

EDITORIALS.

GOD'S AUTHORITY AND MAN'S LIBERTY.

We have demonstrated in these columns that "Mormonism" is not the despotism described by its opponents and believed by the multitude, but a system in which every member has a free voice and vote. Also that it sustains the principle of individual responsibility and accountability. But its enemies strongly object to the doctrine of present revelation, which is fundamental in its creed, and without which it would be as worthless as the various man-made religions that perplex and divide mankind. They seem to hate the very idea of Divine interference in the affairs of men, and claim that the bondage of the mind is inevitable to a belief that any man receives for others the word and will of God.

And yet this is the very essence of Biblical religion. The books of the Old Testament and the New are authoritative throughout Christendom, because they are believed to contain the word of the Lord through Prophets and Apostles. The Moslem dispensation rests upon the revelations of God through the Hebrew leader, Moses, and is sustained by the messages sent from Deity to man through the seers who succeeded him. The Christian dispensation depends upon the manifestations of Deity through Jesus of Nazareth and His disciples. And without belief in Divine communications to mankind through chosen individuals there would be no religions in the world.

If it be admitted that God ever spoke to man, and ever had a mouthpiece on earth to any family, tribe or nation, dissent to present revelation becomes illogical and inconsistent. If God never spoke to man in the past, it might be reasonable to say he does not reveal His will in the present. But if Divine revelation was ever given, it may be given now, and it is just as rational to believe in present as in ancient communications from heaven. God's power to reveal is not limited by time; man's ability to receive is not a faculty of a special period. God is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever; man is His offspring and dependent upon Him for light as much in the nineteenth century as in the first, and in the latter days as in the earliest ages.

It is folly, in the face of history and experience, to say that man's freedom is infringed by God's revelations. Even if people believe a message, delivered by one having Divine authority, to come from the Almighty, they are still perfectly free as to its acceptance and their action in relation to it. God told Israel of old not to have a King. He also warned them of the consequences if they rejected His counsel. But they would have a King, they did have a King, and the results were just as God through His prophet predicted. So it will be always. When the Almighty reveals His will, man is free to obey or disobey. But the consequences are inevitable and natural. And man will be judged for his acts by One who never swerves from the principles of eternal justice balanced with eternal mercy.

There is no compulsion in the teachings or spirit of "Mormonism" nor in the discipline of the "Mormon" Church. Belief in present revelation does not imply coercion in any sense of the word. The doctrine of the Church is that every member is entitled to seek for and receive divine communications and manifestations for his or her own guidance, profit and enlightenment. They will come according to the faith, capacity and integrity of the suppliant. But to the Church, in its organized entirety, only one man at a time is to receive the word and will of the Lord for its government, and that man is the head, called of God, chosen and sustained as such by the free vote of the people composing the Church.

But it is asked, "After the people have accepted him, what then?" And it is said "their reasoning faculties cannot be exercised on any question in which his authority is urged." The answer is, they are just as free then as before, to receive or reject what he brings forth claiming to be the word of the Lord. It is not true that they are deprived of or hindered in the exercise of their "reasoning faculties." It is every man's right to act on his own agency and on his own conceptions of right and wrong, because he is to be judged for his own acts, and he must therefore be left free to do or not to do as he himself elects. If a man does not believe a professed Divine revelation through one whom he recognizes as the properly authorized person to receive such communications, he is not compelled to accept it and act upon it. And if he does believe it, his agency is still free and he can do as he wills concerning it. His reasoning faculties are not destroyed or impaired by his belief.

Israel of old believed that God had commanded them through Moses not to intermarry with the nations around them. Yet they broke this Divine injunction repeatedly, and always with evil results to the transgressors. It is the same today. There are people who will break the Sabbath and yet at the time they know that God has commanded them not to do so, both

through ancient Prophets and by His chosen mouthpiece in the present are whom they recognize and have sustained in that capacity. The people do not lose the exercise of their reasoning faculties by believing anything right to be Divine, nor do they lose the power to act freely in relation to it. There is just as much "free thought" in accepting as in rejecting Divine revelation, and just as much "free choice" in thinking for them or exercising any species of compulsory authority over them. There is not a freer people in the world, so far as any "priestly power" is exercised, than the Latter-day Saints. Individual responsibility is one of the vital principles of their creed. Therefore individual development is inculcated as a necessity to human exaltation. "The glory of God is intelligence;" this is written in the revelations they hold as sacred; also this:

"Whatever principles of intelligence we attain unto in this life it will rise with us in the resurrection; and if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come."—Doc. and Cov. p. 461.

And further:

"That every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto them, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment. Therefore it is not right that any man should be in bondage, one to another."—Doc. and Cov. p. 357.

This is held in view of every convert to the doctrines of "Mormonism." Mere belief in a creed, or acceptance of men as holding Divine authority, is not viewed or taught as the means of salvation. Personal righteousness, intelligence and progress are essential to the exaltation of every man and woman, as well as faith in Christ and obedience to the ordinances administered by men authorized to act in His name. Elevation of individual character is the great desideratum in the "Mormon" system.

At the same time the benefits of order, subordination and unity are not lost sight of. They are necessary to the success of every organized body. "Obedience is better than sacrifice." Co-operation accomplishes more than strife. Without order there is no harmony, and without harmony there is no happiness. The "Mormon" Church is powerful because of the general observance of these principles by most of its members. Their union, compliance with counsel and co-operative effort, though short of the standard before them, are a marvel to the world. They have real faith in their religion and confidence in the Divine authority of their ministers.

But all their obedience is voluntary, their association spontaneous, their action from choice. How can there be greater liberty? If it be objected that they are in "the bondage of a creed," the answer is, that is the condition of all people who have faith. It is the restraint only of conscience. Those who have no conscience, or who are dead to its dictates, are usually the slaves to vice and enjoy less true liberty than the conscientious and religious. They would, if they had their way, destroy the very freedom they pretend to advocate. They would prevent men and women from obeying the word which the latter believe to be divine. They would break up by force the unity that springs from free will. They would destroy the authority compliance with which brings the greatest satisfaction and joy. They would substitute the serfdom of bowing to their dictation for the freedom of willing and intelligent submission to that which is believed to be the decree of heaven.

We want none of it. The Latter-day Saints are contented with their faith and devoted to the system which they have adopted. They have a firm assurance that it is Divine. They have attained that conviction through obedience to the gospel and by the witness of the Holy Spirit. They know that they are not subjected to any unlawful or unrighteous dominion in the Church of which they are members, and they rejoice in the liberty wherewith they have been made free indeed. They will go on in the way of obedience and peace, understanding that to yield to the right is better than self-will, and believing that while the rebellious shall be pierced with many sorrows, "he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

THE MOMENTOUS QUESTION.

The sewerage question, as now presented, is one of much importance. It interests the whole city, although it is presented in definite form to only a limited portion of the people. The property owners in District No. 1 are called upon to decide a proposition made to them by the City Council, but all the citizens of Salt Lake are interested in it, because it will affect them financially and otherwise.

This question should be decided intelligently and without passion or prejudice. And this cannot be done with-

out considering all the prominent facts bearing upon the case. People should avoid being drawn into any crazy current or partisan movement. The situation should be viewed calmly and carefully, and a decision reached after reference to the law and simple, is the chief one each of the streets in the city, by the boundaries of District No. 1, a double row of pipes to receive sewage from the houses, by other pipes to connect them with each house in the District. The cost, to be paid by the property owners, consist of a tax of two per cent on the assessed valuation of their real estate for the present year and \$100 each additional. The cost of plumbing work, to be defrayed by each property-owner, is at present unknown. The poorest property-owner in the district will have to pay the same amount for the connecting pipe as the richest; the widow whose property is assessed at four hundred dollars will have to pay the \$100 for connecting pipe, and the great firm assessed at a hundred thousand dollars will have to pay for it no more.

These lateral pipes are to run into a main sewer the site of which and the cost of which no man knoweth. The first location, by a direct sewer to the Jordan, was planned at an estimated cost of \$25,000, the real cost being computed by many at double that amount. But the first idea was abandoned, and the next notion was to carry it along Fourth South Street a given distance, then turn north and finally westward so as to discharge somewhere near Pettit's on the Jordan. The estimated cost of this is put, in round figures, by practical men at not less than \$100,000.

Another project is to run the main sewer along a lower street, say Seventh South, and carry it out west over the Jordan to White Lake. To do this, pumping would have to be resorted to; the cost of the sewer would be about \$100,000, and of the pumping apparatus nobody knows.

Still another plan is to provide a dumping ground, carry the sewage to it by the most feasible route, and convert the waste matter into fertilizers to be utilized for agriculture. What the cost of this would be has not yet been determined.

The expense of the main sewer and the disposition of the sewage is to come out of the city treasury; in other words, out of the pockets of the taxpayers in every part of the city. That it will be something enormous can be readily perceived by every person who will consider the area covered by this city and the distance the sewer must be built to be of any service. If the sewerage system is only to include District No. 1, then the whole city will be taxed for its especial benefit. If other districts are formed, then the main sewer will have to be extended farther east, at additional cost to the general taxpayers, added to the special taxes on the districts formed.

These facts must be held in view before just and sensible people can come to a rational conclusion as to what ought to be done. To throw out of the question the disposition of the sewage and the construction of the main sewer to conduct it, is to refuse consideration of its most important and most expensive feature. It is not an honest and rational manner of discussing it.

It is said "the people are not called upon to decide the question of its disposition." Just so. They are called upon to decide whether they want these lateral pipes to carry sewage—no one knows where and at an indefinite cost. But will any sane person attempt to claim that the disposition of the sewage should cut no figure in the question whether the people want to pay for laterals to receive sewage? Is it a matter of no moment to those who have to decide whether they want to establish an expensive system, to know what the prospects are for its ultimate success?

We are told that "if the proposition meets with the support of those interested, the City Council will be obliged to provide suitable means and a suitable place for the final disposition of the sewage." Is not that a cheerful and consoling way to get rid of a knotty and formidable problem? "Oh! we don't know how it is to be done or even whether it can be done, but the City Council will have to do it, anyway." If the property owners in District No. 1 can only be induced to shut their eyes and say "we want sewers," neither knowing nor caring what this decision will lead to, then the City will be committed to the sewer policy and will be compelled to make some disposition of a flood of filth which will be cast upon its hands, no matter at what cost, nor whether there is any place to put it where it will not be a thousand-fold greater nuisance than at present.

Of course the question of "disposition" is not to appear in the formal protest of objectors to the proposed system. But it should be kept in view of every taxpayer before he decides the question. It is of far more importance than the bare proposition that calls for decision by October 16th. It lies at the bottom of the whole matter. How can a sensible taxpayer decide whether he wants to pay for pipes to carry sewage from his premises, when there is no plan prepared to receive the body of the sewage, no place chosen to deposit it, no means devised for water to flush the pipes and make sure that the matter will be taken where it can do no harm?

We hope our readers will not be hurried along with a crowd to commit themselves to a great mistake. It is not true that nearly all have been repeatedly valuing it at say \$100,000, and are opposed to it and will protest against it, and have only said they want some system of sewerage or means of sanitation for the city. That is widely different to endorsing the present proposition.

Another thing that should be understood is, that he who does not protest against this proposal counts as in favor of it. He who is not positively against it is considered to be for it. No vote is called in its support. That is not required in the call of the Council. It is only a protest against it that is open to the taxpayers of the district. Every property owner who does not protest, will appear to the City Council on the 16th of October as assenting to the taxation of his property for the building of the laterals and agreeing to pay the \$100 for the connection pipe. Let those who comprehend this explain it to those who comprehend it not. Leave no taxpayer in the dark on this momentous question.

We have explained our views repeatedly on the sanitary question. The city needs a system to dispose of its waste material. Such a system can be established at comparatively small expense and in a most effectual manner. But to commit the city just now to a system that seems impracticable and threatens to overwhelm it with debt and difficulty, appears to us to be very injudicious, and we do not believe it would involve the City Council in no end of trouble. Now let this matter be well weighed and let the people take prompt action as their good judgment shall direct.

CUSTOMS OFFICIALS AND THE BOOK OF MORMON.

The delicate duty of deciding whether or not the Mormon Bible is authentic has devolved upon the customs department of Canada. If really a bible the duty to be levied upon it is but 5 per cent, but if not a bible it is a mere book, taxable at the rate of 15 per cent. The department has levied the higher duty, thus practically determining that the work is no revelation, but the production of human intellect.

The foregoing is from that bright and pungent daily, the Chicago News. We believe, however, it appeared in the Toronto Mail. We were not aware that the Canadian custom house officers were authorities on the subject of divine revelation. They are supposed to render unto Caesar (Victoria's) the things that are Caesar's (Victoria's) but not to have anything to do with "the things that are God's." What standard they have for determining theological questions and gauging where the divine ends and the human begins, or vice versa, is not announced, and we do not know of any formula from Crown or Parliament as a guide to officials in settling what is or is not a revelation from heaven. It would be gratifying to learn on what principle Canadian collectors of customs decide such important problems.

It is hardly to be expected that those officials took time to read the Book under consideration, from beginning to end. And if not, how could they tell without a revelation to themselves that it is "the production of human intellect?" Perhaps they consulted some eminent priests or preachers. If so they would not have long to wait for a conclusion. Without examination and without hesitation their verdict would be given that it was "no revelation." For, on the hypothesis, accepted in the churches, that there has been no voice from heaven or communication from God to man since that to John the Beloved on the Isle of Patmos, investigation would be superfluous. A great many clergymen have come to the same conclusion as the Canadian customs officials, but not one in a hundred of them has ever read the Book.

The "delicate duty" of those officers might have been easily avoided. There was no need for their decision as to whether the Book is a bible. It does not profess to be a bible, neither do the believers in its divinity claim that it is a bible. It is simply The Book of Mormon. The Latter-day Saints have but one Bible, and that is the version of the Old and New Testaments commonly called King James' translation. But on the "delicate" question of the divine authority of the Book, we do not think the "practical determination" of any number of collectors of duties, in Canada or elsewhere, will have any bearing upon intelligent minds.

There is one thing in its favor that ought to be noted. Those who have studied it most are the strongest believers in its divinity, and those who use the bitterest invectives or the sharpest ridicule against it, have either never looked at more than its title page, or even seen the volume, or else have given it but a cursory and skeptical examination.

All the attempts that have been made to account for it on any other hypothesis than that put forth by the Book itself, have utterly and signally failed. The commonest refuge of its opponents—the Spaulding story, has been thoroughly exploded. How an unlettered youth could have produced the Book, with its complete doctrinal

agreement with the Hebrew history, is a matter that, in all its parts, no one has yet been able to explain upon the theory of its human fabrication.

And were that satisfactorily solved, there would remain the evidences of its prophetic character in the fulfillment in later years of the predictions it contains, the discovery of ruined cities and temples on the spots indicated as their site many centuries ago, and the numerous other corroborations which the explorations made by travelers and archaeologists have brought forth since the Book was published to the world.

Then there are the testimonies of the witnesses who saw the plates from which the record was translated, as the angel who revealed it to Joseph Smith turned over the metallic pages, and the voice of God from on high proclaimed the divine origin of the Book and the correctness of its translation. Next there are the thousands of witnesses to its truth who testify that the Lord has made known to them by the revelations of His Spirit, and to many of them by heavenly manifestations, that it contains the word of God to the ancient prophets upon this continent. And lastly there are its glorious promises to all who receive it as a divine record, which have invariably been fulfilled.

The decision of the Canadian custom house officers is funny. The repudiation of the Book by the clergy of the age is painful. The failure on the part of scientists to read it is a great mistake. But its acceptance by the meek and humble believers in Jesus of Nazareth and by the remnants left of the nations whose history it narrates is cheering, and is one of the signs of the coming of the Redeemer and the establishment on earth of the Kingdom of God, and of the day when, as "the stick of Joseph," it will be joined with "the stick of Judah" as a Divine record received for a guide to all who bow the knee to Christ.

LOS ANGELES AND SEWERAGE.

Los Angeles is wrestling with the sewerage question. At present, according to the Express of that city, the sewage is discharged in the Vernon district, where it is used with water for irrigation. But, says the Express, "the running of the water over the land without being separated from the contents of the sewers must obviously be offensive to smell and health." The discharge of the sewage at the edge of the city has been found so dangerous and obnoxious, that a project has been seriously entertained to continue their main sewer to the ocean, at a cost of three million dollars.

But now comes the Pacific Sewerage Company and offers to take the sewage from a given point of discharge and, converting it into fertilizers by separating the solids from the fluids, make its profits from the sale of the fertilizing matter and of the water for irrigation. The process is the same as that to which the Deseret News has several times called attention: The sewage is pumped from the point of discharge to pits where it is filtered through earth and hay and other materials, until the fluid is colorless and odorless. It is then used for irrigating water where needed, or run into ditches to some natural outlet. The solid compost of earth, hay, sewage matter, etc., is also without odor and is a valuable fertilizer.

This method, or something similar in the main, is in use in several English towns, and at Pullman, Atlantic City and other places in this country. It is adapted to inland towns and localities having no immediate outlet to the sea or other proper point of discharge, and seems to be the method particularly suited to this city, if a sewerage system, whether limited or general, should be adopted.

The two great obstacles in the minds of thinking people to the project now before the public here, apart from the question of cost and the ability of comparatively poor people to meet it, are the lack of water for flushing to carry away the accumulations of filth in the pipes and sewer, and the lack of a safe channel to receive the sewage and convey it away out of danger to health and offense to the olfactories. The Jordan is a stream that, at one part of the year, especially in a dry season would be an open sewer, smelling to heaven and disgusting to earth, and at another would be an overflowing nuisance, spreading upon the lands adjacent the vile outpourings of the city, to wait their scents back to the places from whence the deposits came.

To require people to decide whether they want sewers and not take into consideration the two obstacles here mentioned, is to ask them to shut the eyes of their understandings and "go it blind." We do not believe they will jump into such a palpable dilemma as the two horns of the question offer to their feet, that is, unless they are seized with the "booming" craze, and lose their heads.

The Western Union Telegraph Company will transmit free messages for the relief of yellow fever sufferers. We are authorized to make this announcement.