

and to have exercised the power of “the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God,”<sup>13</sup> is as great a blessing for me and for my family as I could ever hope for in this world. And that, in the end, is the meaning of the priesthood in everyday terms—its unequaled, unending, constant capacity to bless.

### Praise to the man

With gratitude for such blessings, I join you and a choir of the living and the dead in singing in this commemorative year, “Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!”<sup>14</sup>—and communed with Adam; Gabriel; Moses and Moroni; Elijah; Elias; Peter, James, and John; John the Baptist; and a host of others.<sup>15</sup> Truly “Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.”<sup>16</sup> May we, young and old, boys and men, fathers and sons, cherish the priesthood that through him was restored, priesthood keys and ordinances by which alone the power of godliness is manifest and without which it cannot be manifest.<sup>17</sup> I testify of the restoration of the priesthood and the indispensable “distinguishing feature” of the true Church of God that it has always been, in the name of Him whose priesthood it is, even the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1937, 121.

2. “Priesthood Restoration,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1988, 71.
3. “Where Is the Church?” devotional address, Brigham Young University, Mar. 1, 2005, 8.
4. Matthew 16:19.
5. See Matthew 17:1–3.
6. Quoted in Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Second Witness of Priesthood Restoration,” *Improvement Era*, Sept. 1968, 20; italics added.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 110:16; see also verses 1–15.
8. Articles of Faith 1:5; italics added.
9. See David F. Holland, “Priest, Pastor, Power,” *Insight*, fall 1997, 15–22 for a thorough examination of priesthood issues current in America at the time of the Restoration.
10. Quoted in C. Beaufort Moss, *The Divisions of Christendom: A Retrospect* (n.d.), 22.
11. Quoted in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (1945), 108–9.
12. Doctrine and Covenants 89:21.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 107:1–3.
14. “Praise to the Man,” *Hymns*, no. 27.
15. Joseph Smith had communion with many prophets and messengers from beyond the veil. For just a few of those mentioned in scripture, see Doctrine and Covenants 128:20–21.
16. *Hymns*, no. 27.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–21.

## Elder Neil L. Andersen

### Beware of the evil behind the smiling eyes

Tonight I speak to you young men, you whom President Gordon B. Hinckley has described as “the finest generation.”<sup>1</sup> Across the world we see your goodness. I pray that you will feel that my words are personally for you, a son of God, working hard to do what’s right.

I’d like to tell you of an experience of a faithful Latter-day Saint who is a good

friend of mine. I’ll refer to him only as “my friend” for reasons you will understand.

Working as a special agent for the FBI, my friend investigated organized crime groups transporting illegal drugs into the United States. On one occasion he and another agent approached an apartment where they believed a known drug dealer was distributing cocaine. My friend describes what happened:

“We knocked on the door of the drug dealer. The suspect opened the door and, upon seeing us, tried to block our view. But it was too late; we could see the cocaine on his table.

“A man and a woman who were at the table immediately began removing the cocaine. We had to prevent them from destroying the evidence, so I quickly pushed the drug suspect who was blocking the door to the side. As I pushed him, my eyes met his. Strangely, he did not appear angry or afraid. He was smiling at me.

“His eyes and disarming smile gave me the impression that he was harmless, so I quickly left him and started to move toward the table. The suspect was now behind me. At that instant, I had the distinct, powerful impression come into my mind: ‘Beware of the evil behind the smiling eyes.’

“I immediately turned back toward the suspect. His hand was in his large front pocket. Instinctively I grabbed his hand and pulled it from his pocket. Only then did I see, clutched in his hand, the semi-automatic pistol ready to fire. A flurry of activity followed, and I disarmed the man.”<sup>2</sup>

Later, in another case, the drug dealer was convicted of murder and boasted that he would have also killed my friend had he not turned around at that very moment.

I have often thought of the communication that came into his mind: “Beware of the evil behind the smiling eyes.” This is what I want to talk to you about tonight.

### **We are here to choose good over evil**

Let’s begin with what we know. Good comes from God; evil comes from the devil.<sup>3</sup> They are not, however, equal forces that are fighting each other in the universe. At the head of all that is good is the Christ—He who is the Only Begotten of the Father, who created our world and numerous others. Our Redeemer is a resurrected and perfect being.<sup>4</sup> I know He lives.

The devil, on the other hand, “persuadeth men to do evil.”<sup>5</sup> “He [has] fallen from heaven, . . . [has] become miserable forever,”<sup>6</sup> and now works “that all men might be miserable like unto himself.”<sup>7</sup> He is a liar and a loser.<sup>8</sup>

The power of the Savior and the power of the devil are not truly comparable. It would be like comparing the greatest army on earth to a runaway band of two-year-olds in the nursery armed with water pistols.<sup>9</sup>

On this planet, however, evil has been allowed a position of influence to give us the chance to choose between good and evil. The scripture says: “God gave unto man that he should act for himself. [And] man could not act for himself [unless] he was enticed by . . . one or the other.”<sup>10</sup>

The choice between good and evil is at the very heart of our experience on earth. In the final review of our lives, it will not really matter if we were rich or poor, if we were athletic or not, if we had friends or were often forgotten.

We can work, study, laugh and have fun, dance, sing, and enjoy many different experiences. These are a wonderful part of life, but they are not central to why we are here.<sup>11</sup> The opportunity to choose good over evil is precisely why we are here.<sup>12</sup>

### **The choice is not always easy**

Not one of us would say, “I want to choose evil.” We all want to choose the right. However, the choice of good over evil is not always easy because evil frequently lurks behind smiling eyes. Listen to these warnings:

“Take heed . . . that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God.”<sup>13</sup>

“Ye must watch and pray always lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you.”<sup>14</sup>

“Satan hath sought to deceive you, that he might overthrow you.”<sup>15</sup>

The message is: Beware of the evil behind the smiling eyes!

I have known a few young men who began with every intention to stay firm in their loyalty to the Savior, but who slipped from the path because they did not see the evil behind eyes that appeared quite harmless. They saw the fun, the pleasure, the acceptance, but they did not see the other consequences.

### How to discern evil

How, then, can we discern the evil behind something that doesn't appear evil?

You already know the answers, but here are a few thoughts:

First, talk to your parents. Does that sound like a revolutionary idea? We fathers know we are far from perfect, but we love you, and along with your mothers we have a deep interest in your choosing the right.

Next, follow the prophet. These 15 men we sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators are given divine power to see what we sometimes do not see. President Hinckley has given us clear and specific counsel about the evil behind the smiling eyes.<sup>16</sup> And you have the inspired guidance in the booklet *For the Strength of Youth*.<sup>17</sup> As you apply President Hinckley's counsel, the Lord has promised that He "will disperse the powers of darkness from before you."<sup>18</sup> You will see the evil behind the smiling eyes, and its appeal will leave you.

Very importantly, let the Holy Ghost be your guide. The Lord has promised us that as we live righteously, the still, small voice will come into our minds and into our hearts.<sup>19</sup> You have felt this influence. You know this voice.<sup>20</sup>

The gift of the Holy Ghost is a spiritual gift. It is sensitive and will not be associated with unworthiness. You cannot offend or ignore it one day and expect it to strengthen you the next day. But as you heed its promptings and remain righteous,

it will grow stronger within you. The Holy Ghost warned my friend of physical danger; the Holy Ghost will also warn you of spiritual danger.

Finally, gain your own testimony of the Savior. Pray passionately. Read the Book of Mormon when no one is watching. Take time alone to think about who Jesus really is and how His life and sacrifice are important to you.

Remember the example of the young Joseph Smith. When he lit the candle at night to read the Bible, it was because he wanted to. When he went into the grove to pray, he went alone.<sup>21</sup>

As we increase our understanding and love for the Savior, His light will illuminate everything around us. We then will see evil for what it is.<sup>22</sup>

I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior. Words cannot describe His greatness and glory, His majesty and magnificence. He appeared with His Father to the Prophet Joseph Smith. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the prophet of God today. Brethren, we hold His holy priesthood. As we remain worthy, we will be blessed to see the evil behind the smiling eyes. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. In Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 96; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 69.
2. Personal correspondence, Mar. 7, 2005.
3. See Moroni 7:12.
4. See Luke 24:36–39; John 1:14; 3 Nephi 12:48; Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24.
5. Moroni 7:17.
6. 2 Nephi 2:18.
7. 2 Nephi 2:27.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:25; see also Bible Dictionary, "Devil," 656.
9. See Moses 1:1–22.
10. 2 Nephi 2:16.
11. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Prophet's Counsel and Prayer for Youth," *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2–11; Conference Report, Apr. 1997, 66–71; or *Ensign*, May 1997,

- 47–50; Conference Report, Apr. 1998, 66–70; or *Ensign*, May 1998, 49–51.
12. See 2 Nephi 2:27.
  13. See Moroni 7:14.
  14. 3 Nephi 18:18.
  15. Doctrine and Covenants 50:3.
  16. See *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 2–11.
  17. See [www.lds.org](http://www.lds.org). Click on “Serving in the Church,” “Aaronic Priesthood / Young Men,” “For the Strength of Youth.”
  18. Doctrine and Covenants 21:6.
  19. See Doctrine and Covenants 8:2.
  20. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:36.
  21. See Joseph Smith—History 1:11–20.
  22. See Moses 1:1–22.

## Elder Robert C. Oaks

### Who’s on the Lord’s side?

This evening I would like to focus my comments on a favorite hymn’s rousing call to service: “Who’s on the Lord’s side? Who? / Now is the time to show” (“Who’s on the Lord’s Side?” *Hymns*, no. 260).

In this, the dispensation of the fulness of time, as we prepare for the final satanic battles in anticipation of the return of Christ to the earth, it is very important to know who is on the Lord’s side. The Lord needs to know on whom He can rely.

You would hope that every priesthood holder could be counted on to show up for service in the ranks of the Lord’s army. Today in the Church there are about three million priesthood holders, split evenly between the Aaronic and the Melchizedek Priesthoods.

Unfortunately, far too many of these men, young and not so young, are missing, absent without leave, AWOL.

One day they each sat humbly while men of authority laid hands upon their heads and conferred the priesthood upon them. That day they all made a covenant of obedience and service with the Lord.

### Authority of the Aaronic Priesthood

To understand the importance of these covenants, we need to ask ourselves, “What is the priesthood?” Every alert deacon knows the answer to this question: the priesthood is the power to act in God’s name.

What does this mean to you deacons, teachers, and priests? First, it means you are authorized to pass, prepare, and bless the sacrament. Is this a big deal? Absolutely!

Who administered the first sacrament service that we have any record of? Of course the answer is the Lord Jesus Christ. The evening before His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ prepared, blessed, and passed the sacrament to His disciples. So when we perform this sacred ordinance, we are actually standing in for the Savior Himself. That is special!

John the Baptist laid his hands on the heads of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery and conferred upon them the priesthood of Aaron and declared, “I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins” (D&C 13:1). That is a significant responsibility for men of any age. With that charge, we are clearly on the Lord’s side.

### Authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood

What of the Melchizedek Priesthood? The 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants reads, “And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God” (v. 19). This priesthood holds the power to administer and lead, to bless and heal, to teach