

Epilogue

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Dear Diane:

I have put off reading your manuscript until I had an uninterrupted block of time, so that I could wholly concentrate on it. I found such a block today, and so have now read your material.

Diane, first may I say how sorry I am that you and your family -- including Steve -have had to go through such pain. In a measure I believe I can empathize with your sorrow and grief, but in so many other ways I feel incapable of understanding. Yes, I have experienced loss and sorrow, but our various circumstances are so different that I cannot even comprehend what you have been through. In such conditions all we can do, I suppose, is turn to Christ, for only He is capable of total understanding and total healing. Nevertheless my heart aches for all of you, and I want you to know that.

Secondly, and for me this is the hard part, I have absolutely no idea what to suggest concerning turning this material into a book. All day I have prayed about it, and I get no ideas concerning organization or rewriting. Instead the whole thing seems confused to me, and I am not able to unscramble it. Praying to know why, the only answer I have obtained - and this has come over and over again -- is that this project is not my stewardship and I am not to be involved.

That said, I feel impressed to tell you that I did have some acute discomfort regarding your therapist's suggestions and your subsequent visits to various spiritual "mediums," if I may use that term, as you sought revelatory information about Steve, his death and his present standing in the eternal worlds. I will elaborate on this, but please understand that what follows is only my opinion, and is in no way binding upon you.

Though limited, my understanding of the doctrines of the Church lead me to believe that all knowledge granted by God is revealed through the power of the Holy Ghost. While anyone of any faith can enjoy the ministrations of the Holy Ghost, it will only be in connection with bearing witness to truth as it applies to that individual's own life or the lives of those over whom he or she has been given direct and divinely sanctioned stewardship, i.e., family members, church callings and so forth. These ministrations of the Holy Ghost are also made more or less effective -- or stopped altogether -- according to the personal righteousness of the individual receiving them, as well as his or her intentions for their use.

Thus, as Steve's mother you have every right to petition the Lord and receive correct and appropriate revelatory information concerning your son -- this right being rendered more or less effective according to your own personal righteousness and your ability to listen to the whisperings

of the Spirit. Others beyond your family who would enjoy similar rights would include home teachers, visiting teachers, and any of those called to leadership positions over you, extending from level to level all the way to the president of the Church. There are also individuals outside this group who may worthily receive such revelation, but they must of necessity be completely worthy to enjoy the ministrations of the Holy Ghost, and their motivations must be based upon pure love for you or Steve, and nothing more.

However, if individuals giving you revelatory information about Steve are without appropriate stewardship or are getting paid for that information in any way -- money, prestige, or any other sort of worldly reward -- then Book of Mormon prophets call their activities "priestcrafts," and warn us that Satan rather than the Holy Ghost is the author of their revelation. Further, if we give heed to any revelation that comes from Satan through such individuals we become subject to deception, and the more we pay attention the farther astray we can be led. It is because I know these things to be true that I experienced such discomfort as I read.

Now Diane, in the hope that it will be of some help to you in understanding your family's experiences with Satan, let me elaborate on what the scriptures seem to say about him, footnoting my comments so that you can personally examine what I have to say.

Just as Jesus Christ is the author of salvation, Satan is the author of evil. As Christ is the Father of truth, Satan is the father of lies. As Christ is the source of all light, so Satan is the author of darkness. As Christ sends forth angels and mortal servants to accomplish His righteousness through the power of the Holy Ghost,' so Satan sends forth his emissaries, both spiritual and mortal, to accomplish the destruction of the souls of men through his own `spiritual' power.

In other words, just as Christ is real, so is Lucifer! To believe otherwise is ludicrous. If the Savior's work is going forward, then Satan's opposing work must also be prospering. And, if truth is revealed, great righteousness brought to pass, and men's hearts lifted to Christ by the power of God, then by the power of the evil one are wrought sorceries, witchcrafts, magics and every form of evil abomination.'

` 2nd Nephi 26:29. See also: 2 Nephi 10:5, 3 Nephi 16:10, 21:29, 30:2. . Moroni 7:29-

31 ' Mormon 1:19

Now, I know you have wondered why Steve had his bouts with Satan and his followers, and from my perspective, the answer can be only one of two things.

Either he was being buffeted because he had opened

himself **up to it through unrighteousness**, or he was being afflicted because he was making **such spiritual progress that Satan was** growing worried. My own opinion is that it was a combination of both things that lead to Steve's mortal destruction and your family's pain. Steve obviously broke numerous commandments, and it was just as obvious that he was endeavoring to overcome these weaknesses and become righteous, which in this context appears to be almost as dangerous as the former.

I believe that everyone who chooses to develop righteousness and power in the Priesthood experiences buffeting and affliction. Even Christ was subjected to Satan's temptations, while Moses was so buffeted by the devil's rantings that the scriptures say he feared exceedingly, and as he feared he saw the bitterness of hell.' Joseph Smith taught that the devil has great powers and your family has now seen first-hand evidence of that.

Did you know that Joseph Smith was almost exactly Steve's age when he also began his crash course in the wiles of the devil? If you remember from the account of the first vision, Satan came and Joseph thought he was going to be destroyed by the binding power and thick darkness that accompanied that evil presence.' Doesn't that sound disconcertingly like what Steve experienced? We don't know much about what Joseph did that was wrong after that, but he tells us in his history that for the next three years he struggled with temptations, made foolish errors, and did other little things that were offensive in the sight of God,' giving the devil a certain amount of power over him. Apparently, however, Joseph's real problem came when he first saw the golden plates as a young man of not quite seventeen, for he immediately thought of the wealth they could bring to himself and his family. When he attempted to remove the plates from the earth, he was severely shocked, and was then reprimanded by the angel, Moroni.

Following that incident, Joseph was apparently allowed to see in vision and become thoroughly acquainted with Satan and his host of evil followers, as well as their method of working to destroy mortals. Speaking of his visions of the devil later in his life, he said: "I have reason to think that the Church is being purged. I saw Satan fall from heaven, and the way (unrighteous members of the church) ran was a caution."g Thus, once Joseph

^o Moses 1:20

¶ Joseph Smith -- History 1:15

¶ Ibid. 1:28

§ Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Salt Lake City, Deseret Book Co., 1976, p. 373.

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understood Satan and his evil plan of operations, we can see by the way he lived his life that he fortified himself against significant further temptations.

I have come to the conclusion that all who set their sights on one day entering the Kingdom of Heaven will without doubt encounter Satan's opposing efforts as they pursue the work of Christ. It is vitally important, therefore, that all of us who have Celestial goals understand Satan, his mission and powers, as well as the eternal laws under which he works, so that we will neither fear nor be deceived and destroyed.

"What do you mean, 'laws under which he works?'" I can almost hear people ask. "I didn't think the devil had to obey any laws."

But he does. In fact, Satan is actually quite limited in what he is allowed to do. But more on this a little later. According to the Lord, there *is no* kingdom that is operated without law, and that includes the kingdom of the devil. The Lord declares that each of these kingdoms is limited by certain bounds and conditions, and that He has set them and comprehends them." Such a statement should give great comfort to those of us who find ourselves opposed to Lucifer's work, for we know that his powers are not unlimited.

In a wonderful editorial entitled "Try the Spirits," in the *Times and Seasons*, a Nauvoo newspaper, Joseph Smith wrote, among other things: "It is evident from the Apostles' writings, that many false spirits existed in their day, and had 'gone forth into the world,' and that it needed intelligence which God alone could impart to detect false spirits, and to prove what spirits were of God. The world in general have been grossly ignorant in regard to this one thing, and why should they be otherwise -- for 'the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.'

"There always did, in every age, seem to be a lack of intelligence pertaining to this subject. Spirits of all kinds have been manifested, in every age, and among all people ...and all contend that their spirits are of God. Who shall solve the mystery? 'Try the spirits,' says John, but who is to do it? The learned, the eloquent, the philosopher, the sage, the divine - all are ignorant.

"'Try the spirits,' but what by? Are we to try them by the creeds of men? What preposterous folly -- what sheer ignorance -- what madness! Try the motions and actions of an eternal being (for I contend that all spirits are such) by a thing that was conceived in ignorance, and brought forth in folly - a cobweb of yesterday! Angels would hide their faces, and devils would be ashamed and insulted, and would say, 'Paul we know, and Jesus we know, but who are ye?' Let each man of society make a creed and try evil spirits by it,

and the devil would shake his sides; it is all that he would ask -- all that he would desire. Yet many of them do this, and hence `many spirits are abroad in the world.'

"One great evil is, that men are ignorant of the nature of spirits; their power, laws, government, intelligence, etc., and imagine **that when there is anything like power**, revelation or vision manifested, that it must be of God.

"And what is the reason (they believe this)? Because they have not a key to unlock, no rule wherewith to measure, and no criterion whereby they can test it... If such ignorance as this is manifested about a spirit of this kind, who can describe an angel of light? If Satan should appear as one in glory, who can tell his color, his signs, his appearance, his glory, or what is the manner of his manifestation? Or who can drag into daylight and develop the hidden mysteries of the false spirits that so frequently are made manifest among the Latterday Saints? We answer that no man can do this without the Priesthood, and having a knowledge of the laws by which spirits are governed; for no man knows the things of God, but by the Spirit of God, so no man knows the spirit of the devil, and his power and influence, but by possessing intelligence which is more than human, and having unfolded through the medium of the Priesthood the mysterious operations of his devices...

"A man must have the discerning of spirits before he can drag into daylight this hellish influence and unfold it unto the world in all its soul-destroying, diabolical, and horrid colors; for nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God..."¹

To me that is quite a profound and comprehensive statement.

Joseph also remarked: "It would seem also, that wicked spirits have their bounds, limits, and laws by which they are governed or controlled ...and it is very evident that they possess a power that none but those who have the Priesthood can control..."²

So, how are evil spirits to be discerned and controlled? By the priesthood, which is also by personal righteousness." And for those who are worthily endowed in the temple and have received the keys of the priesthood, there are given even greater powers of detection. Joseph again said: "There were keys of the kingdom, certain signs and words by which false spirits and personages may be detected from true, which cannot be revealed to the Elders till the Temple is completed."⁴ In other words, the understanding of, as well

" Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 202-205. z

Ibid., p. 208. " D&C 121:36 " Words of Joseph Smith,

pp. 20-21.

as the righteous discerning and rebuking of these wicked spirits, is part of our latter day responsibility.

Let me now share what we have learned about Satan through revelation. The devil (meaning slanderer) is a spirit son of God, born in the morning of pre-mortal existence. Having agency, he chose the wicked part from the beginning, thus placing himself in opposition to God's Divine will." Apparently very powerful and appealing, he won a wide following, and in the great council where the Plan of Salvation was discussed he presented a scheme whereby agency would be denied the rest of us and he would become our God.

Nephi's younger brother Jacob says: "For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more. And our spirits must have become like him, and *we become devils, angels to a devil*, to be shut out from the presence of our God..."^{tb} So you see, the devil truly did long to overthrow God, take Heavenly Father's as well as Christ's place, and rule over us.

It is hard for me to understand how Satan could have thought we would ever fall for a scheme like that, but I think he played upon our fear of failure. You see, we knew the risks associated with mortality, and many no doubt felt concern about succumbing to those risks. Then I am certain that there were many others who simply did not want to put forth the effort required to overcome the world. To people such as those, Lucifer's `fail-proof plan must have had great appeal.

However, according to what we just learned from Jacob, Satan's plan never would have worked anyway, even if he had won that pre-mortal war -- simply because there would have been no resurrection. Worse, the devil knew his plan was not workable in terms of producing Gods and Goddesses, and that is one of the greatest commentaries on the incredibly total selfishness of our lost brother. Through the entire process of that war, and ever since, he has thought only of himself.

Strangely, many people I have met, especially among the youth, actually feel sorry for Satan. They think that there must surely be good in him, and that if given the correct opportunity he will yet repent. But such is not the case. Lucifer is unequivocally and eternally dedicated to the destruction of our souls, and the reason for this is very clearly explained in the scriptures. Father Lehi says: "And because (the devil) had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind ...yea,

u Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, Salt Lake City, Bookcraft, Inc., 1966, pp. 192-195.

¹⁶ 2 Nephi 9:8-9
even that old
serpent who
is the devil,
who is the
father of all
lies... For he
seeketh that
all men might
be miserable
like unto
himself.""

Before your experiences with Steve you may not have believed that. At least it seems apparent that Steve didn't. But after the pain and agony you have been put through, I would wager that you and the devil have definitely become enemies! Besides which, you became Lucifer's enemy long ago when you were led into the waters of baptism and took upon yourself the name of Christ. Satan has unrelentingly been after you -- and the rest of us -- ever since. And even though he knows most of us are not going to give up the church, and although he knows we are not going to go out and begin committing horrible sins, he won't back off. Why? Because he knows us better than we ourselves do, and he knows exactly where our weaknesses are. Further, he knows that any of us can be led into sin and temptation, especially if it is done gently and subtly and gradually enough. Remember the flaxen cords spoken of in the Book of Mormon? Believe me, Satan uses them! So don't count on him giving up on any of us any time in the near future.

Lucifer must be an eternal egotist. Apparently his ego did not diminish after he failed to dethrone God during the Grand Council in Heaven, for Moses learned that one of his greatest aims, then as well as now, is still to get men to worship him." In this, tragically, he has met with great success. As "the god of this world" as he puts it, he has the support and, though they might not realize it, the adoration and worship of all those who live after the manner of the world, including many Latter-day Saints.

"What?" some may exclaim. "But that cannot be so!"

"Oh, yes," I say, "it is!" And I will explain. As we worship God through obedience to His commandments, so also do we worship Satan by obeying his directives. If, for instance, our mouths are filled with profanity or deceit, if our hearts and minds are filled with lust and thoughts of immorality, if our bodies are filled with mind-numbing chemicals, if our money is spent on filth or time-wasting products or materials, if our goals are wealth and power before or rather than, building the kingdom, then no matter how often we pray or go to church or serve missions, Satan remains our god because we are obeying his commandments rather than Heavenly Father's. We then are members of Satan's church, Nephi's aptly-described "church of the devil," and until we repent it does us little good to have been baptized a member of Christ's earthly kingdom.

" 2 Nephi 2:18, 27

'e 2 Nephi 26:22

9 Moses 1:12; Moses 6:49

" 1 Nephi 13

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And if all this darkness reigns, then according to what Moses learned, Satan is very pleased. Moses saw that the devil "...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." It is difficult for me to imagine such intense evil and wickedness, but nevertheless I know it is real, and has been, since before the foundation of the earth.

Now, let's examine a little more **deeply not who, but what, we** are discussing. Following God's rejection of Lucifer's plan, there was war in heaven. One third of the spirit host followed Lucifer, and were ultimately cast out to earth, where they stand at the devil's side today, unalterably opposed to the work of God. These beings are literally dedicated to making war with the Saints and to destroying the souls of men." These individuals, our former brothers and sisters, fall under the title of evil spirits.

Acting in conformity with laws which exist and which I once again promise to discuss later, these spirit beings have power to tempt men, to entice them to work wickedness, and to do those things which are carnal, sensual and devilish. In D&C 46:7, the Lord warns us to be careful that we be not seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men. Seduced means destructively fooled, and if we are seduced, we are fooled unto destruction.

These beings do not have physical bodies, nor will they ever, and they are just as dedicated to the misery of mankind as is their master, the devil.

In the New Testament, Jesus makes a distinction between devils" and unclean spirits," as does Nephi in his writings." Though I have been able to discover in modern literature only Parley P. Pratt's writings concerning this," I give it as my opinion (Brother Pratt agrees with this) that while devils are those who followed Lucifer in the premortal councils, unclean spirits are the spirits of men and women who have lived in mortality and who have then departed in an impure or unclean (unrepentant) state.

Currently suffering under Satan's jurisdiction either in hell or in spirit prison, these unclean individuals seem to be lost wanderers, seeking further gratification of the illicit

z` Moses 7:26 22 Revelation 12

z' Matthew 8:28; Mark 1:23 z^

Matthew 10:1; Mark 1:34 25 1

Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology, Tenth Edition*, Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, 1948, pp. 11611 R.

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pleasures and sins they pursued and partook of so freely during mortality. Having either died in their sins," died without law or died not in the Lord,' they seem unable, at least yet, to break the chains of sinful habit **with which they are bound**. Thus they remain in their lost and fallen state, seeking human habitation in order to once again enjoy the mortal 'pleasures' of sin. These, I believe, are the ghosts, haunts, poltergeists and etc. that people occasionally encounter." And because they spend their time clamoring in our ears endeavoring to entice us into doing their bidding, I am also of the opinion that it was primarily these spirits that Steve encountered.

Now, you will wonder if all this really matters. Let me assure you that it does matter, at least if we are going to be able to combat Lucifer's forces with real power. We can't fight him effectively if we don't have clear knowledge and understanding of who or what we are dealing with; for as the Lord taught Joseph Smith, knowledge is power, no matter the subject involved.

I would now like to discuss those laws and rules by which Lucifer and his host are bound -rules that Joseph Smith spoke of so frequently. You will no doubt remember from the endowment that Satan has made a boast of his 'powers and priesthoods.' In my opinion, this has reference to the specific destructive abilities or assignments that he has, and that he has given his followers. With these, he and they hope to destroy mankind.

An example of such an assignment is found in Alma, where we learn that Korihor was possessed by a lying spirit, or in other words a spirit who seduced Korihor with the specific intent of helping him to become a liar."

These assignments do not seem to apply to unclean spirits, who so far as I can tell have power only to clamor, afflict with disease and illness, frighten and possess in an attempt to entice mortals in order that they may enjoy mortal habits and/or pleasures." But evil spirits or devils, who follow Lucifer in his task of afflicting and tormenting and destroying mortals, do seem to be assigned specific powers or missions. And interestingly, this seems to be done in the manner of an organized assault, just as Christ's missionary force is an organized assault against these same powers of darkness.

Well, I don't know about other men, but until the past few years I had certainly never thought of them! So daily I pray to Heavenly Father that, whatever it takes, whatever I must be called upon to pass through, He will continually reveal unto me my sins. I desire to repent of them, all of them, that I might obtain the power the Prophet Joseph has spoken of, the power to subdue all enemies of my righteousness under my feet, including most especially Satan – the father of all

darkness.

May God bless and be with you and your family, Diane. I hope all this has been of help to you, and I sincerely pray that the Spirit of Divine revelation will be yours as you determine your further courses of action.

Sincerely, your brother,

²⁷ Mosiah 15:26, Alma 12:16, 40:26, Moroni 10:26

Doctrine and Covenants 42:47, 76:72

²⁹ An excellent description of these unclean individuals and their habits and activities can be read in: George G. Ritchie, M.D., *Return From Tomorrow*, Chosen Books, Waco, Texas, 1978.

Alma 30:42