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Reasons Why.

SHALL WE HEAR THEM?

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REASONS WHY.

Shall We Hear Them?

ELDER J. W. PETERSON.

Because the faith of Christ has always been opposed by certain classes, the Latter-day Saints are not above their Master in having their cause misrepresented by both pulpit and press, and themselves frowned upon by those who are ignorant of their faith. Because of this misrepresentation, many persons who have heard or read only the reverse side, often ask themselves the question: "Is it right to go and hear them?" It is right and honorable to hear any one claiming to have the truth, that one may know for himself whether or not the claim is true and not be dependent on biased rumor. In many places where the faith of the Latter-day Saints is first introduced people are advised, warned and forbidden, to go to hear them. This warning, however, seldom comes from those who are acquainted with the faith, but from those who are unfair enough to decide after hearing only one side of the evidence. Why not make the golden rule a living principle and not a dead letter by hearing others as you would expect others to hear you? This statement especially applies to ministers, but is applicable to all. Why should anyone

refuse to correctly understand the faith of another? Does a minister who advises his flock to refrain from getting a correct understanding of the faith of others, think his hearers are incapable of judging between truth and error? What egotism on his part? Why should not the Latter-day Saints be given the same privilege as others to explain their own faith in their own language? The faith of any society is composed of both letter and spirit. Especially is this so of the truth. Many persons may read the letter (the articles of faith) and through prejudice or unkindness fail to catch the spirit of it and misapply and misinterpret, and as a consequence misunderstand the faith of others.

Doubtless every believer in the golden rule will say that is not only fair, but human, and American, and christian, to hear and properly judge the faith of others. It is fair because one man has equal rights with every other. It is human because humanity demands brotherly treatment. We are all brothers of one common family. It is American because the law will not judge any man without first giving him the opportunity of speaking for himself; and the constitution of our country grants to every man the right to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. Any one who tries to abridge that right in the least, by persecution, or by preventing them by ostracism, is not truly American. It is christian because Christ has said: "As ye would that men should

do to you do ye also to them likewise." (Luke 6: 31). Paul, an Apostle of Christ said: "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good." Of the people at Berea, he said: "These were more noble than those at Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." (Acts 17: 10, 11). While those at Thessalonica "which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company and set all the city in an uproar." Why not be safe and sure by first hearing and then judging righteously.

To give the reader a general idea of the faith of the Latter-day Saints we present the following brief outline:

We believe Jesus Christ the Son of God was sent to make an infinite atonement for a fallen race, and also to teach the only effectual plan of salvation ever given to man and exemplify the same in his life. That plan was called the gospel and was sufficient for all time and therefore unchangeable in all its parts. In order to carry that gospel into effect a church was organized with various officers as it pleased God. To them was given the duty of the administering the word and ordinances as taught by the Savior, but they were not given either the right or the privilege of changing them. The church thus organized, authorized, and instructed, was called the "kingdom of God or the

kingdom of heaven." At other times it was known as the "body of Christ," "the Lamb's wife," "the household of God," and by various other terms.

In that church were placed apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and other officers. These officers were to continue in the church until the world was brought to a unity of the faith. (Eph. 4: 11, 12, 13). Evil men crept into the church un-awares and soon brought about many grievous changes both in doctrine and polity. With this change of law and order the Spirit of God was withdrawn and the church was rejected of God. They had gained the world but they had also lost their soul.

Following that came on the dark ages—the midnight of the world. Of that time Marsh's Ecclesiastical history states on page 198, "The revolution under Constantine beginning of the fourth century, was one from which almost everything which the christian values might be hoped. But alas! such is the depravity of human nature, it was one in which almost everything of evangelical worth was lost, Constantine brought the world into the church, and the church was paralyzed. The body existed but the Spirit had fled. Constantine set up an immense national church, but the humility, faith, and the spirituality of the age of Polycarp had passed away."

Mosheim likewise has this to say: "The Christian church was scarcely formed when in different

places there started up certain pretended reformers who not satisfied with that religion that was taught by the apostles, meditated changes of doctrine and worship." 1 Cent. part 2, chapter 5. "There is no institution so pure and excellent which the corruption and folly of man will not in time alter for the worse, and load with additions foreign to its nature and original design. Such in a particular manner was the fate of christianity. In this century many unnecessary rites and ceremonies were added to the christian worship, the introduction of which was extremely offensive to wise and good men." 2 Cent. part 2, chapter 4.

John Wesley the founder of Methodism said: "It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal period when Emperor Constantine called himself a christian, and from a vain ambition of promoting the christian cause thereby, heaped riches, and power and honor upon the christians in general, but in particular upon the christian clergy. From this time they almost totally ceased, very few instances of the kind were found. The cause of this was not (as has been vulgarly supposed) because there was no more occasion for them because all the world had become christian. This is a miserable mistake, not a twentieth part of it was then nominally christian. The real cause was the love of many waxed cold

and the christians had no more of the Spirit of God than the other heathens. * * * This was the real cause * * * the christians had turned heathen again and had only a dead form left." Book of Sermons, by John Wesley, No. 94.

Rodger Williams, founder of the Baptist church in America, said, "I conceive that the apostasy of Anti-Christ has so far corrupted all, that there can be no recovery out of that apostasy till Christ shall send forth new apostles to plant churches anew." Parson's Text Book, page 123.

Rev. T. A. Goodwin of the Methodist church is reported in the Indianapolis *Herald* for February, 1890, as follows: "For more than seventeen hundred years the church has been tinkering at her creeds until they are a theological hodge-podge, in many cases widely departing from the faith once delivered to the saints."

Our view is thus borne out by history and men of research, and the fact proven that the original church departed from the faith and was rejected of God. The apostles and even Jesus himself prophesied of such a departure. As Paul was on his way up to Jerusalem in the year 60 A. D. to report his labors to James and all the elders (Acts 21: 18, 19), he stopped at Ephesus and called a conference of the elders at that place (Acts 20:17) and warned them of the dangers coming upon the church. Among other things he said: "For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among

you not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." From this, we understand that the entire flock was to be destroyed. Again Paul wrote to Timothy in his second letter, 4:3, 4, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts will they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; they shall turn their ears away from the truth and shall be turned unto fables." From this we understand the church would not abide in the truth. Again Paul wrote: "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit or by word, nor by letter as from us as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." 1 Thessalonians 2:3, 4. In the thirteenth chapter of the book of Revelation and the seventh and eight verses is a description of the church in the form of a woman, and mention made of power that was to "make war with the saints and overcome them" and was to have power over all kindreds and tongues and nations. We believe that power to be the power of Satan through the papacy and it was to overcome the saints; which could mean nothing short of a destruction of the church. Jesus said: "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light lest

darkness come upon you, for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." St. John 12:35. Here is a plain indication of the withdrawing of the heavenly light and the dark ages that were to follow.

As it was before Christ, the world at times wandered in darkness away from God, so has it been since. Human nature since Christ is just the same as it was before his time, or even before the flood; but God, ever watchful of his creatures, was not to leave the world in darkness, superstition and doubt, but true to his past record, has restored that light again from heaven, and has given commandments to organize his church as in ancient times, and authorized them to preach and administer the same old gospel in the same old way. Indeed this latter-day restoration was to be a special work called by Isaiah "a marvelous work and a wonder" (Isaiah 29:14), and by Paul as "the dispensation of the fullness of times." John Wesley referred to it as "the latter-day glory." In his seventy-first sermon he said: "The times that we have reason to believe are at hand, if they are not already begun, are what many pious men have termed the latter-day glory." * * * What could God have done which he has not done to convince you that the day is coming, that the time is at hand when he will fulfill his promise, and will arise to maintain his own cause and set up his kingdom." Wesley recognized that he did not have the power, for

his disciples were called a "band of believers * * * seeking the power." See M. E. Discipline.

Martin Luther said: "I cannot tell what to say of myself. Perhaps I am Philip's (Melancthon's) forerunner. I am preparing the way for him, like Elias in spirit and in power." Church History, volume 1, page 2. He too, recognized that he was but a preparer of a greater work to follow. He thought it might be done by Melancthon, but did not know. Rodger Williams said: "There can be no recovery out of that apostacy till Christ shall send forth new apostles to plant churches anew." He too looked forward for new apostles sent forth by the Lord. Alexander Campbell said: "At evening time there shall be light. The primitive gospel in its effulgence and power is yet to shine out in its original splendor to regenerate the world."—Haydn's History, page 37. Again he said: "Some new revelation, or some new development of the revelation of God must be made before the hopes and expectations of all true christians can be realized, or christianity save and reform the nations of the world. We want the old gospel back sustained by the ancient order of things, and this alone by the blessing of the divine Spirit is all that we do want or can expect, to reform and save the world."—Christian System, 2nd edition, 1839, pages 234, 235. Again he said: "Societies indeed may be found among us far in advance of others in their progress toward the ancient order of things, but

we know of none that has fully attained to that model.”—Christian System, page 274. Rev. Dr. Coleman, a Congregational minister of Boston, Massachusetts, said: “The confession of the name of Christ after all, is very lame, and will be so till the discipline which Christ ordained be restored.” Rev. T. A. Goodwin of the M. E. church before quoted, said in the same sermon: “What of Methodism and some other creeds; for nearly three hundred years they have been quartered in a house of theological patchwork. The whole needs to be torn down and reconstructed from cellar to garret, so as to make a systematic and congruous structure consistent with itself and the Bible.” Sir Isaac Newton says: “About the time of the end, in all probability, a body of men will be raised up who will turn their attention to the prophecy, and insist upon their literal fulfillment in the midst of much clamor and opposition.” Lectures on Daniel, page 201.

The restored gospel preached by the Latter-day Saints fills the anticipations of nearly all the reformers which they themselves did not realize, and though “midst much clamor and opposition” yet, nevertheless worthy of at least a hearing. It comes in fulfillment of Isaiah 2:2, “The house of the Lord to be established in the last days.” Isaiah 5:26-29. The ensign of the Lord to be set up afar off—at the end of the earth—among the Gentile nations at a time when there would be horses with

wheels like a whirlwind. (R. R. locomotives.)
Isaiah 18:1-3. The ensign of God to be set up on a land beyond Ethiopia (America) just before the harvest or the end of the world. Isaiah 29:14-17. A marvelous work and a wonder set in operation by the Lord in the last days. Daniel 2:44. A divine kingdom to be set up just before the end of the world. Acts 2:20, 21. A restitution spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began. To be just before the second appearing of Christ. Ephesians 1:10. The dispensation of the fulness of times. With these and many other passages in mind, referring to the work of the Lord in the latter days, is it any wonder that many pious men as John Wesley says, spoke of a "latter-day glory?"

The claims of the Latter-day Saints harmonize with all these and other promises of the Scriptures. They agree with all true history, and fill the anticipations of many of the reformers. They are in exact harmony with ancient christianity in doctrine organization, and we might also say, persecution. Why should not such claims be heard? Of course the devil will rage. What else could be expected? But we pray God to enlighten the honest and bring them into his kingdom restored. The people Sir Isaac Newton looked for has appeared, and that too "mid great opposition." Reader, which side will you enlist on? As a persecutor or as a believer?

HOW SOME OTHERS SEE US.

From the *Independence (Missouri) Progress* for October, 1897:

It is not the province of the *Progress* to engage in any sort of religious discussion or controversy, but right is right and hurts no one. There is over the world a misapprehension of the people called Mormons here in Independence. They do not relish the name of Mormon. * * * They prefer to be called Latter-day Saints of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ. They call themselves Saints for short. They are bitterly antagonistic to the Mormons of Utah. The Mormons of Independence believe in Joseph Smith, but not in Brigham Young, whom they detest as an apostate and despise as a deceiver. When Joseph Smith was killed, the Mormon church broke into fragments. The ambitious Brigham Young got a following and went to Utah, where he perverted the original doctrine, introducing among other unholy doctrines that of polygamy, utterly denounced by all Mormons at Independence. The Mormons in this city are a quiet, orderly, industrious people, enjoying the good opinion of their Gentile neighbors, from whom they differ mainly in their acceptance of the Book of Mormon. Of course there is not the slightest fellowship between the communicants of the Mormon church and those of other churches here, but as neighbors there is no friction. The Mormon children in the public school reflect excellent home training.

Iowa State Register, March 20, 1887:

The Reorganized Mormon church under President Smith not only refrain from endorsing polygamy, but is perhaps the most alert and active enemy that the abomination has. As a church under this president, it is as much entitled to recognition and public favor as any of the many churches of the day, so far as honesty of purpose and actions are concerned."

Missouri Valley (Iowa) News:

These Latter-day Saints encamped in our county for their annual harvest of souls, point with pride to their open creed as evidence of their true christian spirit, and the world cannot but say: "Ye have done well, abide with us." Their devotions are genuine. Their moral lives of the best. Their presses are messengers bearing good tidings. Their loyalty leads them to place the national colors over their holy altars.

Independence (Missouri) Sentinel, April 7, 1888:

It is no longer excusable to charge upon the Reorganized church, sympathy with the polygamists. They regret the Salt Lake dogma with loathing and disgust, and teach and keep the marriage relation as sacred as other Protestant people. The sobriety of the Mormon people of this community and their testimony against all forms of dissipation does them great honor, and ought to silence the tongue of ignorant criticism.

Cleveland (Ohio) Herald, April 9, 1883:

A more devoted or conscientious body of delegates never assembled for a like purpose. Nothing can equal the persistency with which the Mormons gathered here denounce the evils of the Utah church. The consciousness that they are continually reproached on that account evidently aggravates them greatly. Said President Smith, to your representative this morning, 'We differ from them (Utah Mormons) in almost everything. They are a Theocracy. What they are told to do must be done. With us there is freedom of thought.' The Hon. R. P. Harmon, in speaking of the ministers present says, 'In intellectual acumen I think they stand above the average clerical assemblies.'

Chicago Record Herald, March 14, 1904:

One of the largest of these nonpolygamous societies is known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with headquarters at Lamoni, Iowa. Members of congress from Lamoni who know these people say they are

the equals in probity and morality of any people under the sun. No citizens of that state are more highly respected by their neighbors. * * * But a member of the committee who knows something of the high character of the monogamist Latter-day Saints, says he has personally examined some of the evidences which has been submitted to the committee, and he can find no proof whatever that the president of the Utah church was correct in saying Joseph Smith had introduced polygamy into the church.' On the other hand, he 'finds almost conclusive proof that Joseph Smith did nothing of the sort, and that the founder of the church neither practiced or preached polygamy.'

The above committee referred to, was the committee on privileges and elections in the United States Senate when examining the Reed Smoot case, and consists of some of the brightest intellects of the day. Reader, you will do well to listen to a body of people as described in the above extracts.

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