding to that the stewardship of his natural talent, he produces for the group, receiving in return his needs and just wants, being guaranteed that degree of security which the entire group can command, through a socialization of the surplus property of each. Current operating expenses will be met by the law of tithing, which takes one tenth of the annual increase, (not income) for the support of the church. This is equitable, fair, just; for each man is entitled to his needs and just wants FIRST, paying tithing only out of what he receives over and above that, leaving him nine tenths of each year's increase for development and expansion, or for the greater security of himself and his group.

I am a Latter Day Saint because this church is a theocratic democracy. It is ruled by God, through the continued revelation of his will to the prophet of the church, and those under him in authority. But the right of the people to concur in and ratify these instructions is always preserved, making it impossible for priestcraft to become established among this people, if they remain alert to their democratic prerogatives.

I am a Latter Day Saint because of what the church has done for me, and for those I have known -- because of the opportunity it gives for growth, development, purposeful work -- because of the goals it sets before me -- because of the hope it holds forth for the future. I am a Latter Day Saint because this church teaches me allegiance to the government which upholds and safeguards the liberty of men -- their own free agency. I am a Latter Day Saint because in the church and in the things it believes and teaches, I find my highest inspiration towards Christian virtue -- honesty, truthfulness, chastity, benevolence, industry, kindness, temperance, charity, patience. Under its ministry we go forward together, believing all things that can be proved true, hoping for all things good, working for all things attainable.