

were exhorted to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” That, no doubt, sounded very strange to them in that day and age of the world; they had had Jesus among them, he had preached his Gospel unto them; the light of eternal truth had been made manifest, and they had participated in the blessings of the Gospel; and yet, under these peculiar circumstances, blessed, as it were, with the light of revelation, with Apostles in their midst, with a complete Church organization, with everything that was calculated to enlighten, instruct and lead them on in the path of righteousness, they were told to contend earnestly for that faith once delivered to the Saints.

It seems that in the different ages of the world in the past, there has existed, as there does today, a species of self-righteousness, self-complacency, a reliance upon the wisdom, intelligence and virtue of man. In that day the Scribes and Pharisees, the lawyers and doctors, the great Sanhedrin, the pious men, thought they were the peculiar elect of God, and that wisdom would die with them. Jesus came among them and told them very many unpalatable truths; among others, that they were “whited walls and painted sepulchres, that they appeared fair on the outside, but inwardly there was nothing but rottenness and dead men’s bones.” He told them that for a pretence they made long prayers; not that they had any reference to God at all, for God had very little to do with them. They did it, he told them, in order that “they might be heard of men.” They made broad their phylacteries (that is a species of writing which they bound on all their garments), with certain passages of Scripture. They made them very broad, that they might be considered

extra pure, virtuous and holy. Jesus called these very pure, holy, virtuous people, painted sepulchres.

But there is something else associated with these matters very peculiar. Jesus taught the principles of life and salvation—the everlasting Gospel. He introduced men into the kingdom of God; he organized a pure Church, based upon correct principles, according to the order of God. Men were baptized into that Church; they had hands laid upon them for the reception of the Holy Ghost, and they received it. They had among them Apostles and Prophets, Pastors and Teachers, Evangelists and inspired men. The Church enjoyed among themselves the gift of tongues, visions, prophecy; the sick were healed, the blind received their sight, the deaf heard, and the lame leaped for joy; the visions of heaven were unfolded to their view, and they had a knowledge of many things pertaining to eternity; and yet, with all their light, intelligence and blessings, with all their Apostles, with the fulness of the Gospel in their midst, they were advised to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints. The Lord has revealed to us many blessings, and I sometimes think that we hardly appreciate the light of truth which has been developed, the glory that is connected with the Gospel which has been restored, the light of revelation which has been communicated, the position that we occupy in relation to God, angels, our posterity and our progenitors, the hope that the Gospel has implanted in the bosom of every faithful Latter-day Saint, which blooms with immortality and eternal life; and sometimes, when exposed to the various trials with which we are encompassed, to the opprobrium and reproach frequently heaped upon us by ignorant and evil disposed persons,