

# WHY I AM A MORMON

REED SMOOT

## *Confessions of Faith — X*

**I**N the first place, I was born one. My parents were among the early converts to the teachings of Joseph Smith, the founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, — my father in Kentucky, his native state; my mother in far-off Norway. What is commonly known as Mormonism had no stancher adherents than Abraham Owen Smoot and his wife, Anna Kerstina Morrison. That I should have imbibed, from infancy, in the home that sheltered them, the spirit of the religion for which either of them would have laid down life, if necessary, will occasion no surprise to the readers of this article. I was the third-born in the household, and Salt Lake City was my birth-place. Since ten years of age, however, I have resided in the town of Provo, fifty miles south of the Utah capital.

What education I received as a youth was in Mormon schools, notably the Brigham Young Academy at Provo, an institution that my father helped to found. I was one of twenty-nine students with which, in the autumn of 1876, it began its first term. I was then in my fifteenth year.

The founding of the Brigham Young Academy (now University), the parent of a flourishing school system entirely distinct from the public schools, and maintained by the Latter-day Saints at an annual cost of three quarters of a million dollars, was the outgrowth of a sentiment which demanded spiritual as well as mental and physical education for the children of the Mormon community. Joseph Smith was the author of such sayings as these:

“The glory of God is intelligence.”

“It is impossible to be saved in ignorance.”

“Seek learning by study and also by faith.”

“Whatever principles of intelligence we attain to in this life will rise with us in the resurrection; and any man who, by his greater diligence acquires more knowledge than another, will have just that much advantage in the world to come.”

The Prophet was true to his principles. He established schools

and championed the cause of education. A Mormon writer has said: "His educational ideals passed over the threshold of Time and strode down the halls of Eternity. With a full appreciation of the knowledge that makes men and women capable and skilful in this life, he prized and taught others to prize, above all, the knowledge that maketh wise unto salvation. How to make a living here, how to solve life's every-day problems, was, of course, important; but how to grapple successfully with the mightier problems of the Great Hereafter, how to store up treasures in heaven and lay hold upon eternal life, was far more consequential. Education meant to him the leading out of all the latent potential powers of the individual, the training to perfection of every divine attribute in man, as the child of God and as a god himself, in embryo. He stood for the full and complete development of the soul, body, and spirit combined, — mental, physical, moral, and spiritual education, the education contemplated and inculcated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

In the Brigham Young Academy were taught, along with the ordinary branches of learning, the doctrines of Christ's Gospel. The Bible, the Book of Mormon, and other church publications were among the text books of the institution. Prayer and testimony were required of the students, and the atmosphere of worship pervaded the class rooms. The result was that graduates from this school went forth from its portals firm in the faith, believers in God and in the principles of salvation, equipped not only for expert office work, and skilled labor of various kinds, but also for intelligent and efficient service in the Church schools and mission fields. Being a graduate myself, I shared in the advantages of such a training; and this, without doubt, is one reason why I am a Mormon. Incidentally I will remark that Utah, which is still overwhelmingly Mormon in population, ranks among the leading States of the Union, educationally.

But birth and early training are not the only causes of one's conversion, if it be real and genuine. In my intercourse with the world I have had ample opportunity to come in contact with other religious systems and to compare them with my own. If Mormonism is my preference over all, it is because it appeals to me as the most reasonable of all, the most soul-satisfying religion that I have encountered anywhere.

#### STATUE TO THE GULLS

**D**ESIGNED by a grandson of Brigham Young to commemorate the most beautiful legend of Utah, the miracle of the sea-gulls, sacred bird of Mormon tradition. The early pioneers had planted their first seed, but the corn was scarcely out of the soil when a plague of locusts descended and devoured the crops. In answer to prayer deliverance came. A cloud arose from the islands of the Great Salt Lake, — a cloud of gulls which alighted in vast numbers upon the fields and destroyed the locusts.



#### THE TEMPLE

**T**HE cornerstone of the Mormon temple in Salt Lake City was laid in 1853, but the building took forty years to complete. This structure is as sacred to the Mormons as was the Temple of Solomon to the ancient Jews. It is the ambition of every Mormon to be baptized and married within the Temple. The building is said to contain sanctuaries and to house the records of Mormon revelations and sacraments. But the secrets of its interior

are not revealed even to the Editor of THE FORUM. For none but members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are permitted to pass its holy portals.



#### THE TABERNACLE

**T**HE Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City was completed in the year 1870. It is built entirely of wood without the use of nails. The timbers are secured with wooden pegs and bindings of cowhide. It is one of the largest auditoriums in Christendom and contains a great pipe organ. If no non-Mormon is admitted to the Temple the doors of the Tabernacle bid cordial welcome to all the world. Here on a Sunday morning the visitor to Salt Lake City may listen to the swelling tones of sacred music and hear a sermon explaining Mormonism.

Drawings by E. H. Suydam.

It teaches that man is literally the child of God, fashioned in His image, endowed with divine attributes, and capable, by education and development, of becoming like unto that glorious Being, in whose image or likeness all men are created.

It teaches that this earth, which is but one of millions like it, formed for similar purposes, was made, not out of nothing, as some theologians assert, but out of the eternal elements, spirit and matter, and that after it has filled the measure of its creation as a temporary abode, a place of probation for man, it will be converted into a celestial sphere, that the righteous may inherit it forever. Christ's millennial reign is to sanctify the earth and prepare it for celestial glory.

Mormonism teaches that the glorified planets are God's kingdoms, and that to each kingdom a law is given. Whosoever inherits any one of these kingdoms, — celestial, terrestrial, or telestial, — must abide by the law pertaining to that kingdom; all heavenly gifts, whether spiritual or temporal, being predicated upon the principle of obedience.

The Gospel plan, instituted by the Great Creator in the beginning, was designed for the promotion of the lesser intelligences in the midst of which He found himself the most intelligent of all. This plan includes man's fall and redemption, both of which were divinely preordained, and are steps in the march of eternal progression. The condition of this promotion, — this advancement of the pre-existent intelligences who become mortal men and women, is their obedience to the principles of the Gospel. They must have faith, must repent of their sins, must be baptized for the remission of sins, must receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and do all else that the Lord requires of them.

They who "kept the first estate", — life in the spirit world, — are given a second estate, life on earth, where they demonstrate their worthiness or unworthiness of eternal glory. Satan and his legions, one-third of Heaven's spirit host, kept not their first estate, and because of their rebellion were not permitted to take bodies, which are a means of eternal increase and exaltation; but two-thirds of that great family of spirits, for their faithfulness in the previous life, were or will yet be given fleshy tabernacles, thus becoming "living souls", with opportunities for education in the midst of life's vicissitudes.

All men are to be rewarded according to their works, as shown to John the Revelator in his great vision on Patmos. They who inherit celestial glory, the highest heavenly condition, which is comparable to the light of the sun, are they who receive the gospel in this life; also those who would receive it if the opportunity were offered. They can believe and repent in the spirit world, and receive baptism by proxy in temples erected on earth for that purpose. These are the valiant, who obey Christ in all things.

The inheritors of terrestrial glory are they who yield a partial, but not a full obedience to the divine commands. They receive not the gospel here, but afterwards receive it, and their glory is likened unto that of the moon. Celestial glory is for those who are cast down to hell, are there purged of their sins, and after paying their debt to Eternal Justice, are released from prison, to receive that for which they are fitted and prepared. They are as the twinkling stars, and are servants of the Most High, "but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end."

### Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

MEMBERS			
Utah	300,000	Apr. 6, 1830	The Church organized at Fayette, Seneca County, N. Y.
Idaho	85,000	Dec. 25, 1832	Joseph Smith prophesied the Civil War and the World War
Arizona	12,000	1831-1844	Headquarters moved to Ohio, to Missouri, to Illinois
Colorado	4,000	June 27, 1844	Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum killed by mob at Carthage, Illinois
Scattered U. S.	120,000	1844	Brigham Young succeeded as presiding officer
Hawaii	12,500	1846	Church expelled from Illinois
Europe	37,000	July 24, 1847	The pioneers entered Salt Lake Valley, Utah, under Brigham Young
Other Countries	29,500	Aug. 29, 1877	Brigham Young, "Empire Builder," died
Total Mormons	600,000	1882	Congress passed Edmunds Law forbidding polygamy in U. S. territories
MORMON MILESTONES		1896	Utah admitted as a state to the Union
Dec. 23, 1805	Joseph Smith born in Sharon, Vermont		
April, 1820	He beheld the Father and the Son		
Sept. 21, 1823	The Angel Moroni revealed to him the plates of the Book of Mormon on Cumorah Hill near Manchester, Ontario County, N. Y.		
1828-1830	Translated the Book of Mormon		

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All men will be saved except the sons of perdition, who have had every opportunity, not only for salvation, but for exaltation to the highest glory; and then have denied, trampled upon, and thrown it all away. These are the only ones who cannot be saved in some degree of glory; and the reason why they are lost, is that they have sinned away the power of repentance, upon which all salvation is predicated.

These doctrines look reasonable to me. They are scriptural and consistent. They appeal to my sense of justice, of mercy, and of right. They measure up to the eternal fitness of things. I have never found anything better, in my researches for spiritual light, and because of this and my conviction that they are true, I am a Mormon.

My religion proclaims itself to be the Everlasting Gospel, framed in the heavens before this earth was formed, and revealed to man in a series of dispensations, of which the present one, — the dispensation of the fulness of times, — is the greatest and the last. The Gospel's restoration in this age is preliminary to the gathering of the scattered house of Israel, Zion in America and Jerusalem in Palestine being the places where they will assemble to meet their God and King, who is coming literally to reign upon the earth. The Gentiles, with their wealth and power, their steamships, railroads, and other means of rapid transit and communication, are taking part in this work, and will share in the benefits that flow from it. This age is destined to witness the consummation of God's purposes in relation to this planet.

The movement known as Mormonism was made possible, humanly speaking, by the establishment of the Government of the United States, whose constitutional guarantee of religious liberty paved the way for the coming forth of this "marvelous work and wonder". Such is the Mormon position.

The Latter-day Saints believe that they must be loyal to their country, honoring its laws, upholding its institutions, its constituted authorities, and doing all things that American citizens ought to do. They are taught that the Constitution of the United States was inspired of God and framed by wise men whom the Almighty raised up for this very purpose, and that it "should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh", so that



every man may act according to the moral agency which God has given him, that he "may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment".

Believing this, they cannot be otherwise than loyal. They do not blame the Government of the United States for their past persecutions at the hands of lawless mobs. They realize that such things were not because of the Constitution and the Government, but in spite of them; and they stand ready at all times to honor the laws of this nation and to defend it against foes without or within. It is because I know this that I am a Mormon.

Indoctrinated from childhood in the principles of the Church to which I belong, I give my hearty adherence to its Articles of Faith, as penned and published by Joseph Smith, the Prophet. They are as follows:

1. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.
2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.
3. We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.
4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands, by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.
6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, viz., apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc.
7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc.
8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.
9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon this (the American) continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiac glory.

11. We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.

13. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul, — We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

In conclusion, I am a Mormon because I have received a convincing testimony that Joseph Smith's mission was of God; that he lived to do good and died a martyr; and that his successors, in building upon the foundation that he laid, are carrying out the will of God, with the welfare of all men in view.





## LITTLE MISS NOBODY

CLEMENCE DANE

*"There was a jolly miller  
Lived on the River Dee,  
He laughed and sang from morn till night,  
No lark so blithe as he:  
And this the burden of his song  
For ever used to be —  
'I care for nobody, no, not I,  
And nobody cares for me!'"*

— Old Song

Said a girl to me the other day, "I don't mind working hard all my life so long as I'm somebody before I die."

"But you are somebody," said I. As indeed she was, the handsome, restless creature. She had youth, looks, a straight back and quick fingers that bought her food and lodging and inexpensive clothes that were much prettier than the expensive ones of the Somebody she served. I admired her and envied her a little, and so, I think, did her employer. But this unfortunate Miss Nobody wouldn't listen and wouldn't believe it. Her employer had a handle to her name, was a political hostess, wrote verse and attended first nights. Her employer was a Somebody whom people discussed in the daily papers: while she, this poor Miss Nobody of 1926, was, as she firmly explained to me, a nonentity of whom nobody had ever heard "except the family".

Poor Miss Nobody, fiercely assuring you and all the world that she doesn't want anybody's pity, thank you, only her chance to prove that she's as good as the rest of us, — what is really the matter with her? Is this desire to be Somebody, in capitals, just a ridiculous vanity of spirit, or is it a fine flood of emotion gushing down the wrong channel?

It is an ancient emotion, anyway, and has inhabited Titanic breasts! Lucifer tearing down the ramparts of heaven; Cain leaping upon Abel; Napoleon, the little man, observing the French Revolution; Germany anticipating Ragnarok, that war of the gods when all gods die; — these are all victims of the