

Boise Rescue

Dallin H Oaks & Richard E Turley Jr.

June 13, 2015

Stake President:

“In our unique opportunity to be here together in this setting, acknowledge the presence of Elder Dallin H Oaks, of the quorum of the twelve apostles, who will be presiding at our devotional this evening. We also recognize Brother Richard E Turley, Assistant Church Historian, who will be presenting things this evening with Elder Oaks. We also acknowledge the presence of Sister Christian Oaks and Sister Turley, here with us this evening. We will begin the evening by singing on page 3, ‘Now Let Us Rejoice,’ express appreciation to Sister Wells and Sister Dunn, who will be leading the music and at the organ. Following the opening hymn, we will have the invocation by Brother David Dunn and we’ll turn the time to Elder Oaks. At the conclusion of the presentation, we will sing on page 260, ‘Who’s on the Lord’s Side,’ and then Sister Lisa Rawlings will offer the benediction.”

(Invocation given)

Dallin H Oaks:

“My dear brothers and sisters, we greet you here, and at the other buildings, to which this is being broadcast. We are thrilled to be with you. Richard E Turley Jr. and I are pleased to be with you tonight. The purpose of our message is to answer some faithful questions and to minister to some disabling doubts. We do this under this title of our message, ‘Who’s on the Lord’s Side?’

In determining on who’s on the Lord’s side on these latter-days, there are two major questions. First, for most non-Mormons, and for some Mormons, the key question is how they feel about Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. For most Mormons, the key question on who’s on the Lord’s side is how they feel about the church’s current prophetic leadership. If those feelings are sufficiently negative, they take members into what we call apostasy.

We will speak of each of these two questions. First, Brother Turley will speak about Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon.”

Richard E Turley Jr.:

Twenty-nine years ago, when I was twenty-nine years old, I received a call in my law office from Elder Dallin H Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, invited me to lunch, and that interview led to others, at the end of which, I was invited to give up my law practice and devote my full time to the history of the church. By that time, I had already spent about half my life immersed in the church's history, and so, as you might imagine, I was quite intrigued when offered the keys and combinations to the church's historical treasures and told that I was responsible for them. It was a rare privilege to be able to access all of those treasures, whenever I wished, and to be able to hold them, read them, and study them to my heart's intent. For the last three decades, I have been doing exactly that, as well as traveling the world in the interest of church history.

The 69th section of the Doctrine and Covenants directs that the church historian, quote 'travel many times from place to place and church to church' or, as we might say, travel from church unit to church unit, 'that he may more easily obtain knowledge.'

As I have traveled in North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Isles of the Sea, I have frequently participated in Question and Answer Sessions. More than once, I have been asked by church members questions like the following:

'With your access to all the historical treasures of the church, what is the single most remarkable item that you have seen in your study of church history?'

And to that question, I have uniformly answered the Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon. For the next few minutes, I would like to talk to you about this important manuscript.

When Joseph Smith received the gold plates from the angel Moroni, early on the morning of September 22, 1827, he received also a sacred commission. Joseph later wrote, 'the heavenly messenger delivered them up to me with this charge: that I should be responsible for them. That if I should let them go carelessly, or through any other neglect in mind, I should be cut off. But then if I abuse all of my endeavors until he, the messenger, should call for them, they should be protected.'

Those of us who have studied church history realize that part of the four year period in which Moroni instructed Joseph about the plates before delivering them to him, was to go into teaching him lessons about treating the plates as a sacred record and not as an asset to be used for the purposes of lifting his family sometimes crushing poverty. To protect the plates, when he first received them, Joseph hid them in a hollow log. Later, he went back to retrieve them so he could carry them back to his home. At the time, others had inferred that he had had the plates, and you realize there might be danger in traveling with the record too close to the public roads. Instead, he walked home through the woods, avoiding prying eyes. If you have spent time in upstate New York, as I

have, you can imagine what it was like to carry the plates home through the trees and fields between the Hill Cumorah and the Smith Family Home. As Joseph walked through the early fall weather, leaves crunched under his feet as the smells and sounds of the forest surrounded him.

During his homeward journey, Joseph came to a fallen log and began to step over it when, suddenly, a man leaped from behind the log and struck him in an effort to rob him of the plates. Joseph defended himself and then began running, only to be attacked twice more before reaching home with the heavy plates, as well as a thumb that was dislocated in the melee. This was just one of many experiences Joseph Smith had in trying to protect the plates and what they contain. Once he had completed the translation of the Book of Mormon, he did not want to lose the original manuscript of that translation. The previous year, when the 116 pages disappeared, Joseph learned the lesson that all of us with computers learn, which is back-up, back-up, back-up.

After completing the rest of the translation in 1829, Joseph returned to his home in Harmony, Pennsylvania to be with his wife, Emma, and her family there, and he had trusted the process of making a backup copy to his brother Hyrum Smith and their colleague Oliver Cowdery, who had served for most of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon as the scribe. These two men dutifully made a backup copy that we today call the Printer's Manuscript, and they preserve the original dictation copy very carefully. Eventually, they returned that original copy to Joseph Smith, and he kept it in his possession. In 1840, after keeping it for many years, when he was working on the third edition of the Book of Mormon, he used it to proofread the printed text. Then the following year, in 1841, the church was building the Nauvoo House, which is described in the 124th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. During the construction of the Nauvoo House, Joseph Smith took the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon, that he had been safeguarding so carefully, and he put it in the cornerstone of that building.

Brothers and Sisters I've thought many times about his decision to put the original manuscript into the cornerstone. 'Why would he do that?' I've asked myself.

The question, after some thought, should be obvious to most of us. He got the gold plates from a stone box, and so it made sense that, wanting to protect the original manuscript, he would put it into a stone box. After he put the manuscript into the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House, the builders sealed up the box and began laying bricks on top of it as they continued the construction process, and that was the last time Joseph Smith ever saw the manuscript.

Three years later, in 1844, Joseph was martyred in Carthage, Illinois. The decades passed and, in 1879, his wife, Emma, also passed away. Three years later, Emma's second husband, Lewis Bidamon, decided to do something with the never-completed Nauvoo House. And so, he tore down the southeast portion of the building and used the materials that he salvaged to complete a structure

on the north end. During the demolition, he came to the cornerstone and opened it, and there inside laid the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon. Now, gold plates do very well for hundreds of years in a stone box. But the same is not true for paper.

With the high humidity in Nauvoo, the high water table there, and flooding on the Mississippi river, which is adjacent to the Nauvoo House, water had seeped into the cornerstone and much of the manuscript was soaked. Lewis Bidamon took out the soggy manuscript, carried it home, and dried it out. Then, over the course of the next few years, as visitors came to Nauvoo, he gave away portions of the manuscript as souvenirs. Gratefully, many of the people who received those portions were members of our church and between 1882, when Lewis first opened the box, and the 1930's, nearly all of the known surviving large portions of the manuscript made their way to the Church Historian's Office in Salt Lake City. Today, there are also a few of the smaller fragments of the manuscript in other locations.

The bottom line is this: we can study the Book of Mormon manuscript today because we have it. Over the last 30 years, I have looked at it again and again. I want to tell you something about that manuscript and how it relates to our covenant obligation as church members to remember and follow the savior. We have on display in the Church History Library in Salt Lake City a page of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon for all to see. If you can't make it to Salt Lake, you can also see this page in an online exhibit that we call 'Foundations of Faith.' By the way, as part of the Joseph Smith Papers Project, we will be publishing all of the surviving portions of the original manuscript for the whole world to see, just as we are publishing the other documents in which Joseph Smith had a major role.

If you look at the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon, you will see that the text moves smoothly from one line to the next with very little punctuation and very few corrections, just a steady flow of text from one line to another. Clearly, you can tell, as you study the manuscript, that the prophet was dictating as the scribe took down his words. Now that might not sound very remarkable to you, but I want you to think about something: if you've read the Book of Mormon, you know that it has a complex set of characters, a complex geography, a complex chronology, and a complex narrative with threads that intertwine. And of course, it contains a very rich treasure of theological truth.

I have a doctorate level of education, and I write books. I have computers to help me, I have a staff to assist me, and, with all of that, it still takes numerous drafts and often several years for me to write a significant book. Now realize this: The Book of Mormon, essentially as we have it today, was dictated by the prophet Joseph Smith, a man with perhaps one year of formal education, in just a single draft over a period of less than 90 days. Brothers and Sisters, I don't care how smart you are, I don't care how much education you have or how good you are as a writer. I defy anyone to sit down and, in just one draft, dictate in a period of ninety days or less, a book of the power and complexity of the Book of

Mormon.

I'll come back to that in a minute because I want to contrast it with another artifact we have on display at the Church history library and on our Joseph Smith Paper's website. But first I'll have to mention something else. A lot of people have asked, 'when Joseph Smith had his first vision, when Moroni first visited him, and when he translated the Book of Mormon, why didn't he write these experiences down at the time?' The answer is really quite simple. He hardly wrote anything down at the time. He and his family were not a record-keeping people.

As I mentioned earlier, I have traveled around the globe. In the process, I have met people in many parts of the world who rely on an oral tradition for their history instead of writing. Joseph Smith's family was literate, but it was largely a family of oral tradition. So far as we can tell from the historical record, Joseph Smith and his family members didn't write a lot of things down in those early days. But when the church was legally organized on April the 6th, 1830, the Lord gave a commandment to the prophet Joseph Smith to keep a record. That commandment, now in section 21 of the Doctrine and Covenants, reads, 'Behold, there shall be a record kept among you.'

These words are so important that we have them written on the wall in the Church History Library. Joseph Smith struggled with this commandment to keep a record. He knew he was supposed to do so, but he didn't like to write. It was hard for him. He wasn't very good at it. Finally, on November the 27th, 1832, two and a half years after the church was organized, Joseph Smith sat down to write his very first journal entry. That journal entry is also on display right now in the Church History Library, online with our Foundations of Faith exhibit, and also on the Joseph Smith Papers website. I want to read to you briefly what this very first journal entry says.

You can imagine that Joseph wanting to keep this commandment to keep a record, sits down. He's purchased a new little notebook, he gets his ink and his quill pen and he dips the pen in the ink and begins to write, and this is what he wrote: 'Joseph Smith Jr.'s record book bought for to note all the minute circumstances that comes under my observation.'

I have a degree in English, and I'll tell you that this is not an especially good sentence. Joseph recognized that fact, too, and, as you can see in the slide, he crossed it out. He dipped his pen and started again. This time, he tried to write essentially the same content, but he wanted to flower it up a bit. So he writes, 'Joseph Smith Jrs book for record bought on the 27th November, 1832 for the purpose to keep a minute account of all things that come under my observation etc.' A valiant effort but still, frankly, not very good.

He concludes the journal entry that day by writing very humbly, 'may God grant that I be directed in all my thoughts. Oh blessed thy servant. Amen.' Overall, this humble journal entry is not very good from the standpoint of writing. A third of it is even crossed out, but consider this. This awkward first journal

entry of Joseph Smith was written three and a half years after Joseph completed the translation of the Book of Mormon. Contrast Joseph the man, writing this journal entry, to Joseph the seer, dictating the Book of Mormon. With the 1832 journal entry, Joseph struggled to write a single page of text. But with the 1829 Book of Mormon manuscript, Joseph rapidly dictated what became a 588 page printed book in a single draft over a period of less than 90 days. The only way that was possible, Brothers and Sisters, is in the way he said he did it, which is by the gift and power of The Lord and his servants went through a lot of trouble over thousands of years to preserve the various records that make up the Book of Mormon so Joseph Smith could translate the book for our day. Have you ever stopped to think about how important the Book of Mormon is in testifying of our Lord Jesus Christ? In 1982, the Church added a subtitle to the Book of Mormon, 'Another Testament of Jesus Christ.' The Book of Mormon testifies of Jesus Christ and the covenants that he makes with his people. Hence, it is a testament, just as the Old Testament and the New Testament were about the Old covenant and the New covenant that we find in the Book of Mormon.

Each week in sacrament meeting, we partake of the emblems of the Lord's atoning sacrifice and we covenant to remember the Lord Jesus Christ always. The word 'remember' appears in the scriptures more than 200 times and the word 'forget' also appears dozens of times. Clearly, as human beings, we risk forgetting the Lord. The Book of Mormon, the Old Testament, and the New Testament contain case after case of people making covenants and then forgetting them. Regular meeting with the Book of Mormon will help us always remember him. It will testify of him in powerful ways. Let me give you just one example:

When I was a third-year law student at BYU, I was taken a full load of difficult law classes. I was serving as the executive editor of the Law Review at the time, which will not mean a whole lot to most of you but it means I was very, very busy. At the time, I was also the Elders Quorum President in my BYU student ward, which requires significant time commitment, and I was married and had four young children at the home and I spent time each day reading, praying, singing, and playing with them, as well as putting them to bed at night. For some reason, with all of this, I felt compelled, on top of it all, to go to the college of religion and take a graduate course on Greek New Testament Textual Criticism. In that class, I learned that in the 22nd chapter of the Book of Luke, there are important verses that we often quote in church. In these verses, Christ is in the Garden of Gethsemane working out the great atonement. Beginning in verse 43 we read, 'And there appeared an angel unto him, from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the Now that, Brothers and Sisters, is one of the finest descriptions that exists of this incredible moment in the Garden of Gethsemane. If you look at the thousands of early manuscripts of the New Testament, however, you will discover that there are some in which those verses do not exist. We read in the Book of Mormon that plain and precious truths would be removed from the Bible. Here is an instance in which some of the early manuscripts don't have those verses in them. Now some scholars will look at

the various manuscripts and say, ‘well, if some manuscripts have these verses in them and some do not, these verses must be questionable.’ And so they read these verses as a C-level passage rather than as an A-level passage. In other words, they cast doubt on them. But we, Brothers and Sisters, have another testament of Jesus Christ. We can go the Book of Mormon and we can read a powerful confirmation of these words in Mosiah Chapter 3 verse 7. ‘And lo, he shall suffer temptations and pain of body, hunger, thirst, fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and abominations of his people.’

The Book of Mormon confirms the authenticity of important New Testament details about the atonement of Jesus Christ, the key event in all of human history.

This passage and a similar one in section 19 of the Doctrine and Covenants serve as second and third witnesses to the atonement of Jesus Christ that we covenant each week to remember as we participate in the ordinance of the sacrament.

Brothers and Sisters, I testify to you that the Book of Mormon is another testament of Jesus Christ, and that, if we study it, we will grow in faith in ways that are difficult without. There is a reason the Book of Mormon has been preserved to come forth in our day. There is a reason why the Prophet Joseph Smith was charged so severely to keep the record safe, and there is a reason why he and others suffered valiantly in order to bring it forth, as Doctrine and Covenants 135 says, ‘the salvation of a ruined world.’

The Book of Mormon is for us and our day. It was compiled anciently and translated in modern times by the gift and power of God for us so that we will not forget. So that we will always remember the Lord Jesus Christ as we covenant to do when we partake of the sacrament. If we will study the Book of Mormon regularly, we will have keen insights about the Lord and his work, and we will obtain the faith to meet the many challenges that we will each face on this earth and that are, indeed, a part of our purpose for being here. I leave that testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dallin H. Oaks:

“Brother Turley has given us a marvelous account of Joseph Smith and the translation of the Book of Mormon. I will now speak of the second question about the truth of the restored gospel, the continuing authority of the church’s prophetic leadership. I will do so under the heading of ‘apostasy’.

Throughout our recorded religious history, we see a pattern of apostasy and restoration. The great prophets we learn about in the scriptures were often individuals who restored gospel truths that had been corrupted by apostasy. Noah, Enoch, Abraham, and Moses, to mention only a few. There are two

main causes, or manifestations of apostasy, mentioned in the scriptures. The first is disobedience to the commandments of God. Thus, through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord declared: ‘The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, broken the everlasting covenant.’

The scriptures are filled with similar statements. We will say little about this kind of apostasy, but concentrate our remarks on the second cause, or manifestation. The scriptures, ancient and modern, have many warnings about false prophets. This is the second cause, or manifestation, of apostasy. Here is our Savior’s teaching on this subject. Note that these teachings are addressed to his disciples, not to unbelievers. False prophets can be most threatening to those who already believe in prophets.

‘And Jesus answered and said unto them, take heed that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name, saying, ‘I am Christ,’ and deceive many.’ He continued as follows: ‘And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.’

Now, I switch to the Joseph Smith translation of these passages, which give a significant additional warning and an important way to avoid being deceived.

‘For in those days there shall also arise false Christ’s and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders insomuch that if possible they shall deceive the very elect who are the elect according to the covenant. Whoso treasureth up my word shall not be deceived.’

After the Savior’s resurrection and ascension, his apostles continued these warnings. Paul taught the elders, ‘take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made thee overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves, shall man arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples. The apostle John wrote, ‘beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.’

The Savior had a great teaching on how to identify false prophets. ‘Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Wherefore, by their fruits ye shall know them.’

Here’s a visual to help you remember this important teaching. Here are good fruits and here are decaying or undesirable fruits. When you are judging the truth of teachings, look to the fruits of those teachings in the lives of those who follow them. By their fruits ye shall know them.

Now Brother Turley will explain how the pattern of apostasy, the Savior and his apostles described continued even after the Gospel was restored by the prophet Joseph Smith.

Richard E Turley:

“If you have read the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Book of Mormon, you will realize that apostasy is a frequent phenomenon throughout the history of the ancient church. It has also been a frequent phenomenon in modern times. The history of our latter-day church furnishes numerous examples. Apostasy leads to chaos, which is contrary to the way of the Lord.

In the scriptures, the Lord has repeatedly emphasized the importance of order. In the Doctrine and Covenants, for example, the Lord declared, ‘My house is a house of order saith the Lord God.’

When the church was organized on April the 6th, 1830, the Lord gave a revelation that is now contained in the 21st section of the Doctrine and Covenants.

In this revelation, the Lord, speaking of Joseph Smith, commanded: ‘Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed to all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me. For his word, ye shall receive as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith. For by so doing, by doing these things, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. Yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you and cause the heavens to shake for your good and his name’s glory.’”

The first principle of order therefore, is that the Lord speaks to the church through the prophet. In other words, the Lord wanted to make it clear to the Saints that the Prophet was the head of the church on earth, the mouthpiece of the Lord.

This was the first of the many principles related to order in the church that the Lord laid down in early revelations.

Another later principle appears in a revelation that many members of the church call ‘The Articles and Covenants.’ We can think of it as the Church’s Constitution or the first general handbook of instructions. Today, we call it section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants.

In Doctrine and Covenants section 20 verses 65 and 66, the Lord makes it clear that no one can be appointed to an office in the Church without a vote of the church. Our second principle therefore is that no one can be appointed to an office without the vote of the church members.

Not long after the church was organized, one of the eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon, Hyrum Page, announced that he was receiving revelations by means of a seer stone. Several church members, including Oliver Cowdery, were intrigued by Page’s purported revelations. In section 28 of the Doctrine and Covenants,

however, the Lord reminded Oliver Cowdery ‘but behold verily verily I say unto thee, that no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church, excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jr., for he receiveth them even as Moses.’

The Lord then counseled Oliver, ‘Thou shalt take thy brother Hyrum Page between him and thee alone and tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me, and that Satan deceiveth him. For behold these things have not been appointed unto him, neither shall anything be appointed to any of this church contrary to the church covenants.’

Then the Lord reiterated an important principle: ‘For all things must be done in order, and by common consent in the church by the prayer of faith.’

Taken together, these verses provide a third principle: No one is to receive revelation for the church except the prophet.

When the church’s headquarters moved from New York to Kirtland, Ohio, similar difficulties arose, as they have throughout the history of the church. Before the Saints moved to Ohio, the Lord promised that He would reveal His law there.

Section 42 of the Doctrine and Covenants was understood by church members as being a fulfillment of this promise, and that revelation contains further warnings against those who had set themselves up as receiving revelation for the church or who teach unauthorized doctrines.

The Lord warns, ‘again I say unto you that it shall not be given to anyone to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church. And again, the elders, priests, and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fullness of the gospel. And they shall observe the covenants and articles to do them, and these shall be their teachings, as they shall be directed by the Spirit. And the spirit shall be given you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach.’

Our fourth principle, therefore, is that no one is to preach or build up the church except he that be regularly ordained by the heads of the church. Also, church members are not to teach their own doctrines. They are to teach from the scriptures.

Furthermore, they are to observe the covenants and church articles and teach from them as well.

During the Kirtland period, a Ms. Hubble set herself up as receiving revelations for the church. We call her Ms. Hubble because we are not completely sure of her first name. Her errors prompted another revelation from the Lord, who, if you look at all these experiences strung together, was being remarkably patient with the young church. That revelation, now section 43 of the Doctrine and

Covenants, reminded church leaders that the prophet was the only one appointed to receive revelations for the church. As to others who might claim to do so, the Lord directed, “And this shall be a law unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments; And this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me. For verily I say unto you, that he that is ordained of me shall come in at the gate and be ordained as I have told you before, to teach those revelations which you have received and shall receive through him whom I have appointed.’

That then is another important principle of order. He that is ordained shall come in at the gate and be properly ordained. In addition to these challenges faced by the church during this time period, there were many enthusiastic members who sought so zealously to receive spiritual manifestations that they began experiencing spiritual phenomena that led to unworthy behavior and, once again, basic violations of the principles of order that the Lord have given again and again. To counter such overzealousness, the Lord gave revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith, now section 50 of the Doctrine and Covenants, in which he declared, ‘Hearken, O ye elders of my church, and give ear to the voice of the living God; and attend to the words of wisdom which shall be given unto you. Behold I say unto you that there are many spirits which are false spirits, which have gone forth in the earth, deceiving the world. And also Satan hath sought to deceive you, that he might overthrow you.’

We can go on and on with examples with people who have apostatized by ignoring the Lord’s principles of order and instead setting themselves up for a life unto the world. The scriptures refer to this practice as ‘priestcraft.’ Just one more historical example and then I will summarize and conclude.

Following the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum, several parties tried to assert themselves as the new leaders of the church.

The saints, however, voted to sustain Brigham Young and fellow members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as the church leaders. Still, this decision did not stop many others from trying to claim leadership for themselves. Church members today, in general, know that Sidney Rigdon sought to be appointed guardian of the church after Joseph Smith’s death. But relatively few today know that one of the most dominant claimants of the 1840’s was a relatively new convert names James Jesse Strang. Strang was reportedly baptized by Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Illinois around February of 1844. Although very few people knew Strang in the church, after Joseph Smith’s death, the new convert claimed that he had been designated to lead the church, by the prophet, just a few days before his death. Strang even produced a three-page letter of appointment purportedly written by Joseph Smith on June the 18th, 1844. The letter coordinates supposed revelation from the Lord stating that, to him, ‘James J Strang shall the gathering of the people be, for he shall plant the state of Zion in Wisconsin and I will establish it and there shall my people have peace and rest and shall not be moved.’

Strang also claimed to be visited by an angel and to have unearthed and translated an ancient record. Strang tried very hard to copy Joseph Smith's experiences and charisma even going so far as organized his own Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with headquarters in Voree, Wisconsin and ultimately attracting as many as 2,000 followers, including some previously notable church members. Strang also tried to duplicate many church practices, including Baptisms for the Dead, Endowment Ceremony, and Consecration. Eventually, however, as with most of these movements, his faith and Strang himself was killed in 1856. Once Strang's supposed letter of appointment became accessible to scholars, it became abundantly clear that Strang was a fraud, a false prophet.

The top half of this slide, which you see in front of you, shows what Strang claimed to be the signature of Joseph Smith on his appointment letter. The bottom half of the slide shows a genuine Joseph Smith signature. Now, it does not take a handwriting expert to figure out that the top signature is a forgery, and that Strang's claim to have been appointed by Joseph Smith was nothing but a bold dissention. In many ways, Strang was like many other apostates throughout church history, who have tried to assert leadership over church members outside the order established by the Lord. Let's review again, in summary, what those principles of order are.

Frist, the Lord speaks to the church through the Prophet.

Second, no one can be appointed to an office without a vote of the church.

Third, no one is to receive revelation for the church except the prophet.

Next, no one is to preach or build up the church except he be regularly ordained by the head of the church.

Next, church members are not to teach their own unauthorized doctrine.

They are to teach from the scriptures. Also, church members shall observe the covenants and church articles and teach from them as well.

Finally, he that is ordained shall come in at the gate and be properly ordained, not claiming some kind of secret ordination.

Brothers and Sisters I testify to you that the history of the church and the revelations of the Lord show clearly principles of order that must apply in the case of individuals that want to be brought forward as equal speaking on behalf of the church. This order has been meticulously followed from the very first day of the church's organization, when the Prophet Joseph Smith, on April 6th, 1830, asked that those present for the meeting sustain him as the prophet of the Lord, which then did. I testify to you that if we follow these principles of order, we will not be deceived, and I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dallin H Oaks:

Now I will speak on some current applications of the principles that have just been reviewed. Apostasy continues even today. Its two causes or manifestations are clearly evident. The first, disobedience to the commands, is most visible. The second manifestation of apostasy, false prophets, is less visible but a reality nonetheless. I speak more of this.

The apostle Paul taught Timothy as follows: ‘Now the spirits speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.’

This reference to ‘seducing spirits’ is a description of the spirits of darkness that inspire false prophets to persuade some believers to depart from the faith. The pattern is for some false prophet to claim that the spirit has revealed to him or her that the established leaders of the church are in error in some way and that he or she is to be the Lord’s agent to correct them. This is an obvious violation of the principles of order Brother Turley has taught so well from the revelations. The so-called ‘new prophet’ may pursue his or her correcting mission by a variety of means; organizing a new church, advocating a change of doctrine, or opposing some church policy. We have seen all of these tactics and many more in our lifetime. The content of the new message may be more than what is true and correct, or it may be less. But it is always: ‘I have a better way than the Lord’s current leaders.’

The process can be illustrated by these pictures. Here’s the temple, the great symbol and manifestation of our faith. There are now more than 140 operating temples, just one fruit of the restored gospel and of our prophetic leadership. How do we view and use the temple, and how do we view our prophetic leadership? Here is a visual representing how we approach or view the temple. This is symbolic of how we view the church and its leaders. Do we see the temple or the church and its doctrine in its entirety? Including its fruits in our lives present and eternal, or do we search for some defect in its many parts, ignoring the magnificent, overall structure and function and focusing on and magnifying that alleged defect to drag ourselves and others into apostasy?

Brother and sisters, there will be small defects in any mortal structure or any mortal life, but we should never lose sight of the wonderful, all-encompassing plan and doctrine of the Lord’s church. By their fruits, not by the occasional fruit fly, ye shall know them. Now Brother Turley and I will review some questions we sometimes hear from persons being influenced by the teachings of false prophets.

Richard E Turley:

One claim that we sometimes hear is that the church is no longer the church that was restored to the earth by the prophet Joseph. That it fell into apostasy and that the priesthood keys were not passed to Brigham Young.

Dallin H Oaks:

Answer— then who held them? If there are no priesthood keys then the authority of the priesthood cannot be used upon the earth.

Richard E Turley:

Historically it's very interesting to see who received priesthood keys and ordinances before the death of the prophet Joseph Smith and who did not. After members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles served a faithful mission in the British Isles and returned to Nauvoo, the prophet Joseph Smith gave them increasingly larger responsibilities and he also gave them the ordinances that we now experience in the Temple. When Joseph Smith died in 1844, only a few people comparatively had received these keys and ordinances, and therefore the pool of potential successors was very small.

On August the 8th, 1844, when the saints had the opportunity to choose between the quorum of the Twelve Apostles and Sidney Rigdon, whose activities had become erratic, perhaps some think because of injuries he sustained during severe persecutions, the saints who might have been divided, instead according to shorthand minutes we have in our possession voted overwhelmingly for Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. To me, that suggests that the spirit spoke strongly on this occasion, and that the saints had voted overwhelmingly for Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles knew where the keys went and in fact that is where historically we know that they lay because those were the brethren who had the keys and had the right to perform the ordinances necessary for salvation and exaltation.

Dallin H. Oaks:

One more point on this claim; the idea that the established Prophet has strayed and needs to be replaced is an idea Satan has planted in the minds of apostates from the very beginning. For example, at the time of Christ, the Savior was challenged by those who claimed allegiance to Abraham and Moses using the teachings of prophets past to criticize the Lord himself.

Turning to another claim, the new prophet or leader, the false prophet is receiving revelation to correct the present one.

Richard E Turley:

The idea that the current prophet has strayed from the truth and needs to be corrected by a new prophet is always accompanied by that claim that someone is receiving substitute revelations. But this goes entirely against all the rules of order that we talked about previously.

In 1912 the first presidency warned, ‘When visions, dreams, tongues, prophecy, impressions or an extraordinary gift or inspiration, convey something out of harmony with the accepted revelations of the Church or contrary to the decisions that its constituted authorities, latter-day saints may know that it is not of God no matter how plausible it may appear.’

More recently, President Spencer W. Kimball affirmed this point by saying ‘I believe that if one wants revelations enough to crave them beyond the rightness of it, that eventually he will get his revelations but they may not come from God. I am sure that there may be many spectacular things performed because the devil is very responsive.’

Another claim is that the church is not teaching what is necessary for exaltation, for example, some say that only those who see the face of Jesus Christ in mortality will receive Celestial Glory.

Dallin H. Oaks:

Of course, all of the righteous desire to see the face of our Savior, but the suggestions that this must happen in mortality is a familiar tactic of the adversary.

To identify a worthy goal, such as to achieve exaltation, and then to use the desirability of that goal and people’s enthusiasm for it to obscure the new means the adversary suggests to achieve it. The means are important, even vital. As the Lord said in another setting, ‘it must needs be done in mine own way.’

Another claim we sometimes hear is that the leaders won’t answer our doubts. Doubts. Here we need to define the difference between doubts and questions. Questions, when asked with a sincere desire to increase ones understanding and faith, are again encouraged. Such questions, questions we call them, are asked with the real intent of better understanding and more fully obeying the will of the Lord. Questions are very different from doubts.

Richard E Turley:

Asked in faith, questions can lead to revelation. Joseph Smith received many of the revelations now contained in the Doctrine and Covenants, and he received his first vision because he had questions. One difference between questions asked in faith and doubts is that questions lead to faith and to revelation whereas doubts lead to disobedience, which in turn renders people less able to receive revelation, or in other words, doubt is darkness. Questions asked in faith lead to light.

The Lord will answer our questions but not necessarily in a way that we want. He is omniscient, and he knows what is best for us, better than we know what is good for ourselves. He will answer in his own time and his own way. We know from the history of the church that even the Prophet Joseph Smith did

not always receive answers in the way he wished. On one occasion, as we see from the Doctrine and Covenants, he sought for the Lord to know the timing of the Lord's coming. The Lord's answer to him, a very direct answer, showed that the Lord was not going to give that answer to him at that time. We must be able to have faith not only in the Lord and what he says to us but also in the Lord's timing in answering our questions and giving us revelations. (1:03:40)

Dallin H. Oaks:

The first step in resolving questions is always to stand as we read in Alma 1:25, 'Stand steadfast and immovable in keeping the commandments of God.'

Richard E Turley:

Another claim that we sometimes hear is that current apostles have no right to run the affairs of the church since they do not meet the New Testament standard of apostles because they do not testify of having seen Christ.

Dallin H. Oaks:

The first answer to this claim is that modern apostles are called to be witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world, Doctrine and Covenants 107:23.

This is not to witness of a personal manifestation. To witness of the name is to witness of the plan, the work, or mission such as the atonement and the authority or priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which an apostle who holds the keys is uniquely responsible to do.

Of course apostles are also witnesses of Christ just like all members of the Church who have the gift of the Holy Ghost. This is because the mission of the Holy Ghost is to witness of the Father and the Son. In addition, while some early apostles and other members of the church have had the sublime spiritual experience of seeing the Savior and some have made a public record of this, in the circumstances of today we are counseled not to speak of our most sacred spiritual experiences, otherwise with modern technology that can broadcast something all over the world, a remark made in a sacred and a private setting can be said abroad in violation of the Savior's commandment not to cast our pearls before swine.

Here's another claim. The church is focused on following the brethren instead of seeking Christ.

Richard E Turley:

This is a preposterous claim. If you think about the period in the New Testament following the crucifixion of the Savior, would you expect that followers of Jesus Christ would follow someone other than the Lord's disciples? Indeed, following someone other than the Lord's called servants is a sign of apostasy.

As the Lord said clearly to the Prophet Joseph Smith in the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, 'he that receiveth my servants receiveth me.' Furthermore in the 59th section we read 'And let them journey from thence preaching the word by the way, saying none other things than that which the prophets and apostles have written, and that which is taught them by the Comforter through the prayer of faith.'

In section 42 of the Doctrine of Covenants the Lord says, 'And again, the elders, priests and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fullness of the gospel. And they shall observe the covenants and church articles to do them, and these shall be their teachings, as they shall be directed by the Spirit.'

Dallin H. Oaks:

Thank you brother Turley. Brethren and Sisters we come now to the conclusion of our presentation. When you follow false prophets, when you start toward apostasy, you are on the wrong side. I know what it means to be on the wrong side in another situation. I remember a time when I was president of Brigham Young University that we were to announce the establishment of the Ezra Taft Benson Agriculture and Food Institute. The announcement was planned to be at the BYU farm. President Benson was in attendance. To add some human interest to the ceremony, someone had the idea of President Benson and President Oaks, both former farm boys, engaging in a cow-milking contest. I approved the idea, assuming there would be two cows. But when the time came and they led us to the sight of the contest there was only one cow, two buckets, two men, but only one cow. Now what would you do?

The district news recorded the scene, and one of their writers described my choice to go to the left side. Quote, 'Dallin was milking the bovine from the left side, which is a big no-no in the dairy industry. Why the wrong side? It's easy to explain.

Dallin was sharing the milking chores with President Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve. Now, there is nothing in the manual, but Dallin did not fall off the turnip wagon yesterday, you know?' The article continues, 'When the president of the church-owned school with the president of the council of the twelve, he wants to be on the safe side. The safe side is the unsafe side.' What happened? The district news explained, quote, 'President Oaks positioned himself on the left of the huge holsting and President Benson sat on her right.

Gingerly, the milking began. The contest had only been in progress for a few seconds, however, when it became evident that the cow was the least enthusiastic participant. With a swift kick, she knocked over not only President Oak's milk bucket but also the president himself.

He flipped over in a not too graceful backwards summersault as President Benson sat on the other side of the cow chuckling at the scene.' Here is President Benson's reaction: (pictured)

Brothers and Sisters, don't get on the wrong side. And now its time for us to conclude. Brother Turley, please.

Richard E Turley:

Brothers and Sisters, this evening we have talked with you about the wonderful experience we have as a church and having the Book of Mormon and how that book was preserved for our day through thousands of years by ancient prophets and then was brought forth by the gift and power of god to the Prophet Joseph Smith. I testify to you that if we will read and follow the Book of Mormon we will grow in our faith and we will also grow in our faith if we follow the current leadership of the church and those who are appointed to succeed them as time goes on. There is no salvation or exhalation through false prophets. The Lord has laid down patterns and principles of order. Those principles are clearly laid out in the scriptures available to all of us. Those scriptures make it clear how people become leaders of the church and what is required of them to become such. When we follow those appointed leaders we will be blessed. The scriptures and the history of the church show very clearly that following false prophets, in the end, leads only to unhappiness. I testify that if we will follow the word of the Lord, as found in the scriptures, and in the words of the modern prophets, directed by the Lord Jesus Christ, that we will receive the greatest of all blessings, even peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dallin H Oaks:

Brothers and sisters- Richard E Turley Jr. and I, from our respective points of view, have spent many weeks researching the matter that we have presented to you visually and by the spoken word. The principles we have drawn from the scriptures are the truth, and we know from reading ancient and modern history that the pattern of apostasy is as clear as the patter of restoration and that the existence of false prophets, as we have defined that term today, is as real in our day as it was when past prophets spoke of and prophesied of false prophets in the last days. I also testify to you that the teachings the savior has given us in his own words recorded in the New Testament and in modern revelation through his authorized spokesman are true and they set out for us

the way to avoid being deceived by seducing spirits, to use the scriptural term, or by those who have themselves been deceived by seducing spirits. Stand fast with the leadership of the church. I heard President Hinckley in describing a revelation he had received concerning the building of small temples from which he will soon benefit in this part of the world that he did not claim perfection that there was only one perfect person who had ever lived upon this earth and even the prophets of God were not perfect. But, as the Prophet Joseph Smith said, on a great occasion, ‘there is no error in the teachings.’

Spoken under the influence of the spirit of the Lord, witnessed to be true in the hearts and minds of those who have the gift of the Holy Ghost, those teachings are the Lord’s will to his people. And I testify to you that these teachings are true and that if we hold with and follow the current leadership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we will stay on the path toward eternal life. Eternal life, our destiny, as children of God, our eternal Father, and I testify to you of these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

“Elder Oaks was not scheduled for an assignment that weekend so decided to use his free time to visit an area with a concentration of members, knowing that some members have questions from time to time that trouble them.” - Church spokesman Eric Hawkins
