

out the world, would put those words where he might see them every morning as he begins his day. They would give him the courage to speak up, they would give him the faith to try, they would strengthen his conviction of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe that miracles would begin to happen over the earth.

The words of eternal life

I recall the occasion on which Jesus fed the multitude with the loaves and fishes. They were satisfied physically and were curious. He then taught them the doctrines of the kingdom and many fell away. "Then said Jesus unto the Twelve, will ye also go away?"

"Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

"And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:67-69.)

I echo that testimony, my brethren. I know that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that this is their holy work, and I plead with you and with the God of heaven that we shall have the power and the faith and the devotion to roll it forward to its great destiny, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

He to whom you have just listened is Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Council of the Twelve.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing "To Music," after which Brother Mark E. Petersen will be our concluding speaker.

The Tabernacle Choir sang the number, "To Music."

ELDER MARK E. PETERSEN

Of the Council of the Twelve

● Earnestly I pray for the direction of the eternal Spirit of God as I stand before you and bear you my testimony that I know that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is true.

From its beginning, true Christianity has been a religion that has been hard to believe and hard for most people to live.

When the Savior was on earth and taught his pure doctrine, many refused to listen to him. Some were offended by what he said and became so angry that they sought his life, and eventually they crucified him.

Following his ascension into heaven, his disciples endeavored to carry on his work, but they also were misunderstood, disbelieved by most, and severely persecuted.

As the scriptures indicate, they were everywhere spoken against. It was largely because their teachings were so hard to believe.

Doctrines challenged traditions

The doctrine which first challenged

the credulity of the people was the teaching that Christ was the Son of the living God. This led his critics to call him a blasphemer.

When he exhibited his divine power in healing the sick and giving sight to the blind, they called him Beelzebub and said he was of the devil.

These reactions to his labors were quite understandable, and in a way the people generally were hardly to blame. Jesus himself prayed at the crucifixion, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34.)

The doctrines of Christ were quite different from what they had been taught all their lives, and therefore, under the influence of their time-honored tradition, they felt that what Jesus said was false.

And yet, the scriptures that they professed to love and read had foretold his coming. They even described his person and predicted his eventual sacrifice. But the scriptures were misconstrued by the elders and the scribes,

who so confused the people that when Jesus held his pure truth before them, they not only misunderstood but they became angry and bitter.

As his teachings challenged their long-standing traditions, their resentment rose to the point where thoughts of revenge filled their minds.

Disbelief in resurrection

When the apostles proclaimed his resurrection, again there was disbelief. Had anyone ever come back from the dead? Who in all his life had seen a dead man rise from his grave in physical reality and walk and talk and eat?

The idea of a resurrection seemed completely incredible and was much too hard for most people to believe, so they turned away.

But time favored credulity. That which is old always seems easier to believe, so when the immediacy of Christ's sacrifice was past, greater numbers of people began to accept him.

Divisions in Christianity

But a new difficulty arose. They did not all believe alike. Certain of them had one interpretation of the sacred word while others had contrary views. For example, differences arose among the believers pertaining to the nature of God. What is God like? That was the question. Is he a person? Is he a shapeless, indescribable spirit, or is he a mere influence for good, filling the universe? The believers could not agree among themselves.

Even on such a simple thing as baptism, conflicts arose among them. Some could not believe this ordinance was even necessary. Those who did believe in it disagreed as to the method by which it should be administered.

So further divisions arose in Christianity.

Well-meaning men began to alter Christ's doctrines to suit their own notions, making them seem easier to accept in a revised form than in the way they were given originally by the Master.

And then among the believers themselves, divisions also began to arise over the resurrection, which had been

an earlier stumbling block. Some at that time could not, and many Christians even today still cannot, accept that doctrine. Certain of them convinced themselves that the spirit or soul could survive death, but not a decaying body. A physical resurrection of flesh and bone was beyond their ability to accept. Therefore, many professed followers of Jesus rejected this Christian teaching as being too hard to believe.

And yet it was in the scripture. To reject the resurrection really meant also to reject certain portions of holy writ. What were the followers of Christ to do? Could they believe some of the scripture and not the remainder?

This is exactly what many did, with still further division as a result. And yet the apostle Paul had said that Christ is not divided!

It became obvious that the original gospel was too hard to believe, even for many professed Christians.

Need for better understanding

Today Christianity is still divided. But the many denominations, with their varied versions of Christian doctrine, now see the need for a better understanding.

Ecumenical movements have begun, arising largely in the wake of the courageous steps of the late Pope John, who called together the great ecumenical councils of Rome. He saw the need for a change in world Christianity and so did most of his associates.

His Eminence Julius, Cardinal Dopfner of Munich, Germany, was one of the four prelates chosen by Pope John to moderate the council meetings in Rome. As quoted in *Time* magazine, following his return to Munich, the distinguished cardinal said that many of the faithful have been lost because the Christianity of today appears "as a superannuated souvenir of a past age," and he called for reforms that would bring Christianity back to Christ and the Bible. Ponder, if you will, the deep significance of that declaration.

But if Christianity does take this giant step, and does return to the pure doctrines of Christ, will modern Christians find the original teachings of

Jesus any easier to believe than did their ancient predecessors?

To unite the various Christian churches under a single banner is one thing, but to accept the original hard-to-believe doctrines of Christ is quite another, particularly if they upset long-standing creeds and traditions as they very definitely did when Jesus walked the plains of Palestine.

Call to rediscover Christ

Philip Scharper, writing his defense of the changing Catholicism of today, in his book *Meet the American Catholic*, makes some remarks that are well worth serious consideration.

He calls for Christians to rediscover Christ.

We Latter-day Saints make the same appeal.

Speaking for his fellow Catholics and describing important changes recently made in his church, he adds:

"Now the stereotypes are being smashed, and we are forced to search out the authentic features of our Protestant brothers."

And then he further says:

"Every Catholic who would take seriously the high ecumenical mandate of the Council [of Rome] must come to a knowledge of and respect for the beliefs and practices of the major Protestant churches."

Riches of divine revelation

Then he calls for an exploration of the riches of divine revelation! What a blessing this would be!

But to explore the riches of divine revelation can only mean a genuine study of the original doctrines of Christ, no matter how hard to believe they may seem to be, for God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

If we are to accept Christ, then we must accept what he taught. Pretenses accomplish nothing. He himself said that we cannot serve two masters.

Then if we are to discover him, we must discover the kind of Christianity that he established and be willing to accept it as it is, whether or not it upsets old traditions that have become dear to our hearts.

Tradition is by no means infallible. Often it has no basis in fact. And quite as often it is at variance with the original gospel.

Important message for mankind

We Latter-day Saints have long been concerned about the divisions in Christianity. The question "Which church is right?" is often on our lips.

In all sincerity and in deep solemnity before God, we declare that we Latter-day Saints have an important message for all mankind that is most pertinent to this point.

In the spirit of Mr. Scharper's ecumenical book, we ask both Catholics and Protestants to listen to the authentic features of Mormonism.

Being heard amidst the echoes of long-standing creeds and dogmas, our teachings may be as hard to believe as the gospel was originally. But they are nevertheless true and scriptural.

Mormonism, so called, proclaims that God does live and that he has been seen and heard by mortal men in these modern times.

Mormonism further declares that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Son of Almighty God; that he is divine; that he is the Savior of the Christians, the Messiah of the Jews, and the Redeemer of mankind.

We affirm the fact of his death on the cross and the physical reality of his resurrection, in flesh and bone.

We teach the authenticity of the Holy Bible and the truthfulness of the prophetic writings therein.

Gospel restored in its purity

Hard to believe though it is, the scriptures themselves foretold the sad division in Christianity, leading to the formation of the many denominations of today. They refer to it as a falling away, an apostasy from the original gospel.

But those same scriptures declare that the gospel truth would be restored in all its purity and simplicity in these latter days.

Is that hard to believe? It should bring joy to all.

The sacred word further explains the manner in which this restoration

would be accomplished and teaches the almost incredible fact that before the hour of God's judgment, holy angels would fly through the midst of heaven, bringing back to mankind the one and only true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ as it was originally taught by the Master himself.

Is that hard to believe? It is nevertheless a fact.

Such an event, of course, would mean a new and modern revelation from God. Dare you believe that? Dare you accept the scriptures?

A new and sacred book

The ancient prophets, speaking of our day, also foretold that a new and sacred book would be given to modern man, a book written anciently but reserved for publication in our times. It was to be a record that had been buried in the ground for ages, but, as Isaiah said, it would come out of the earth in the latter days to tell the story of a fallen people who had lived anciently.

Is that hard to believe? It is scripture!

The book necessarily would be in an ancient tongue, but it would be published in modern languages and would be done—not by some great scholar—but by an unlearned man, says the prophet Isaiah.

What a paradox! A sacred volume of ancient scriptures produced in our day by an unlearned man! And yet it is foretold in the scripture. Is that hard for you to believe?

Great modern revelation

Through this great modern revelation, God would restore his church to the earth with modern apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists, and teachers, such as were in Christ's ancient church.

This restoration would make ecumenical councils unnecessary and would avoid further debates over differing creeds and dogmas.

Man no longer would need to grope through the darkness of his own wisdom seeking religious truth, for the light of modern revelation would be there to guide him.

Revelation would take the place of conjecture. Prophets would guide mankind in this day as Moses and Isaiah led their people anciently. All of this would be part of a modern restoration of the gospel.

Is this hard for you to believe? Yet it is scripture. It is Bible doctrine. Is the Bible too hard to accept?

Glad news of the Latter-day Saints

The glad news of the Latter-day Saints, then, is this: Hard to believe or not, God lives, and he is our Father.

Hard to believe or not, Jesus Christ is his divine Son, the Savior of the Christians, the Messiah of the Jews, and the Redeemer of all mankind.

Difficult as it may be to admit, the many denominations of today, by their very existence, evidence a departure from the original truth as described by the apostle Paul.

And hard to believe as it may seem, a modern revelation from God has now come, just as Peter and John said it would.

New prophets have been raised up in our day. Once again apostles traverse the earth. Once again the ancient cry is heard: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 4:17.) The gospel now has been restored in its purity.

So to all mankind we extend our hand in fellowship and love and say: "Come, listen to a prophet's voice, And hear the word of God, And in the way of truth rejoice, And sing for joy aloud. We've found the way the prophets went Who lived in days of yore; Another prophet now is sent This knowledge to restore."

—Hymns, No. 46

And this is our humble testimony in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. ○

President N. Eldon Tanner

We express our thanks and appreciation to the General Authorities who have spoken to us, and to the Tabernacle Choir for their inspirational music.