



**By Elder
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Of the Seventy

The True Church

“For the Perfecting of the Saints”

By now you have had the opportunity to read the first several chapters of volume 1 of the new four-volume narrative history of the Church, *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*. It is wonderful to see how the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, told in its context as experienced by those who lived it, builds our faith and renews our hope. We feel privileged to bring that history forth in a way that can be understood and appreciated across the world and throughout the Church.

The impressions one gets from reading the history of the Church depend largely on what one expects to find in that history. We read the Lord’s own statement that this Church is “the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” (D&C 1:30). So it may seem reasonable to expect that the history of the true Church portray unerring leaders successfully implementing a sequence of revealed directions progressing to a perfect organization that is widely welcomed and embraced. But that is neither what the scriptures describe nor what our history represents, because the perfecting of the Church as an organization was not the Lord’s primary purpose.

What Is the Purpose of the Church?

Nowhere in our scriptures, our doctrine, or the teachings of latter-day apostles and prophets is it taught that the

purpose of the Lord is to perfect or to save the Church. Rather, the purpose of the Church is “for the perfecting of the saints . . . till we all come in the unity of the faith . . . unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12–13). The Lord’s primary purpose is to perfect His Saints. The Church serves to support that objective.

Thus, we will be thrilled by what we find in our history if we expect it to demonstrate how the process of the Restoration not only established the Lord’s true Church on earth but also provided the experiences by which its leaders and members could grow toward perfection as they learned from their triumphs and their mistakes. Their experiences can increase our faith in God and Christ and help us see how our participation in this same divinely directed process can change and bless us. In other words, the history of the Church gives us hope that we too can ultimately be “perfected in [Christ]” (Moroni 10:32).

What Does It Mean That This Is the True Church?

If the leaders and members of the past were able to establish Christ’s Church even though their efforts were sometimes imperfect, and if they sometimes made mistakes, then what does it mean to say that this is the true Church? It means that we may have complete confidence in the validity of the restored priesthood authority, the

saving ordinances, the revealed doctrine, the scriptures, and the united quorums of the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency. It means that we may know that the Savior Himself directs the Church and that the Holy Ghost will bear witness to all sincere seekers of the truth of these things. It means that by striving to keep the covenants associated with the ordinances, and continually repenting, even imperfect but sincere people like you and me will live in celestial glory with God and Christ and our families forever, through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

We feel privileged to present this narrative history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and we encourage you to continue reading the remainder of the series as each volume comes out. It is faithful to the records and the facts available. We are confident that an honest reading of this history will increase our faith in Heavenly Father's love and in the power of Christ's Atonement, will strengthen our witness of the

divine direction of the Prophet Joseph Smith and of the Restoration, and can give us hope that we too will receive all the blessings promised to the faithful. ■

Elder Cornish was serving as Assistant Executive Director of the Church History Department at the time this article was prepared.

Chapter 7 of *Saints* appears in the following article. The entire first volume is available in 14 languages in print from store.lds.org and free of charge in the Gospel Library app and online at saints.lds.org. It is also available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese on popular e-book and audio book platforms.

To learn more about inspiring events in Church history, join the worldwide devotional, a Face to Face event with Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, on September 9, 2018. Visit YSAface2face.lds.org for details and to submit questions in advance.

