

to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God. We are too much disposed to believe and act like the world, not rendering that submission and humble obedience to the righteousness of God which would justly accord with our high profession. Many are disposed through their own wickedness "to do as I damned please," and they are damned. The volition of the creature is free, to do good or to do evil; but we are responsible to God for our acts, as man is responsible to man if he breaks the laws which man enacts. When we boast of our independence to act, it would be well for us to remember that we are bounded by these limits; if we transcend them and violate the laws of God and man, we shall sooner or later be made to suffer the penalty, without any reference to our choice whether we are willing to suffer that penalty or not. Hence, true independence and freedom can only exist in doing right. It is written, "That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Every item will be recorded and all will be known when the books are opened.

We are acting upon our own responsibility and agency which God has given us, if we secretly violate the laws of righteousness, and our wicked works are in the dark while we maintain a pious and fair exterior; they are nevertheless known; and for every evil word and work which we commit, unless repented of we shall be brought into judgment and be made to pay the utmost farthing of the penalty. The Spirit of the Lord is in the hearts of all people to teach them to cleave to good, and to forsake evil. If they will listen to the whisperings of this Spirit when the

Gospel of Jesus Christ is presented to them, whether by the voice of his ministers, or in the written word, their minds will be enlightened to understand it.

Before Joseph Smith made known what the Lord had revealed to him, before his name was even known among many of his neighbors, I knew that Jesus Christ had no true Church upon the earth. I read the Bible for myself; I was supposed to be an infidel and to content myself with a moral religion. When I was told to believe in Jesus Christ, and that was all that was required for salvation, I did not so understand the Bible. I understood from the Bible that when the Lord had a church upon the earth it was a system of ordinances, of laws and regulations to be obeyed, a society presided over and regulated by officers and ministers peculiar to itself to answer such and such purposes, and bring to pass such and such results, and I have not received a revelation to the contrary. Such a system answering the description given in the Bible I could not find on the earth, and I was not prepared to listen to the men who said "lo here" and "lo there," who presented themselves, as they said, as true ministers of heaven. When I would ask the ministers of religion, if they were prepared to tell me how the kingdom of God should be built up; if that which is laid down in the new Testament is not the pattern, all the reply I could receive from them was; "but you know, my dear friend, that these things are done away." They would tell me that ordinances were mere matters of ceremony, that belief in Jesus Christ was all-essential and all that was really necessary.

I could only think of the religious world as a mass of confusion; and when I visited England I saw it in its perfection. There I saw hundreds