
TRIALS OF JOSEPH SMITH

See: Smith, Joseph: Legal Trials of Joseph Smith

TRUE AND LIVING CHURCH

“The only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” is a phrase from a REVELATION given to the Prophet Joseph SMITH (D&C 1:30) often used by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when they testify to the truthfulness of the restored gospel in testimony meetings, MISSIONARY presentations, or other settings. The phrase echoes Paul’s “the living and true God” (1 Thes. 1:9), which also occurs elsewhere in the scriptures.

Latter-day Saints speak of “the only true and living church” because of their belief that Jesus Christ and his apostles organized the Church during their ministry on the earth. This organization included prophets and apostles at its head, along with various other offices such as bishop, elder, seventy, and so on. The holders of these offices were given authority to preach the gospel, perform ORDINANCES, and govern the Church.

However, as Christ and his apostles had prophesied, the “true” Church they established was lost from the earth through APOSTASY (JS—M 1:7–9, 22; 2 Thes. 2:3). Therefore there was a need for a RESTORATION. Guided by angelic messengers and by revelation from God, Joseph Smith and his successors have reestablished Christ’s Church in these “latter days.” Members bear testimony that the Church is true because they believe it is the restored Church of Christ, with the same authority, teachings, organization, and spirit found in the Church that the Savior originally established.

The Church is a “living” church with “living” scripture, not only because it has been restored by a “living God” who continues to reveal his will to his living prophets and people to lead them to life eternal, but also because it is a growing, dynamic organization that plays an important role in the way of life of active members. The Church has a lay ministry; therefore its offices are filled by the general membership. Many young men and women begin early in life to serve in Church positions as teachers and leaders, and continue to serve throughout their lives. Being involved in a significant way in an organization that is directed by continuing revelation and is dramatically growing

leads its members to speak of it as a true and living church.

To its members, as President Spencer W. KIMBALL has stated, the LDS Church “is not a church. [It] is *The Church of Jesus Christ*” (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. E. L. Kimball, p. 421, Salt Lake City, 1982).

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SOREN F. COX

TRUTH

The LDS conception of truth does not fit any of the categories in which it has been discussed in the Western philosophical tradition. For Latter-day Saints, truth is found in living the type of life exemplified by JESUS CHRIST.

In the Western philosophical tradition, truth is the characteristic or quality of an idea or statement that justifies belief in it. What this characteristic might be has been the subject of long-standing philosophical debate; some have said it is the correspondence with reality that true statements possess; some, their “tie-in” or coherence with other statements; some, their consequences or practical usefulness. So devastating have been the attacks upon each of these theories that in recent times many philosophers have abandoned altogether the traditional assumption that a firm or absolute kind of truth is possible. These philosophers say that because our knowledge of the world is heavily conditioned by the peculiarities of the particular language in which it is expressed, it is an interpretation at best; we have no basis for claiming we can ever know “how things really are,” they argue, and therefore, whatever truth exists is relative to the speaker’s language, culture, and situation. Absolute truth, thought of as a property of ideas or statements, is a concept that has fallen on hard times.

Commonly it is supposed that for Latter-day Saints truth is absolute in a way that makes it vulnerable to the relativist’s arguments. But for Latter-day Saints, as their scriptures and everyday discourse reveal, truth is not primarily a matter of