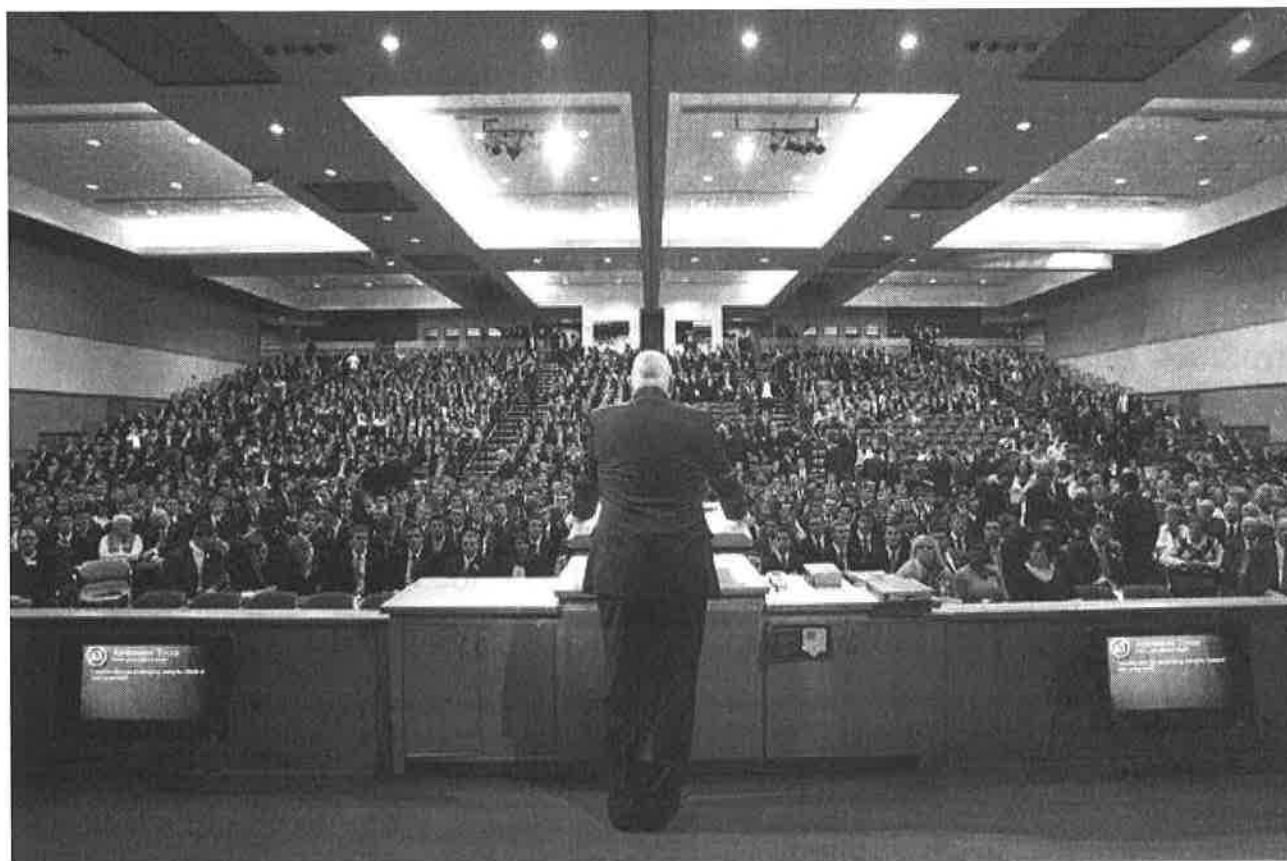




O Beware of False Religions!



The following is an excerpt from a training address I delivered to our valiant missionaries at the Provo MTC. I counsel all saints and member missionaries everywhere to share these valuable principles via the Internet and during church meetings and talks, that the Lord's true Church may profit thereby in bringing many of our Heavenly Father's children unto salvation through its saving ordinances.

Dearest missionaries,

What a joy it is to be with you this day. Truly this is an historic meeting. You are the Lord's army, called and chosen by Him to deliver His word to the world. Does this make you feel special? It should. You could have remained at home, pursuing your education and your careers, dating, attending college sporting events, performing humanitarian service in the community or abroad, or pursuing and developing your talents and gifts, and yet here you are! O what joy, what satisfaction, what fulfillment it must bring to you young people when you realize that instead of doing these self-centered things, you will be building your mansions in heaven by serving in the manner prescribed by the Lord's chosen prophets, seers, and revelators, and as expected of you by your precious families and beloved ward members. I can think of no more noble and charitable act than this, my young friends!

Now, dear missionaries, as you travel "to and fro in the earth, walking up and down in it" (Job 2:2), you will encounter many false religions. The purpose of my training today is to help you prepare and strengthen yourselves against the adversary, so that you will be able to recognize these false religions for what they really are. The adversary knows that the most effective way of keeping people from receiving the truths of the Restored Gospel is to entrap masses of devout believers in false religions and cults, and thus he leads them "carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:21). Therefore, the question of how to identify Satan's work becomes very important, and we should learn all we can of his cunning traps, that we may more effectively rescue these lost souls as true missionaries of the Lord.

Some years ago, whilst serving as a mission president in Canada, I became acquainted with a certain Ms. Sands who lived in our neighbourhood. Sister Delaney and I tried numerous times to bring her the further light and knowledge of the Restored Gospel, but to no avail. You see, Ms. Sands would not even listen to us because she was involved in an oppressive cult which blinded her from the truth without her even knowing it. This cult claimed to be Christian and to be following the peaceful and loving Christ, but this was clearly not reflected in their ideology. Sadly, Ms. Sands devoutly followed these false cult leaders, who even claimed to speak for Christ even though their teachings had clearly been shown to be false throughout their entire religious history. She had even been indoctrinated to such a point that her home was adorned with pictures, paintings, and figurines of these cult leaders and of their founder. We eventually learned that in her younger days, she had an opportunity to marry a good young man but had declined because he had failed to perform their cult's rite of passage, which was seen by her cult as a terrible disappointment. Her obedience to these false leaders was so controlling that she even believed that leaving her false religion was equal to leaving God, and that there was no other way she could be saved. Remember, dear missionaries, that it is a cardinal rule that *no one can ever be in a cult and simultaneously realize that they are in one* ([source \(http://www.prem-rawat-talk.org/forum/uploads/CultCharacteristics.htm#American%20Family%20Foundation\)](http://www.prem-rawat-talk.org/forum/uploads/CultCharacteristics.htm#American%20Family%20Foundation)). How difficult this made it for us to teach Ms. Sands the true message of the Restoration!

Ms. Sands feared her organization without even realizing it, to the point where she had been broken down to a state of absolute obedience to her leaders, thinking that if she complained or didn't conform, it would appear to be a sign of weakness or unrighteousness to her peers and family members. Sister Delaney and I were appalled when we learned that this cult also limited her access to any information that could save her from delusion by keeping the truth about its past hidden from her, and instead teaching a carefully edited and modified version of its history. Any problems that became exposed were only answered by providing incomprehensible and nonsensical explanations which they knew would be impossible for her to understand. Can you see how terrible the effects of this cult were upon her life? The cult further controlled Ms. Sands by telling her that she would be in Satan's power if she did not live up to every commandment given in their ritualistic ceremonies, and by placing her under a secret oath (without any prior knowledge on her part that this would happen) to give everything she would ever own to the cult, under penalty of death! Such was her indoctrination that she even willingly gave her cult large sums of money in exchange for their promised blessings, without any knowledge of how that money was really being used or if the organization was actually corrupt.

What a terrible tragedy! Sister Delaney and I have wept many tears for dear Ms. Sands, who was entrapped by the evil one, ironically only because she desired to be good and obey God!

Thus the first lesson we should learn, Elders and Sisters, is that the adversary is very deceptive. He is called "the father of lies" (John 8:44). He will work very subtly to trick and mislead our Heavenly Father's children into thinking they are on the correct path when, in reality, they have been greatly deceived. He is the great imitator, who will use the appearance of righteousness to mask his evil ways. There are numerous scriptures that describe the adversary's great ability to trick and mislead:

- The adversary can appear as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14, D&C 128:20, D&C 129:8).
- The adversary will seem to be like God (2 Thess 2:4).
- The adversary will not be exposed as the devil until the end of time (2 Thess 2:8).
- The adversary's followers will show forth miracles and wonders (Matt 24:24, Mark 13:22).
- The adversary will tempt with the promise of dominion and power (Matt 4:8-9, Luke 4:5-7).
- Those who think they are standing [who think they are correct] will fall (1 Cor 10:12).
- The adversary will raise false prophets who will deceive even the very elect [those who desire to be good and righteous] (Matt 24:24, Mark 13:22).
- And worse yet, the adversary's followers will seem and claim to be apostles of Christ (2 Cor 11:13-14, Matt 24:4-5, 24:23-26, Mark 13:21-22).

Do you see, Elders and Sisters, the great deception used by the adversary? He leads people away from the message of the Restored Gospel by getting them involved in cults where they become indoctrinated to such a point that they are unable to recognize the truth even when it is clearly presented to them. So it was with Ms. Sands, who was so involved in her cult and so hopelessly dependent on the system that she was willing to fight to protect it, even when Sister Delaney and I presented her with all the evidence which clearly showed that their beliefs had little to no foundation, and that the organization she was in was corrupt. To her, it was all she had known, and the need to conform to the group was more important to her than the truth. Therefore, dear missionaries, as you teach lost souls such as Ms. Sands, remember to reiterate this important lesson: *By definition, it is not possible to be in a cult and at the same time know that you are in one.* Only when someone comes out of a cult, and can clearly see it through the eyes of an outside observer, do they realize that they were being controlled (even though this fact is plainly evident to the rest of the world). This makes teaching the Restored Gospel to such individuals extremely difficult, dear missionaries, because they will rarely, if ever, consider the possibility that they could be mistaken. It is an unfortunate fact that such deluded individuals always think they are right, even when they are clearly wrong. O that all our Heavenly Father's children could be free from the controlling influences of false religions and thus embrace the Lord's true Church!

Now, some of you missionaries are probably asking: "How does the evil one manage to ensnare people such as Ms. Sands, and how can we rescue them?" This is a very important question that all missionaries should prayerfully consider. Certainly those who are wicked—the thieves, liars, murderers, and adulterers—are already in Satan's clutches. But how does Satan tempt those who are already good, kind, and loving, and who abhor wickedness? Some people naively think that Satan's best tactic would be to tempt them to steal, kill, curse God, and commit other grave evils. But Satan is surely much too wise to place all his efforts into tempting good people to be bad.

No, Satan, being very clever in his efforts to keep people from the Restored Gospel, and knowing that good people want to be good, endeavours to ensnare these souls by appearing as an "angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14), by preaching goodness and by giving people bits of truth and light. He will make his false teachings look very righteous. His representatives will not be evil-looking men, but rather they will be people who look very righteous, clean-cut and smiling, speaking words of peace and love. (Just like the deceptively righteous looking pictures of the false cult leaders displayed in Ms. Sands' home.) Satan's message will claim to be from God, and may even sound like it came from God. It will say all the things that a lover of God might want to hear.

"But wait," some of you young missionaries might say, "Satan does not want people to be good! Why would his representatives be teaching people to be good, and to love God?"

Dearest missionaries, remember the example of our misguided neighbour, Ms. Sands! Satan taught her just enough righteousness to make her feel that she was being righteous, just enough truth that she would assume that everything she is being taught is true. Satan included just enough good so that Ms. Sands could presume, "This organization must be good, for by their fruits ye shall know them." *And then Satan very slyly and surreptitiously slipped in his own lies and evil teachings.* O the wiles of the devil! May we ever be vigilant against his sinister trappings. We can recognize him by his lies. This, my young Elders and Sisters, is how you can teach your investigators to know the difference between our Church and the false and deceptive religions and cults of the world.

We can find proof of this fact within the holy scriptures, which plainly tell us that only the devil's false prophets lie (Deut 13:1-3, 18:20-22, Isa 9:15, Jer 5:31, 14:14, 1 John 2:21, and many other passages). Yes, the scriptures teach that the devil *sometimes tells truths* (Mark 1:24, Luke 4:33-34, 41, Gen 2:4-5), but this he does *that he might also carefully slip in his deceptive lies*. Teach this to your investigators, dear missionaries. How tragic it is to see good people across the world being deceived by false prophets who teach a thousand truths and then cunningly slip in a few lies for their corrupt churches in order to obtain masses of deceived followers and prevent them from accepting the truths of the Restored Gospel!

We plainly read in the Book of Mormon: "Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints], and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, *whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church [of the devil], which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth*" (1 Nephi 14:10). Elders and Sisters, for your benefit I will list some examples of how the devil leads these false churches. May you be ever on the lookout during your missions that you may recognize the following eight tactics used by the enemy to guide the false religions of the world:

1. The devil may teach people not to kill, but then he will teach some exceptions. For example, he will teach that it is not a sin to kill someone who opposes your religion. The Catholic Church held an inquisition for many years that resulted in a grievous death toll, dear missionaries, as you probably learned in your high school history classes. I cannot imagine anyone believing that someone is a true prophet who claims that God told him to kill an unsuspecting or unbelieving person just to fulfill his own prophecy.
2. The enemy will teach people not to steal, but then he will teach that stealing is acceptable if

something belongs to an enemy of your religion, or if they possess something that your religion needs. What a terrible thing it is to steal, Elders and Sisters. I have even heard rumours that the Freemasons stole our endowment ceremony and now use these exact same symbols and tokens as part of their corrupt cult rituals. I cannot think of anything more preposterous than this type of blatant thievery. This is the type of dishonesty that can cause mobs to form and violence to ensue. Can you see how one evil always leads to another, dear missionaries?

3. The adversary will teach people not to commit adultery, but then if the man is caught he will say that as long as the man has "married" these other women, it is not really adultery, and in fact is more righteous than being married just to the first wife. This insidious practice takes place today with Warren Jeffs and his cult followers, as many of you probably know. What a terrible thing this false prophet has done by misleading so many people into believing he was commanded of God to commit such evils when he was clearly only succumbing to the carnal desires of the flesh.
4. The enemy will teach people to seek knowledge and to love truth, but then he will teach that what you are hearing from him is the test of all truth, and anything that contradicts it is evil and false. We have seen this great deception take place in the life of our unfortunate neighbour, Ms. Sands. Oh that she could see the error of her false religion and instead join the Lord's true Church!
5. The enemy will teach you to love your family, but then he will teach you not to cherish them if they believe something different from what he says. I have personally seen this despicable practice take place in the life of a Jehovah's Witness with whom I was acquainted at the university, who was shunned by his parents for leaving their faith in order to donate blood to his dying baby, which ended up saving her life. I have even seen Jehovah's Witnesses walking the streets of my neighbourhood in an attempt to cause division in peaceful Latter-day Saint homes by converting members of their families to a false religion!
6. The enemy will teach you that lying is wrong, but then he will tell you that it is acceptable to deceive a little bit, if it will help the cause of "truth" (what he has taught) and convince others to believe it. What a tragedy it is that dear Ms. Sands is kept from the truth regarding her cult because it is being hidden from her! Remember that *only error fears investigation*, my dear missionaries.
7. The adversary will teach you that God loves everyone, and that you should also love everyone, but then he will teach that certain people are inherently less acceptable before God and do not deserve the same rights and love as everyone else. I cannot think of a more obvious sign of religious falsity than that of discrimination and bigotry against innocent people. This only goes to show how blinded the followers of cults can become when they fail to see such clear signs that they are entrapped in a false religion!
8. The enemy will tell you that God will forgive your weaknesses and mistakes, but then he will tell you that you will be forgiven only if you obey his false teachings to the letter, and especially only if you pay large sums of money to his representatives. Certainly this will remind you of the Church of Scientology, which charges their members thousands of dollars in exchange for access to their greatest blessings and rites. How anyone could regard a church as "true" which engages in such fraudulent practices is beyond me.

Thus, to put it very succinctly, my dear Elders and Sisters, Satan will tell a thousand truths to pass off a single lie. He endeavours to convince his followers to do a few good deeds so that he can get them to do a little evil, and he will have deceived them so that they no longer can recognize the evil. In fact, he is so skilled and talented at deception that many of his servants do not even realize who their master is, and if you were to suggest it to them they would firmly and very sincerely deny it.

O ye army of the Lord! You are true servants of the Lord, even the very elect of God, preaching His word throughout the world! What should you teach your precious investigators, that they might know the truth? Teach them that the only tool that only Satan uses and that God does not use is *the lie*, for God cannot lie. Yes, this is the means by which your investigators can determine whether someone who claims to represent God really is of God or not. If he lies, he is not of God, since God and the servants of God do not lie. They have no need to lie. *Only the servants of Satan need to lie.*

Dearest missionaries, may we ever sound this warning voice to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples, keeping them safe from the dangers of false religions! To anyone whom you teach that may be involved in an organization requiring blind obedience and implicitly threatening members with loss of salvation, remember to testify that only by leaving that corrupt organization and joining the one true Church will they find eternal happiness and be able to live with their family in the world to come. How great are the promises of the Lord!

Of these truths I humbly testify, in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, amen.

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12 thoughts on “O Beware of False Religions!”