

them unless they were strictly in accordance with the Scriptures, reason, and common sense.

I used to be told when investigating religious principles that it was dangerous to do so, and I had better let them alone; but I did not think so. I believe it is good to investigate and prove all principles that come before me. Prove all things, hold fast that which is good, and reject that which is evil, no matter what guise it may come in. I think if we, as "Mormons," hold principles that cannot be sustained by the Scriptures and by good sound reason and philosophy, the quicker we part with them the better, no matter who believes in them or who does not. In every principle presented to us, our first inquiry should be, "Is it true?" "Does it emanate from God?" If He is its Author it can be sustained just as much as any other truth in natural philosophy; if false it should be opposed and exposed just as much as any other error. Hence upon all such matters we wish to go back to first principles.

If I am a man, where did I come from, and what is the nature of my existence and being here? I want information on these points, if anybody can give it. If I had an existence before I came here I want to know something about it. If there is a God and anybody on the earth ever knew anything about Him, I want to know something about Him. If there are wise, intelligent, and learned men anywhere who can tell me anything about Him, about my own existence and future destiny, I want to know it. These desires are reasonable; why should they not be gratified? You go to the heathen and inquire about God, and they have thousands of them in every form. Go to the Christians and they have one God, but he has neither body,

nor passions; his presence is everywhere, but he exists nowhere. They have never heard nor seen him, and they do not know anybody who ever did, not even their ministers, whom, they claim, are sent of God. They are equally as ignorant in relation to their own existence and the ends of their creation. They say they are going to Heaven, but all they can tell you about it is that it is beyond the bounds of time and space.

This kind of doctrine does not suit me. I can read in the Scriptures that men used to converse with God, and that angels conversed with them; that others had visions and could read the purposes of God as they were unfolded before them. But come to the present day when, according to their own account, the most intelligent people that ever were upon the earth are now in existence, and they know nothing about God or His purposes. I care nothing about such knowledge and wisdom. In the language of the old prophet I say, "My soul, enter not thou into their secret." I want something that is intellectual and true, and that will bear investigation.

When I turn to the Gospel as taught by Jesus, I find that he sent his disciples into all the world and commanded them to preach the Gospel to every creature, saying, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This Gospel was no pliant thing, as in this day, that men could receive or refuse as they pleased, or that they could tinker to suit their own notions; but when preached, it involved the salvation or damnation of those who heard it.

When the apostles commenced to preach the Gospel, Jesus said it was necessary for him to go away, for if he went away he would send them the Comforter—the Holy Spirit—