SATAN: GREAT IMITATOR; GREAT DECEIVER


You may have heard the story, and it is a story, of the disruptive, noisy boys in a Sunday School class who were asked by their exasperated teacher why they bothered to attend Sunday School. One of the more impudent boys replied, “We came to see you perform a miracle.”

The teacher walked slowly over to the boy and menacingly responded, “We don’t perform miracles here, but we do cast out devils!”

Satan is the great imitator

For some reason I feel impressed to speak today against the devil and his angels—the source and mainspring of all evil. I do so prayerfully, because Satan is not an enlightening subject. I consider him to be the great imitator.

I think we will witness increasing evidence of Satan’s power as the kingdom of God grows stronger. I believe Satan’s ever-expanding efforts are some proof of the truthfulness of this work. In the future the opposition will be both more subtle and more open. It will be masked in greater sophistication and cunning, but it will also be more blatant. We will need greater spirituality to perceive all of the forms of evil and greater strength to resist it. But the disappointments and setbacks to the work of God will be temporary, for the work will go forward (see D&C 65:2).

Avoid evil; study its consequences

It is not good practice to become intrigued by Satan and his mysteries. No good can come from getting close to evil. Like playing with fire, it is too easy to get burned: “The knowledge of sin tempteth to its commission” (in Joseph F. Smith, Gospel Doctrine [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 373). The only safe course is to keep well distanced from him and any of his wicked activities or nefarious practices. The mischief of devil worship, sorcery, casting spells, witchcraft, voodooism, black magic and all other forms of demonism should be avoided like the plague.

However, Brigham Young said that it is important to “study . . . evil, and its consequences” (Discourses of Brigham Young comp. John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1941], p. 257). Since Satan is the author of all evil in the world, it would therefore be essential to realize that he is the influence behind the opposition to the work of God. Alma stated the issue succinctly: “For I say unto you that whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil” (Alma 5:40).

Know Satan’s methods

My principal reason for choosing this subject is to help young people by warning them, as Paul said, “lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11). We hope that young people, unfamiliar with the sophistries of the world, can keep themselves free of Satan’s enticements and deceitful ways. I personally claim no special insight into Satan’s methods, but I have at times been able to identify his influence and his actions in my life and in the lives of others. When I was on my first mission, Satan sought to divert me from my future path and, if possible, to destroy my usefulness in the Lord’s work. That was almost fifty years ago, and I still remember how reasonable his entreaties seemed.

Satan is the master deceiver

Who has not heard and felt the enticing of the devil? His voice often sounds so reasonable and his message so easy to justify. It is an enticing, intriguing voice with dulcet tones. It is neither hard nor discordant. No one would listen to Satan’s voice if it sounded harsh or mean. If the devil’s voice were unpleasant, it would not entice people to listen to it.

Shakespeare wrote, “The prince of darkness is a gentleman” (King Lear, act 3, scene 4, line 143), and “the devil can cite Scripture for his purpose” (The Merchant of Venice, act 1, scene 3, line 95). As the great deceiver, Lucifer has marvellous powers of deception. As Paul said to the Corinthians, “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14; see also 2 Nephi 9:9).

Some of Satan’s most appealing lines are “Everyone does it”; “If it doesn’t hurt anybody else, it’s all right”; “If you feel all right about it, it’s OK”; or “It’s the ‘in’ thing to do.” These subtle entreaties make Satan the great imitator, the master deceiver, the arch counterfeiter, and the great forger.

We all have an inner braking system that will stop us before we follow Satan too far down the wrong road. It is the still, small voice which is within us. But once we have succumbed, the braking system begins to leak brake fluid and our stopping mechanism becomes weak and ineffective.

Satan’s pervasiveness

The prince of darkness can be found everywhere. He is often in very good company. Job said, “Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord” (Job 2:1). His influence is everywhere: “And the Lord said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it” (Job 2:2).

Satan tries to pacify and flatter us

Nephi has given to us the pattern or formula by which Satan operates:

“And others will he pacify, and lull them away carefully, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

“And behold, others he flattereth away, and telleth them there is no hell; and he saith unto them: I am no devil, for there is none—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance” (2 Nephi 28:21–22).

The First Presidency described Satan: “He is working under such perfect disguise that many do not recognize...
either him or his methods. There is no crime he would not commit, no debauchery he would not set up, no plague he would not send, no heart he would not break, no life he would not take, no soul he would not destroy. He comes as a thief in the night; he is a wolf in sheep’s clothing” (James R. Clark, comp., Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75], 6:179).

Satan is the world’s master in the use of flattery, and he knows the great power of speech (see Jacob 7:4). He has always been one of the great forces of the world.

**How Lucifer became the devil**

We just recently heard President Ernest LeRoy Hatch of the Guatemala City Temple say, “The devil is not smart because he is the devil; he is smart because he is old.” Indeed, the devil is old, and he was not always the devil. Initially, he was not the perpetrator of evil. He was with the hosts of heaven in the beginning. He was “an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God” (D&C 76:25). He came before Christ and proposed to God the Father, “Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor” (Moses 4:1). This he proposed to do by force, destroying the free agency of man. Does his statement “Give me thine honor” mean that he wanted to mount an insurrection to supplant even God the Father?

Satan became the devil by seeking glory, power, and dominion by force (see Moses 4:3–4). But Jesus, chosen “from the beginning” (Moses 4:2), said unto God, “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” (Moses 4:2). What a contrast in approaches! Wrong as his plan was, Satan was persuasive enough to entice one-third of the hosts of heaven to follow him (see D&C 29:36, Revelation 12:4). He practiced a great deception by saying, “I am also a son of God” (Moses 5:13).

Free agency, given us through the plan of our Father, is the great alternative to Satan’s plan of force. With this sublime gift, we can grow, improve, progress, and seek perfection. Without agency, none of us could grow and develop by learning from our mistakes and errors and those of others.

Because of his rebellion, Lucifer was cast out and became Satan, the devil, “the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice” (Moses 4:4). And so this personage who was an angel of God and in authority, even in the presence of God, was removed from the presence of God and his Son (see D&C 76:25). This caused great sadness in the heavens, “for the heavens wept over him—he was Lucifer, a son of the morning” (D&C 76:26). Does this not place some responsibility on the followers of Christ to show concern for loved ones who have lost their way and “are shut out from the presence of God”? (See Moses 6:49). I know of no better help than to show unconditional [fair, constant, perfect] love and help lost souls seek another path.

**An important negative function**

Satan does, however, perform an important negative function. In the book of 2 Nephi we are told, “For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things” (2:11). However, Peter warns, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

**Satan misdirects our good motives**

Let us not become so intense in our zeal to do good by winning arguments or by our pure intention in disputing doctrine that we go beyond good sense and manners, thereby promoting contention, or say and do imprudent things, invoke cynicism, or ridicule with flippancy. In this manner, our good motives become so misdirected that we lose friends and, even more serious, we come under the influence of the devil. I recently heard in a special place, “Your criticism may be worse than the conduct you are trying to correct.”

C. S. Lewis gave us a keen insight into devilish tactics. In a fictional letter, the master devil, Screwtape, instructs the apprentice devil Wormwood, who is in training to become a more experienced devil:

> “You will say that these are very small sins; and doubtless, like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness. . . . It does not matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. . . . Indeed, the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts” (The Screwtape Letters [New York: Macmillan, 1961], pp. 64–65).

**The strength of Satan’s power**

C. S. Lewis also wrote: “A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. This is an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. . . . You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by measuring it.” (Mere Christianity [New York: Macmillan, 1960], p. 124).

The Prophet Joseph Smith related from his own experience, “The nearer a person approaches the Lord, the greater power will be manifested by the adversary to prevent the accomplishment of His purposes” (in Orson F. Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1945], p. 132).

**We can withstand Satan’s power**

However, we need not become paralyzed with fear of Satan’s power. He can have no power over us unless we permit it. He is really a coward, and if we stand firm, he will retreat. The Apostle James counseled: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). He cannot know our thoughts unless we speak them. And Nephi states that “he hath no power over the hearts of people who are righteous” (see 1 Nephi 22:26).

We have heard comedians and others justify or explain their misdeeds by saying, “The devil made me do it.” I do not really think the devil can make us do anything. Certainly he can tempt and he can deceive, but he has no authority over us unless we do not give him. The power to resist Satan may be stronger than we realize. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. The devil has no power over us only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power” (Teachings of

We can be forgiven

He also stated, “Wicked spirits have their bounds, limits, and laws by which they are governed” (History of the Church, 4:576). So Satan and his angels are not all-powerful. One of Satan’s approaches is to persuade a person who has transgressed that there is no hope of forgiveness. But there is always hope. Most sins, no matter how grievous, may be repented of if the desire is sincere enough.

A shield against Satan

Satan has had great success with this gullible generation. As a consequence, literally hosts of people have been victimized by him and his angels. There is, however, an ample shield against the power of Lucifer and his hosts. This protection lies in the spirit of discernment through the gift of the Holy Ghost. This gift comes undeniably by personal revelation to those who strive to obey the commandments of the Lord and to follow the counsel of the living prophets.

This personal revelation will surely come to all whose eyes are single to the glory of God, for it is promised that their bodies will be “filled with light, and there shall be no darkness” in them (D&C 88:67). Satan’s efforts can be thwarted by all who come unto Christ by obedience to the covenants and ordinances of the gospel. The humble followers of the divine Master need not be deceived by the devil if they will be honest and true to their fellow men and women, go to the house of the Lord, receive the sacrament worthily, observe the Sabbath day, pay their tithes and offerings, offer contrite prayers, engage in the Lord’s work, and follow those who preside over them.

I wish to testify that there are forces which will save us from the ever-increasing lying, disorder, violence, chaos, destruction, misery, and deceit that are upon the earth. Those saving forces are the everlasting principles, covenants, and ordinances of the eternal gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. These same principles, covenants, and ordinances are coupled with the rights and powers of the priesthood of Almighty God. We of this church are the possessors and custodians of these commanding powers which can and do roll back much of the power of Satan on the earth. We believe that we hold these mighty forces in trust for all who have died, for all who are now living, and for the yet unborn.

I pray that, through the spreading of righteousness, the evil hands of the destroyer might be stayed and that he may not be permitted to curse the whole world. I also pray that God will overlook our weaknesses, our frailties, and our many shortcomings and generously forgive us of our misdeeds. I further pray that He will bring solace to the suffering, comfort to those who grieve, and peace to the brokenhearted, in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen.


Contributing to society’s present desperate sickness is the widely accepted pernicious fallacy that God is dead and the equally pernicious doctrine that there is no devil. Satan himself is the author of these falsehoods. To believe them is to surrender to him. Such surrender has led, and is now leading, men to destruction.

We Latter-day Saints know that God lives. With like certainty we know that Satan lives. The reality of their existence is conclusively established by the scriptures and by human experience.

IN THE BEGINNING

Abraham’s account of the earliest specific event of which the scriptures speak—the great pre-earth heavenly council—identifies God, Jesus, Satan, and the spirits of men as participators in that council. In his account Abraham says:

Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was;... 

And God... stood among those that were spirits,... and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them;... 

And... God,... said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth wherein these may dwell; 

And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate: and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever. 

And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will send the first. And the second was angry, and kept not his first estate; and, at that day, many followed after him (Abr 3:22-28).

This scripture reveals knowledge concerning things as they were in the distant past; it speaks of God’s plans for the creation of this earth to be a dwelling place whereon the spirits, among whom he then stood, could in mortality demonstrate their worth; it refers to the gospel plan and, without naming them, to Christ and Satan.

Amplifying these truths, the Lord said to Moses:

That Satan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor (Moses 4:1). 

In this last dispensation the Lord has confirmed what he revealed in these ancient scriptures. To the Prophet Joseph, he said:

The devil was before Adam, for he rebelled against me, saying, Give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency (D&C 29:36).
In 1832 Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon testified that they saw in vision:

that an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God, who rebelled against the Only Begotten Son, ... was thrust down from the presence of God and the Son (D&C 76:25).

The Prophet succinctly summed up the great pre-earth controversy in these words:

The contention in heaven was—[said he] Jesus said there would be certain souls that would not be saved; and the devil said he could save them all, and laid his plans before the grand council, who gave their vote in favor of Jesus Christ. So the devil rose up in rebellion against God and was cast down, with all who put up their heads for him (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pg. 357).

**Satan Comes to Earth**

When Satan and his followers were thrust down from the presence of God and the Son, they came to earth.

During the vision given to Moses, the Lord said:

Because ... Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down.

And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies (Moses 4:3, 4).

In the Garden of Eden, Satan

sought ... to beguile Eve, for he knew not the mind of God, wherefore he sought to destroy the world.

And he said unto the woman: Yea, hath God said—Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (And he spake by the mouth of the serpent.)

And the woman said unto the serpent: We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; But of the fruit of the tree which thou beholdest in the midst of the garden, God hath said—Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman: Ye shall not surely die; For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (Moses 4:5-11).

Not only did Satan tempt Adam and Eve in the Garden; he continued to tempt them and their children after they had been driven from the Garden. When they received the gospel, Adam and Eve rejoiced in it. They

Blessed the name of God, and ... made all things known unto their sons and their daughters.

And Satan came among them saying: I am also a son of God; and he commanded them, saying: Believe it not; and they believed it not, and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish (Moses 5:12-13).

The record says that years later, in the days of Seth, when

the children of men were numerous upon the face of the land. ... Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man's hand was against his brother, in administering death, because of secret works, seeking for power (Moses 6:15).

From then until now Satan has been in the earth. In Job's time

there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence cometh thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it (Job 1:6, 7).

In his diary for August 11, 1831, the Prophet wrote:

After we had encamped upon the bank of the river at McIlwaine's Bend, Brother Phelps, in open vision by daylight, saw the destroyer in his most horrible power, ride upon the face of the waters; others heard the noise, but saw not the vision (History of the Church 1:203).

**Satan's Purpose and Methods**

Satan is evil: totally and always. He ever seeks to defeat the gospel plan and "destroy the souls of men" (D&C 10:27). "He persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him" (Moro 7:17).

At the Last Supper, just prior to his ordeal in Gethsemane, Jesus thus warned Peter: “Simon, Simon, ... Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Lk 22:31).

Satan is irrevocably committed to countering and overcoming the influence of the Spirit of Christ upon men. He is the representative, promoter, and advocate of that “opposition in all things” referred to by Lehi in his instruction to his son Jacob (2 Ne 2:11, 14-18).

His methods are various, devious, and countless.

By every possible means he seeks to darken the minds of men and then offers them falsehood and deception in the guise of truth. Satan is a skillful imitator, and as genuine gospel truth is given the world in ever-increasing abundance, so he spreads the counterfeit coin of false doctrine. ... [As] “the father of lies” he has ... become, through the ages of practice in his nefarious work [such an adept] that were it possible he would deceive the very elect (Joseph F. Smith in Latter-day Prophets Speak, Daniel H. Ludlow, pp. 20-21).

The devil is an orator; he is powerful; he took our Savior on to a pinnacle of the Temple, and kept Him in the wilderness for forty days. ... The devil can speak in tongues; ... he can tempt all classes (Joseph Smith in History of the Church 3:392).

President John Taylor said:

It is not every revelation that is of God, for Satan has the power to transform himself into an angel of light; he can give visions and revelations as well as spiritual manifestations and table-rappings (John Taylor in Latter-day Prophets Speak, pg. 22.).
We read in the Doctrine and Covenants that he can appear “as an angel of light” (D&C 128:20; 129:8).

At the opening of every gospel dispensation, he has made a frontal attack against the advent of the truth. We have already noted how he deceived the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve in the first dispensation.

At the beginning of the Mosaic dispensation, after he had seen the great vision recorded in Moses chapter one,

| the presence of God withdrew from Moses,... And as he was left unto himself, he fell unto the earth. And ... it was ... many hours before Moses did again receive his natural strength ... [When he did] Satan came tempting him, saying: Moses, son of man worship me. And ... Moses looked upon [him] and said: Who art thou ... that I should worship thee? For behold, I could not look upon God, except his glory should come upon me,... But I can look upon thee in the natural man.... And I can judge between thee and God; for God said unto me: Worship God, for him only shalt thou serve. Get thee hence, Satan; deceive me not;...

And now, when Moses had said these words, Satan cried with a loud voice, and rent upon the earth, and commanded, saying: I am the Only Begotten, worship me.

And it came to pass that Moses began to fear exceedingly; and as he began to fear, he saw the bitterness of hell. Nevertheless, calling upon God, he received strength, and he commanded, saying: Depart from me, Satan, for this one God only will I worship, which is the God of glory.

And now Satan began to tremble, and the earth shook; and Moses received strength, and called upon God, saying: In the name of the Only Begotten, depart hence, Satan.

And it came to pass that Satan cried with a loud voice, with weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; and he departed ... from the presence of Moses (Moses 1:9, 10, 12-16, 19-22).

In the days of Jesus, Satan attacked the Master himself. Luke says that

| Jesus ... was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he ... hungered. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world.... And ...said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them,... If thou ... wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee,... And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation he departed from him for a season (Lk 4:1-13). |

[Note the following rendition of the same from the Inspired Version by the Prophet Joseph Smith—this is not included in Elder Romney’s address:

1. And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.
2. And after forty days, the devil came unto him, to tempt him. And in those days, he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterwards hungered.
3. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.
4. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.
5. And the Spirit taketh him up into a high mountain, and he beheld all the kingdoms of the world, in a moment of time.
6. And the devil came unto him, and said unto him, All this power will I give unto thee, and the glory of them; for they are delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give them.
7. If thou therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine.
8. Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.
9. And the Spirit brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple. And the devil came unto him, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence; For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee; and in his hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.
10. And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.
11. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.] That Satan was present and contested the opening of this last dispensation, we learn from the Prophet’s statement:
I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such an astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction.

... Not to an imaginary ruin but [by] the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being (JS–H 1:15, 16).

Satan’s attack against the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is detailed in the 10th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. Speaking to the Prophet in that revelation, the Lord said:

Because you have delivered the writings [the 116 manuscript pages of the Book of Mormon] into [the] hands of [Martin Harris], wicked men have taken them from you.

And, behold, Satan hath put it into their hearts to alter the words which you have caused to be written,...

And, on this wise, the devil has sought to lay a cunning plan, that he may destroy this work; ...

He has put it into their hearts to get thee to tempt the Lord thy God, in asking to translate it over again.

And then, behold, they say and think in their hearts—

... If God giveth him power again,... [to bring] forth the same words, behold, we have the same with us, and we have altered them;

Therefore they will not agree, and we will say that he has lied in his words and that he has no gift, and that he has no power;

Therefore, we will destroy him, and also the work;....

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that Satan has great hold upon their hearts,...

Satan stirreth them up, that he may lead their souls to destruction.

And thus he has laid a cunning plan, thinking to destroy the work of God;...

And thus he flattereth them, and leadeth them along until he draggeth their souls down to hell;

And thus he goeth up and down, to and fro in the earth, seeking to destroy the souls of men (D&C 10:5, 8, 10, 12, 15-20, 22, 23, 26, 27).

Another evidence of Satan’s effort to thwart the spread of the gospel in this dispensation was his encounter with the brethren who took the gospel to England in 1837. Heber C. Kimball says that Saturday evening, July 29th, 1837,

it was agreed that I should go forward and baptize, the next morning, in the river Ribble, which runs through Preston....

Sunday, July 30th, about daybreak, Elder Isaac Russell ... who slept with Elder Richards ... came up to the third story, where Elder Hyde and myself were sleeping, and called out, “Brother Kimball, I want you should get up and pray for me that I may be delivered from the evil spirits that are tormenting me to such a degree that I feel that I cannot live long, unless I obtain relief.”

I had been sleeping on the back of the bed. I immediately arose, slipped off at the foot of the bed, and passed around to where he was. Elder Hyde threw his feet out, and sat up in the bed, and we laid hands on him, I being mouth, and prayed that the Lord would have mercy on him, and rebuked the devil.

While thus engaged, I was struck with great force by some invisible power, and fell senseless on the floor. The first thing I recollected was being supported by Elders Hyde and Richards, who were praying for me; Elder Richards having followed Russell up to my room. Elders Hyde and Richards then assisted me to get on the bed, but my agony was so great I could not endure it, and I arose, bowed my knees and prayed. I then arose and sat up on the bed, when a vision was opened to our minds, and we could distinctly see the evil spirits, who foamed and gnashed their teeth at us. We gazed upon them about an hour and a half....

We were not looking towards the window, but towards the wall. Space appeared before us, and we saw the devils coming in legions, with their leaders, who came within a few feet of us.

They came towards us like armies rushing to battle. They appeared to be men of full stature, possessing every form and feature of men in the flesh, who were angry and desperate; and I shall never forget the vindictive malignity depicted on their countenances as they looked me in the eye; and any attempt to paint the scene which then presented itself, or portray their malice and enmity, would be vain. I perspired exceedingly, my clothes becoming as wet as if I had been taken out of the river. I fell excessive pain, and was in the greatest distress for some time. I cannot even look back on the scene without feeling of horror; yet by it I learned the power of the adversary, his enmity against the servants of God, and got some understanding of the invisible world. We distinctly heard those spirits talk and express their wrath and hellish designs against us. However, the Lord delivered us from them and blessed us exceedingly that day.

Elder Hyde’s supplemental description of that fearful scene is as follows (taken from a letter addressed to President Kimball):

Every circumstance that occurred at that scene of devils is just as fresh in my recollection at this moment as it was at the moment of its occurrence, and will ever remain so. After you were overcome by them and had fallen, their awful rush upon me with knives, threats, imprecations and hellish grins, amply convinced me that they were no friends of mine. While you were apparently senseless and lifeless on the floor and upon the bed (after we had laid you there), I stood between you and the devils and fought them and contended with them face to face, until they began to diminish in number and to retreat from the room. The last imp that left turned round to me as if to apologize, and appease my determined opposition to them, “I never said anything against you!” I replied to him thus: “It matters not to me whether you have or have not; you are a liar from the beginning! In the
name of Jesus Christ, depart!” He immediately left, and the room was clear. That closed the scene of devils for that time.

Years later, narrating the experience of that awful morning to the Prophet Joseph, Heber asked him what it all meant and whether there was anything wrong with him that he should have such a manifestation.

“No, Brother Heber,” he replied, “at that time you were nigh unto the Lord; there was only a veil between you and Him, but you could see Him. When I heard of it, it gave me great joy, for I knew that the work of God had taken root in that land. It was this that caused the devils to make a struggle to kill you” (Orson F. Whitney, Life of Heber C. Kimball, pg. 143-146).

**Satan’s Success**

As a deceiver, Satan has had great success.

1. He succeeded in deceiving Eve (Moses 4:5-19).

2. He succeeded with Cain. When his parents, Adam and Eve, taught him the gospel, he rejected their words,

   saying, Who is the Lord that I should know him?…

   And Cain loved Satan more than God (Moses 5:16, 18).

   And Cain went into the field, and Cain talked with Abel, his brother. And it came to pass that while they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him (Moses 5:32).

Enoch beheld in vision that

the power of Satan was upon all the face of the earth.

And he saw angels descending out of heaven; and he heard a loud voice saying: Wo, wo be unto the inhabitants of the earth.

And he beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced (Moses 7:24-26).

On this pattern did Satan promote wickedness during antediluvian times, until the Lord had to bring in the floods and cleanse the earth by water.

In ancient America Satan led two mighty civilizations—the Jaredites and Nephites—to utter destruction by internecine war.

Following the mortal ministry of Jesus and his apostles, Satan literally drove the Church of Christ from the earth.

**Limitations on Satan’s Power**

But notwithstanding Satan’s successes, he has no power over men except as they surrender to him.

Men are free according to the flesh [said Lehi] and all things are given them which are expedient until man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself (2 Ne 2:27).

Jacob, the son of Lehi, thus admonished his people “Cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life” (2 Ne 10:23).

To the saints of his day, James wrote: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jas 4:7).

Earlier in these remarks we noted how Satan fled from the presence of Moses.

President George Albert Smith used to say that there is a well-defined line between the territory of the Lord and that of the devil; that when one stays on the Lord’s side of the line, the devil cannot cross over. It is when we get into his territory that he takes possession of us.

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared: “The devil has no power over us, only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes over” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pg. 181).

We can all profit by heeding this admonition given by Samuel and Lamanite:

And now remember, remember my brethren, that whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free.

He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and he hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death; and ye can do good and be restored unto that which is good, or have that which is good restored unto you; or ye can do evil, and have that which is evil restored unto you (Hela 14:30, 31).

**In Conclusion**

The general acceptance of Satan’s declaration “I’m no devil, for there is none” (2 Ne 28:22) accounts in large measure for the decadence in our deteriorating society.

We must not be deceived by the sophistries of men declaring the non-existence of Satan. He does exist. He is a real person with great power, and we had better believe it. He and his countless followers, seen and unseen, are exercising a controlling influence upon men and their affairs in our world today.

An ancient American prophet, visioning our day and observing what is now going on among us, warned that if Satan is not checked he will bring this generation to destruction. Addressing himself to our present situation, Nehi said:

The kingdom of the devil must shake, and they which belong to it must needs be stirred up unto repentance, or the devil will grasp them with his everlasting chains, and they be stirred up to anger, and perish;

For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well.
in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell.

And behold, others he flattereth away and telleth them there is no hell; and he said unto them: I am no devil, for there is none—and thus he whispereth in their ears, until he grasps them with his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance (2 Ne 28:19-22).

Now I am not calling attention to these things to frighten or discourage you. I refer to them because I know they are true, and I am persuaded that if we are to “conquer Satan and … escape the hands of the servants of Satan who do uphold his work” (D&C 10:5), we must understand and recognize the situation as it is. This is no time for us to bury our heads in the sand, to equivocate or panic. The difficulties of our times have not caught us unawares. A hundred and forty years ago the Lord clearly revealed the tenor of our times. We know that as the second coming of the Savior approaches, the tempo of Satan’s campaign for the souls of men is being, and will continue to be, accelerated. We know that the experiences of the intervening years will try men’s souls.

We are fortified for the ordeal, however, by our knowledge that God lives; and his “eternal purposes … shall roll on, until all his promises shall be fulfilled” (Morm 8:22). We know that, to qualify us to prevail against Satan and his wicked hosts, the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in these latter days. We know that the Spirit of Christ and the power of his priesthood is an ample shield to the power of Satan. We know that there is available to each of us the gift of the Holy Ghost—the power of revelation—which embraces the gift of discernment by which we may unerringly detect the devil and the counterfeits he is so successfully foisting upon this gullible generation. Our course is clear and certain. It is to strictly obey the commandments of the Lord as they are recorded in the scriptures and given by the living prophets.

In conclusion, I bear my witness to the truth of the things I have called you attention to in these remarks.

I know that God lives. Through my own experiences I have come to know of his Spirit and his power. I know also that Satan lives. I have detected his spirit and felt his power—not to the extent the Prophet Joseph did, but in like manner.

I know that at the second advent of Christ, the signs of which are mounting, “Satan shall be bound” and “have no place in the hearts of the children of men” (D&C 45:44).

I bear further witness to the truth of the Savior’s prediction that at the time of his coming

they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived… shall … abide the day.

And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong,… For the Lord shall be in their midst, and his glory shall be upon them, and he will be their king and their lawgiver (D&C 45:55, 57-59).

That we may take the Holy Spirit for our guide, recognize Satan, his representatives and their works, and not be deceived by them, to the end that we may be partakers of the promised blessings, I humbly pray.