

behold the heavens opened and see Jesus, they may see visions, and have revelations given to them, and yet if they do not live as they should do, and cherish the Spirit of God in their hearts, all this knowledge, and these revelations and wonderful manifestations fail to keep them in the Church, to preserve them from the power of the adversary, and to deliver them from the snares that he spreads for the feet of all the children of God. And in our own experience we can comprehend very easily how the Church of God, in ancient days, fell away from the truth, wandered into darkness, and lost the knowledge of God and the ordinances which he had established in his Church for the salvation of his people. How long would it be, were it not for the teachings, warnings and reproofs of those who are set to preside over them, before many of the Latter-day Saints, and probably a majority of them, would stray into by and forbidden paths, and forget the knowledge that they once had and the blessings they once enjoyed? And yet I am thankful that people cannot stay in this Church and practice unrighteousness. I am thankful that God allows those who do not keep his commandments to fall away, so that his Church may be cleansed, and, in this respect, this Church is different from any other that is upon the earth. A man may practice iniquity and do wrong in other churches, and he may cover it up for years, and nobody, or probably but a few—himself, his God, and a few others—be aware of this wrong, and he may pass along and nobody ever imagine that there is anything wrong with him. But it is not so in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—no man can stand in this Church, or retain the Spirit of God and continue in a course of hypocrisy for any length of time. God

will tear away the covering of lies and expose the wrong; he will leave the transgressor to himself, and the strength that he formerly had, which enabled him to stand and maintain his associations with the people of God, will be taken away from him, and he will be left to go down to destruction unless he repents. It is true that the Lord has said that the tares shall grow with the wheat until harvest, but it is not said that tares will not be plucked up from time to time, for if it were not so they would overpower and choke out the wheat. The sifting or weeding process has been going on from the commencement of this Church until the present time; hence it is that the leaders of this Church are stirred up in their feelings from time to time to call upon the people to repent. They understand clearly that unless there is a godly life and conversation corresponding with our profession, this people would soon fall into darkness and error, and stray from the path of righteousness.

Our enemies are not mistaken in some of their ideas respecting us, that is, respecting the power that can be brought to bear to destroy us. They seem to be well aware of the fact that, if we only conform to their customs, fashions, ideas and practices, we would soon fall away and cease, as a people, to preserve our identity. They understand this, and hence the efforts which have been made of late. It has seemed as though the adversary has been exerting every power and bringing every influence within his reach to destroy us; and the most lamentable feature—the one that has given me most concern connected with it—has been the apparent blindness of our people respecting these designs; it has seemed as though we could not see and understand their nature, and