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# Speeches

*Absolute Truth*

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# Absolute Truth

SPENCER W. KIMBALL

**M**y beloved brothers and sisters, what a joy it is to be with you on your first devotional for the new school year! I am glad to be here and I greet you with my affection and deep-seated love.

I wrote, some time ago, a letter to a disbeliever. Much of what was said in that letter has been on my mind lately and I wish to share the substance of those thoughts in this talk to you. With that explanation you will better understand the point of view assumed and the style in which it is given. Writing to this young man, who was battling with his thoughts, I said:

*Dear John:*

*Your resistance and argument against the truths of the gospel have given me grave concern.*

*I realize I cannot convince you against your will, but I know I can help you if you will only listen and let me call to your attention some salient truths, and if you will listen with a prayer and a desire to know that what I say is true. I would not, even if I could, force your thinking, for free agency is the basic law of God and each one must assume the responsibility for his own response; but certainly each of us must do his part in influencing for good those who might need some assistance.*

The Lord said unto Enoch:

*Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency.*

[Moses 7:32]

I have lain awake many long hours contemplating and have offered many fervent prayers on my bended knees, hopeful that I might say the right thing, and that you would receive it in the humble spirit in which it is given.

This true way of life is not a matter of opinion. There are absolute truths and relative truths. The rules and dietetics have changed many times in my lifetime. Many scientific findings have changed from year to year. The scientists taught for decades that the world was once a nebulous, molten mass cast off from the sun, and later many scientists said it once was a whirl of dust which solidified. There are many ideas advanced to the world that have been changed to meet the needs of the truth as

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*Spencer W. Kimball was President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given at Brigham Young University on 6 September 1977.*

it has been discovered. There are relative truths, and there are also absolute truths which are the same yesterday, today, and forever—never changing. These absolute truths are not altered by the opinions of men. As science has expanded our understanding of the physical world, certain accepted ideas of science have had to be abandoned in the interest of truth. Some of these seeming truths were stoutly maintained for centuries. The sincere searching of science often rests only on the threshold of truth, whereas revealed facts give us certain absolute truths as a beginning point so we may come to understand the nature of man and the purpose of his life.

The earth is spherical. If all the four billion people in the world think it flat, they are in error. That is an absolute truth, and all the arguing in the world will not change it. Weights will not suspend themselves in the air, but when released will fall earthward. The law of gravity is an absolute truth. It never varies. Greater laws can overcome lesser ones, but that does not change their undeniable truth.

We learn about these absolute truths by being taught by the Spirit. These truths are “independent” in their spiritual sphere and are to be discovered spiritually, though they may be confirmed by experience and intellect (see D&C 93:30). The great prophet Jacob said that “the Spirit speaketh the truth. . . . Wherefore, it speaketh of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be.” (Jacob 4:13). We needed to be taught in order to understand life and who we really are.

God, our Heavenly Father—Elohim—lives. That is an absolute truth. All four billion of the children of men on the earth might be ignorant of him and his attributes and his powers, but he still lives. All the people on the earth might deny him and disbelieve, but he lives in spite of them. They may have their own opinions, but he still lives, and his form, powers, and attributes do not change according to men’s opinions. In short, opinion alone has no power

in the matter of an absolute truth. He still lives. And Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Almighty, the Creator, the Master of the only true way of life—the gospel of Jesus Christ. The intellectual may rationalize him out of existence and the unbeliever may scoff, but Christ still lives and guides the destinies of his people. That is an absolute truth; there is no gainsaying.

The watchmaker in Switzerland, with materials at hand, made the watch that was found in the sand in a California desert. The people who found the watch had never been to Switzerland, nor seen the watchmaker, nor seen the watch made. The watchmaker still existed, no matter the extent of their ignorance or experience. If the watch had a tongue, it might even lie and say, “There is no watchmaker.” That would not alter the truth.

If men are really humble, they will realize that they *discover*, but do not *create*, truth.

The Gods organized the earth of materials at hand, over which they had control and power. This truth is absolute. A million educated folk might speculate and determine in their minds that the earth came into being by chance. The truth remains. The earth was made by the Gods as was the watch by the watchmaker. Opinions do not change that.

The Gods organized and gave life to man and placed him on the earth. This is absolute. It cannot be disproved. A million brilliant minds might conjecture otherwise, but it is still true. And having done all this for his Father’s children, the Christ mapped out a plan of life for man—a positive and absolute program whereby man might achieve, accomplish, and overcome and perfect himself. Again, these vital truths are not matters of opinion. If they were, then your opinion would be just as good as mine, or better. But I give you these things, not as my opinion—I give them to you as divine truths which are absolute.

Someday you will see and feel and understand and perhaps even berate yourself for the

long delay and waste of time. It is not a matter of *if*. It is a matter of *when*.

Experience in one field does not automatically create expertise in another field. Expertise in religion comes from personal righteousness and from revelation. The Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith: "All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it" (D&C 93:30). A geologist who has discovered truths about the structure of the earth may be oblivious to the truths God has given us about the eternal nature of the family.

If I can only make clear this one thing, it will give us a basis on which to build. Man cannot discover God or his ways by mere mental processes. One must be governed by the laws which control the realm into which he is delving. To become a plumber, one must study the laws which govern plumbing. He must know stresses and strains; temperatures at which pipes will freeze; laws which govern steam, hot water, expansion, contraction, and so forth. One might know much about plumbing and be a complete failure in training children or getting along with men. One might be the best of bookkeepers and yet not know anything of electricity. One might know much about buying and selling groceries and be absolutely ignorant of bridge building.

One might be a great authority on the hydrogen bomb and yet know nothing of banking. One might be a noted theologian and yet be wholly untrained in watchmaking. One might be the author of the law of relativity and yet know nothing of the Creator who originated every law. I repeat, these are not matters of opinion. They are absolute truths. These truths are available to every soul.

Any intelligent man may learn what he wants to learn. He may acquire knowledge in any field, though it requires much thought and effort. It takes more than a decade to get a high school diploma; it takes an additional four years for most people to get a college degree; it takes nearly a quarter-century to become a

great physician. Why, oh, why do people think they can fathom the most complex spiritual depths without the necessary experimental and laboratory work accompanied by compliance with the laws that govern it? Absurd it is, but you will frequently find popular personalities, who seem never to have lived a single law of God, discoursing in interviews on religion. How ridiculous for such persons to attempt to outline for the world a way of life!

And yet many a financier, politician, college professor, or owner of a gambling club thinks that because he has risen above all his fellowmen in his particular field he knows everything in every field. One cannot know God nor understand his works or plans unless he follows the laws which govern. The spiritual realm, which is just as absolute as is the physical, cannot be understood by the laws of the physical. You do not learn to make electric generators in a seminary. Neither do you learn certain truths about spiritual things in a physics laboratory. You must go to the spiritual laboratory, use the facilities available there, and comply with the governing rules. Then you may know of these truths just as surely, or more surely, than the scientist knows the metals, or the acids, or other elements. It matters little whether one is a plumber, or a banker, or a farmer, for these occupations are secondary; what is most important is what one knows and believes concerning his past and his future and what he does about it.

When we were spiritual beings, fully organized and able to think and study and understand with him, our Heavenly Father said to us, in effect: "Now, my beloved children, in your spirit state you have progressed about as far as you can. To continue your development, you need physical bodies. I intend to provide a plan whereby you may continue your growth. As you know, one can grow only by overcoming.

"Now," said the Lord, "we shall take of the elements at hand and organize them into an

earth, place thereon vegetation and animal life, and permit you to go down upon it. This will be your proving ground. We shall give you a rich earth, lavishly furnished for your benefit and enjoyment, and we shall see if you will prove true and do the things that are asked of you. I will enter into a contract with you. If you will agree to exercise control over your desires and continue to grow toward perfection and godhood by the plan which I shall provide, I will give to you a physical body of flesh and bones and a rich and productive earth, with sun, water, forests, metals, soils, and all other things necessary to feed and clothe and house you and give to you every enjoyment that is proper and for your good. In addition to this, I will make it possible for you to eventually return to me as you improve your life, overcoming obstacles and approaching perfection.”

To the above most generous offer, we as sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father responded with gratitude. We took our turns and came to earth as bodies were prepared by our earthly parents. We are now on trial—on the proving ground. This, also, is an absolute truth. It cannot be disproved. It is an incontrovertible fact. If one can accept these unassailable truths, then he is ready to start his experimentation and his laboratory work.

A few more salient facts, which I shall not attempt at this moment to elaborate upon: Adam and Eve transgressed a law and were responsible for a change that came to all their posterity, that of mortality. Could it have been the different food which made the change? Somehow blood, the life-giving element in our bodies, replaced the finer substance which coursed through their bodies before. They and we became mortal, subject to illness, pains, and even the physical dissolution called death. But the spirit, which is supreme in the dual man, transcends the body. It does not decompose but proceeds to the spirit world for further experience, with the assurance that after sufficient preparation there a reunion will take place

where the spirit will be housed eternally in a remodeled body of flesh and bones. This time the union will never be dissolved, since there will be no blood to disintegrate and cause trouble. A finer substance will give life to the body and will render it immortal.

This resurrection referred to is the work of Jesus Christ, the Savior, who, because he was both mortal (the son of Mary) and divine (the Son of God), was able to overcome the powers governing the flesh. He actually gave his life and literally took it up again as the “first fruits,” to be followed by every soul that has ever lived. Being a god, he gave his life. No one could take it from him. He had developed, through his perfection in overcoming all things, the power to take up his life again. Death was his last enemy, and he overcame even that and established the resurrection. This is an absolute truth. All the theorists in the world cannot disprove it. It is a fact.

Before his crucifixion, the Savior recognized the absolute necessity for an organization of persons duly empowered to carry on his work, teach his plan to the world, and persuade people to follow the eternal program. He therefore organized his Church among his faithful followers, with apostles, prophets, and other officials to give his people guidance. He sent those officials into all the world to teach his truths—but to teach them without using force, for the basic law of this world is free agency. Certainly men and women may use their free agency to do as they please, but they cannot ever evade the penalties that might come by reason of any error they make.

The Lord set up his program of organization fully, gave the governing principles and doctrines, and delegated his full authority to his officers to teach and perform ordinances. He ignored all the multitudinous religious organizations then extant and all their man-made doctrines and philosophies and set up his own divine plan. This is true. If all the pro-

ponents of the “-isms” on all the continents disbelieve it, it is still true—an absolute truth.

Even before he went to Calvary, the Lord knew that his young and pitifully small organization could not long resist the wolves of antagonistic philosophies and the terrific persecutions which would come, but he left some stalwart apostles and others to guide and build the kingdom. The Savior knew beyond doubt that an apostasy would come. It did.

Persecution was intolerable. The apostles are said to have suffered martyrs’ deaths. Innumerable others, both priesthood and laity, suffered unbelievable tortures. The Church was uprooted and almost destroyed by physical horrors; then finally, through pagan rulers who were not truly converted, Christianity was accepted and made popular. In order to do so and to get the nations to accept it, pagan superstitions and doctrines were superimposed upon the Christian doctrines and intermingled until the doctrines and ordinances established by the Christ were changed and diluted so that they had only a faint resemblance to the truth. With the authorized servants martyred and both authority and doctrines gone, the world went into a spiritual tailspin and plunged into the Dark Ages, wherein the true understanding of God and his plan was not upon the earth; when gross darkness enveloped the people; when there was little progress even in material things and an almost complete void spiritually.

This apostasy is a certainty. There is no room for doubt. God’s church was lost for the moment, as it had been through many centuries in the past. The true plan of life was placed upon the earth in the beginning when it was given to Adam. After a few generations, the descendants of Adam went the way of the world and most of the earth’s children lost the truths and the knowledge of God and of the gospel. One descendant of Adam, Enoch, again established good communications with God and again established truths upon the earth, but only comparatively few of the inhabitants

listened and accepted; hence, there was another great apostasy from the truth.

The people of the world became so wicked that they were literally drowned and washed off the earth. Noah, a righteous prophet, reestablished communication with the Lord and carried on the work of the Lord, but only for a brief period, for weak mortal man permitted the flesh to control the spirit again, and another great apostasy took place and most of the people were without a knowledge and understanding of God.

Time passed, idolatry prevailed, wickedness increased—but finally the Lord sent a superior spirit to earth, born the son of Terah. Though all on earth were apostate, having turned to the worship of idols and to murder, adultery, drunkenness, bribery, and all manner of evil, this child—Abraham—grew up with sufficient power and goodness to cause the heavens to open again, and God revealed again to him all these truths I am writing about. Abraham spent a glorious life teaching righteousness to his own numerous posterity and to others. As in all other dispensations, the majority went foul, ignored the true way, and followed the way of the world.

Then the Savior was born in Judea, ushering in another dispensation. He reestablished his truths on the earth—the priesthood, the power, the organization, the knowledge to save and exalt men—but, as stated earlier, this lasted only a few generations and was gone again.

Now, with the doctrines perverted, the priesthood gone, the organization corrupted, and the knowledge lost, there must come another awakening. And, as the prophet Daniel prophesied millennia ago, there finally came a day when another restoration of truth should come, this time never to be lost. We have that promise now, that even though individuals may fall the Church and the gospel are here to stay, and all the powers of the earth and hell cannot effect total apostasy again. This much-needed restoration came through the Prophet



Joseph Smith, who followed in the march of the prophets Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, and the Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the Church organized through revelation by the Savior: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was organized by revelation from Jesus Christ. It was given full and complete authority, full and complete plans and programs.

This restoration was preceded by a long period of preparation. The Pilgrims and other Europeans were inspired to find this American haven of refuge and thus people this land with honest and God-fearing citizens. Washington and his fellows were inspired to revolt from England and bring political liberty to this land, along with the more valuable treasure of religious liberty so that the soil might be prepared for the seed of the truth when it should again be sown.

So, in the early nineteenth century, the “marvelous work and a wonder” was reintroduced in to the world. The youthful Prophet, whose mind had not been contaminated with the sins of the world or prejudiced by false philosophies of men, was the instrument of the Restoration. As in all of the other dispensations, and especially the one preceding it when Jesus personally came to restore it, the little seed of truth had to fight a mountain of falsehood. Church organizations made by men, without claim to divinity or revelation, were everywhere in abundance. The corrupted doctrines of former centuries were all there. Religious confusion reigned and most of the world opposed the work bitterly and cried “false prophet” at the first mention of the restored truth. The tiny organization, begun in 1830 with six members, has had phenomenal growth to some four million in that short period. It is here to stay. This church of Jesus Christ (nicknamed *Mormon*) is the “only true and living church” that is fully recognized with the authority to perform for him, and the only one with a total and comprehensive and true

program which will carry men to powers unbelievable and to realms incredible.

This is an absolute truth. It cannot be disproved. It is as true and the near-spherical shape of the earth, and as gravity; as true as the shining of the sun—as positive as the truth that we live. Most of the world disbelieves it, ministers attempt to disprove it, intellectuals think to rationalize it out of existence; but when all the people of the world are dead, and ministers and priests are ashes, and the highly trained are mouldering in their graves, the truth will go forward—the Church will continue triumphant and the gospel will still be true.

The Lord has defined truth as being a “knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24). God’s existence is a reality. Immortality is a reality. These realities will not go away simply because we have different opinions about them. These realities will not be dissolved just because some have doubts about them.

Opinion? Of course, there is a difference of opinion but again, opinion cannot change laws or absolute truths. Opinions will never make the earth to be flat, the sun to dim its light, God to die, or the Savior to cease being the Son of God.

Now, it is a good question which has been asked by millions since Joseph Smith phrased it: How am I to know which of all, if any, of the organizations is authentic, divine, and recognized by the Lord?

He has given the key. You may *know*. You need not be in doubt. Follow the prescribed procedures, and you may have an absolute knowledge that these things are absolute truths. The necessary procedure is: study, think, pray, and do. Revelation is the key. God will make it known to you once you have capitulated and have become humble and receptive. Having dropped all pride of your mental stature, having acknowledged before God your confusion, having subjected your egotism, and having surrendered yourself to



the teaching of the Holy Spirit, you are ready to begin to learn. With preconceived religious notions stubbornly held, one is not teachable. The Lord has promised repeatedly that he will give you a knowledge of spiritual things when you have placed yourself in a proper frame of mind. He has counseled us to seek, ask, and search diligently. These innumerable promises are epitomized by Moroni in the following: "And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5). What a promise! How extravagant! How wonderful!

May I repeat, the time will come when there will be surrender of every person who has ever lived on this earth, who is now living, or who ever will live on this earth; and it will be an unforced surrender, an unconditional surrender. When will it be for you? Today? In twenty years? Two hundred years? Two thousand or a million? When? Again, to you, John, I say, it is not *if* you will capitulate to the great truth; it is *when*, for I know that you cannot indefinitely resist the power and pressure of truth. Why not now? Much time has been lost. The years ahead can be far more glorious for you than any years in the past.

How foolish would be the enslaved Israelite who was born in slavery and had never known anything but slavery to say to himself, "This is life. There is nothing better than this. Here I get my belly full daily and a fair space in which to sleep." How short-sighted he would be to prefer such status when he is told that across the sea and across the desert a promised land awaits where he can be free and well-fed, be master of his own destinies, and have leisure, culture, growth, and all one's heart could rightfully desire. What does it matter? What is the difference between light and darkness—growing and shriveling—a giant and a pygmy—freedom and slavery—eternity and the one day—life and death?

Now, with great humility, I send this message to you, John, and to all others who may

hear it, with a prayer in my heart that you will not cast it aside, but that you will think it through and ponder about it as you pray about it. There must be an open mind, a sincere heart, a desire, a reaching. The assurance will definitely come to you, but not unless you make an effort. I bear testimony to you that this is true. I know it. I send to you a solemn warning; and when you stand before the judgment bar in the not-too-distant future, you will know then that I spoke the truth with your eternal welfare in mind. Please remember that I have tried to bring this matter to your attention with such force that it would impress you. The true and living Church and its members and representatives stand ready to provide answers to any questions; and I promise you faithfully that if you will study and pray, keeping your mind open, you will receive the light, and it will be to you as the dawning of a new day after having gone through the night of darkness.

Again, I offer the assistance of the Church, but I will not push this matter upon you nor force it. You are mature, you have a good mind, you have a strong background, and the seeds of truth were sown in your life in your youth. All the powers of earth and heaven cannot bring this knowledge to you. It cannot be hoped for nor purchased. It must come by a careful, honest, and sincere investigation. The Church stands ready to furnish such assistance as you may require.

You cannot cast off this appeal and warning without grave responsibility. You will have to answer to your Creator if you ignore it, just as I would have to answer if I ignored it. I am doing my best to present it. I know that this is the only complete, divine, eternal program which is recognized and approved of God!

Joseph Smith went into a grove, spent a long time on his knees, and came out with knowledge to the divinity of Elohim and his Son, Jesus Christ—such a firm conviction that he went voluntarily to his martyrdom rather than deny it.

Paul, on his way to Damascus, saw a glorious personage and heard his voice; and yet, after even these unusual manifestations, Paul prayed so that he could know beyond the shadow of doubt of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and of his Father, and of his eternal program, the gospel. He finally knew it so positively that he gave the balance of his life teaching it. He was stoned nearly to death and raised again. He suffered hunger, thirst, persecutions. And then, knowing full well that his life would be taken, he went gloriously to his death, thus giving not only his energy, time, and earning capacity but his very life for the cause. Paul knew more about the healing and saving truths that were necessary for the welfare of human souls than all of the sages and the doctors of his time or this time. He knew that God lived,

Jesus was the Christ, and the gospel was a way of eternal life, mortal and immortal, never ending; he knew that the rewards of eternities were worth the sacrifice of comforts of this life.

You may know, as did Joseph Smith, Paul, and Peter, and as do a great number of your contemporaries. This is not another church. This is *the* Church. This is not another gospel or philosophy. This is the church and gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our Father lives; his Son lives. I am so sure of this that I am willing to bear witness of it with the last effort of my tongue and lips. I am willing to go into eternity and face my God with this testimony on my lips. Of these truths I bear witness in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.