

“Mom, Are We Christians?”

ELDER GARY J. COLEMAN

Of the Seventy

I am a devout Christian who is exceedingly fortunate to have greater knowledge of the true “doctrine of Christ” since my conversion to the restored Church.



Christianity celebrates the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God the Eternal Father. Christian churches with great variations of doctrine dot the land the world over. When 14-year-old Cortnee, a daughter of a mission president, entered a new high school as a freshman, she was asked by classmates if she was a Christian. They scoffed at her response that she was a Mormon, a common reference to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Upon arriving home she asked her mother, “Mom, are we Christians?”

Growing up in my family, we lived as devout members of another

Christian faith. I was baptized a member of that church shortly after my birth. Our family went to church each week. For many years my brothers and I assisted the pastors who conducted our Sunday services. I was taught the importance of family prayer as our family prayed together each day. I thought that someday I would enter the full-time ministry in my church. There was no question in our minds that we could define ourselves as devout Christians.

When I was a university student, however, I became acquainted with the members and teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a Christian faith centered on the Savior. I began to learn about the doctrine of the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ in these latter days. I learned truths that I had not known before that changed my life and how I viewed the gospel. After much studying, prayer, and faith, I chose to embrace beautiful restored truths found only in this Church.

The first restored truth that I learned was the nature of the Godhead. The true Christian doctrine that the Godhead consists of three separate beings was known in biblical times. God bore witness of Jesus, His Only Begotten Son, on several occasions.

He spoke at Jesus’s baptism: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”¹ Jesus Himself testified of God, His Father, when He said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”² After Jesus’s death and Resurrection, we learn that Stephen, “he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”³ What a dramatic testimony of the Godhead from that disciple of Christ.

The knowledge of God and His physical separateness from His Son and the Holy Ghost was lost after the death of Christ and His Apostles. Confusion and false doctrines about the Godhead were fashioned out of the Nicene Creed and Constantinople councils, where men declared that instead of three separate beings, the Godhead was three persons in one God, or the Trinity. Just as Christian Protestant reformers struggled with these creeds of men, I did as well. The teachings about the Trinity that



I learned in my youth were incomprehensible to me.

However, when I was introduced to the glorious truths of the First Vision experienced by the Prophet Joseph Smith, it was a stunning awakening for me to finally understand the truth about the nature of God the Eternal Father and His Only Begotten Son. Joseph declared: "I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*"⁴ This heavenly vision restored the wondrous yet plain and precious knowledge of God and His Son to the earth again, dispelling at once the teachings I had learned about the Trinity.

I know that heaven-sent revelations have replaced the gross errors of man-made doctrines concerning the Godhead. I know that God is our Heavenly Father. His Son, Jesus Christ, is my Savior. The Holy Ghost testifies of the Father and the Son. I express my profound gratitude to God for introducing the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ to mankind in these last days. The Savior lives; He has been seen; He has spoken; He directs the work of His Church through apostles and prophets today. What magnificent truths He has taught as the Good Shepherd who continues to look after His sheep.

The second restored truth I learned as an investigator of this Church was the reality of additional scripture and revelation. The prophet Isaiah saw in vision a book that he proclaimed was part of "a marvellous work and a wonder."⁵ I testify that the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ is that book. It is a sacred record written by prophets of God to persuade all people to come unto Christ, and it helps to reveal the gospel of Jesus Christ in its fulness. The Book of Mormon tells



of prophets and other faithful members of the Church who took upon themselves the name of Christ, even before the Savior's birth.⁶ This book tells of the resurrected Christ teaching men what they must do to gain peace in this life and eternal salvation in the world to come. What could be more Christian than seeking to take His name upon ourselves and follow His counsel to become like Him?

President Gordon B. Hinckley has said, "I cannot understand why the

Christian world does not accept this book."⁷ I first read the Book of Mormon at the age of 21. I then asked God if it was true. The truth of it was manifested unto me by the comforting power of the Holy Ghost.⁸ I know that the Book of Mormon is a second testament of Jesus Christ. I join my testimony with the prophets of this sacred book to declare that "we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ."⁹ I am deeply grateful for every word that He

has spoken and for every word He continues to speak as He quenches our thirst with living water.

Another restored truth of the gospel I became acquainted with was the restoration of priesthood authority, or the power to act in God's name. Former prophets and apostles, such as Elijah, Moses, John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John, have been sent by God and Christ in our day to restore the holy priesthood of God. Every priesthood holder in this Church can trace his priesthood authority directly to Jesus Christ. Men now possess the keys to establish the Church so that we can come unto Christ and partake of His eternal ordinances of salvation.¹⁰ I testify that this is the Church of Jesus Christ—the only church authorized with true priesthood authority to exercise the keys of salvation through sacred ordinances.

Cortnee asked, “Mom, are we Christians?” As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you are a Christian, and I am too. I am a devout Christian who is exceedingly fortunate to have greater knowledge of the true “doctrine of Christ”¹¹ since my conversion to the restored Church. These truths define this Church as having the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Like other members of the Church, I now understand the true nature of the Godhead, I have access to additional scripture and revelation, and I can partake of the blessings of priesthood authority. Yes, Cortnee, we are Christians, and I testify of these truths in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Matthew 3:17.
2. John 17:3.
3. Acts 7:55–56.
4. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
5. See Isaiah 29:14; see also vv. 11–12, 18.
6. See Alma 46:14–16.
7. “The Marvelous Foundation of Our Faith,” *Liabona and Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 81.
8. See Moroni 10:4–5.
9. 2 Nephi 25:26.
10. See D&C 2; 13; 110; 112:32.
11. 2 Nephi 31:2; see also 3 Nephi 11:31–36.

Who's on the Lord's Side?

CHARLES W. DAHLQUIST II

Young Men General President

If you will remain on the Lord's side of the line, the adversary cannot come there to tempt you.



My dear brethren and sisters, I am grateful that we live in a day and age when apostles and prophets walk the earth and provide inspiration and guidance for us. I bear my witness that President Hinckley is, indeed, a prophet of God—just as was Moses, Abraham, and all the other prophets since the world began. I am grateful for his counsel this morning and for the opportunity we will have at the conclusion of this conference to hear from him once again.

Today I speak particularly to the young men and young women of the Church, as well as to their parents and leaders. I speak also to the great

young single adults, who have such marvelous talents and capabilities and potential for service in the kingdom.

President Hinckley has said of this generation: “There never was a time such as this. What a season in the history of the world to be alive! Never before has there been such a generation of youth. . . . You really are ‘a chosen generation’” (*Way to Be!* [2002], 3).

You, as the youth of Zion, have a great work to do and have been given all the talents and opportunities, regardless of where you live, to do just exactly what your Father in Heaven expects of you. I pray that my comments this afternoon will help you in that quest.

In February 1852, a young woman by the name of Hannah Last Cornaby was baptized in Yarmouth, England. It was not the quiet, reverent experience most have but was described by her in these words: “We found the house surrounded by a mob, through which we with difficulty made our way. . . . Before we reached the water's edge, the whole horde was upon us; and my husband baptized me amid a shower of stones, and shouts . . . and, although the stones whizzed around us thick as hail, not one touched us, and we reached home in safety, thanking God for our