

same conclusion: Joseph the Prophet was sent from God. If he was not, his whole career would be an enigma, and his work the most profound of mysteries. Then we would have the problem of a man working a system of peculiar doctrines for the salvation of mankind, a religion producing the fruits of the Spirit in accordance with the Gospel of Christ; and all this through whom? Through mere human wisdom? Or, shall we say through the devil? Can any rational man for a moment think that the devil, even if he felt so inclined, could frame a moral system the effects of which upon men would be purity and holiness? The idea is so absurd that it is hardly worthy even of suggestion, and yet the Rev. Mr. Lamb has suggested that the faith of the "Mormons" is possibly due to "demoniac" influence—a theological possibility which the reverend gentleman may have from studying the theology of the Pharisees, who were perplexed at the manifestations of the power of God in Christ.

No honest man, however good an opinion he may have of the devil, can honestly believe the adversary of God capable of making men holy and virtuous. Nor is it possible for mere human wisdom to do it without the aid of God. Our only alternative is to acknowledge the hand of God, and humbly bow in obedience to the message delivered through Joseph the Prophet.

SPIRITUAL EVIDENCE.

Stronger than any of the evidences thus far considered is another kind of evidence which may be called spiritual, being the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the soul. This testimony has been promised to every one who is willing to "do the will of God."

When the Holy Spirit enlightens and operates upon the heart and mind of man, he is made to perceive intuitively, as it were, the perfect truth of the message of which we speak. Having received this testimony, a man is no longer dependent upon demonstrations for his belief. His eyes are opened; he can see for himself.

What a miserable existence we should have on this earth if everything had first to be "proved" to us before we would accept it as truth. We see that the sun shines; we hear the harmony of music; we feel or we are conscious of our existence. Such facts we do not require anybody to prove to us. So is it when our spiritual nature has been quickened and called into activity by the operations of the Holy Spirit. We "see the Kingdom of heaven;" we feel and are anxious for its blessings through our spiritual senses. This is the testimony of the Spirit in our soul, and the strongest evidence that can be produced.

When we are told through the Gospel that we "ye have strayed from Mine (God's) ordinances," and "broken His everlasting covenant," and that "every man walketh in his own way," we feel this to be true. When the word of revelation declares that men stand incriminated before the bar of God, not only for

the acts of transgression but also for a deep and inveterate habit of ungodliness in the innermost recesses of the soul, we feel this to be so. If man, when honestly searching himself, found that, after all, he was good enough, and his desire was to serve God, to keep His commandments; that his highest anxiety was to promote not his own interests but the kingdom of God, then he might feel that the message which depicts man as a sinner, outwardly and inwardly, is not from God. But through the aid of the spirit he feels the truth of the gospel when it condemns sin, and is (with the Prophet) led to acknowledge the "corruption of human nature," as such. (Pearl of Great Price, p. 92).

This is not all. Through the same spirit he is led to feel that the provisions made through the gospel are more than sufficient to restore himself and the human family at large, and even inanimate creation, to all its original beauty and glory. Is man guilty? Here is the pardon provided. Is he corrupt? Here is provision made for his edification. Is he surrounded by temptation? Here is divine strength imparted unto him. Is he surrounded by problems, many of which he cannot solve? Is he dying and fears a coming eternity? Has he lost his dearest upon earth and feels as if life itself were lost? Oh, here are remedies for all wants. Here is a gospel that opens the eternities to the eye, once dim by tears, perhaps, and for the views the soul here perceives, all earthly troubles vanish like a light cloud, and the following words of Paul become clear: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed to us." (Rom. viii: 18). Thus it is observed that the message given is precisely what we in our fallen condition wanted, and, let us say, what we might expect from a merciful Father.

To this comes also that the experience of the believer in the message harmonizes exactly with the promises or threatenings accompanying it. Joseph the Prophet frequently told what would be the experience of those who would be faithful and of those who would not be faithful to their covenants made with God. Each promise of blessings on the faithful, each warning to the unfaithful, is a prediction, the fulfillment of which adds to the strength of the testimony. This experience grows with our growth and multiplies with every step of our progress in the knowledge and love of truth.

It must be added, however, that this spiritual and experimental evidence is of value only to the believer, who already enjoys the testimony. But to him it is sufficient, were it even alone. He cannot sometimes understand that it is possible for anyone to doubt what he himself already "feels," "sees" and "perceives" to be true. He has the witness within himself and needs no other; for he knows that Joseph the Prophet was a man sent from God, just with the same degree of certainty and in the same

way that he knows Jesus is the Christ.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

The several evidences now considered are indeed important enough to establish the claims of Joseph Smith, and all taken together are overwhelming. We have seen the Prophet stand forth, a man whose desire was to be just, true and righteous, and we have heard him proclaim his message: "Thus saith the Lord." We have seen that the ancient prophecies predict that such a messenger should come just about the time of Joseph; we have proved that Joseph showed his authority from God by miracles and prophecies; that his message bears peculiar internal marks of divine origin, produces fruits of righteousness in the believers, and is accompanied by that testimony of the Spirit which God alone can give. To deny the divinity of the message or the divine authority of the messenger, in view of this overwhelming evidence, seems to be nothing short of total blindness or something much worse.

We do not claim that by each one of these evidences, nor by all together, all objections are answered, all difficulties are removed. To prove religious truth above a possibility of objection is beyond the possibilities of this earth. In religious matters, as in others, our views must necessarily be limited and hemmed by different ties.

Nor is it necessary, or even desirable, that all difficulties should be removed. Were there no difficulties any longer, were everything clear even to a mere worldly mind, religion would be no longer religion, for there could be no room for the exercise of faith. Faith is, indeed, after all, the very moving power of practical religion. It is therefore clear that difficulties must exist so that faith may be exercised.

It is so with Christianity at large and the Bible itself. Difficulties exist large enough to strengthen, by exercise, the faith of the believer, and to become stumbling blocks to those who do not want to believe. We are finite. Could we expect that God, when talking about matters of infinite interest, should always have only that to say which we could understand in every particular, thus having no difficulties? Certainly not. Concerning the Bible, an eminent theologian of our own time has said: "We can dispense with nothing, not even difficulties. Every element (the apparent discrepancy among the rest) is essential to the force of the whole."

But this important truth applies just as much to the message delivered through Joseph the Prophet. We can dispense with nothing in it, not even the apparent difficulties which follow it. Suppose that Joseph had given a code of laws or a system of theology in which everything was plainly demonstrated like a handbook in geometry, having every idea defined, every step proved. Who would have believed such a work to have emanated from the Spirit of God? Would it not have carried with it a