

"And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures." And there is the spiritual side to the Word of Wisdom. And these great treasures of knowledge will help us in this world and will follow us into the world to come and are of an eternal nature. We also have the promise that the destroying angel shall pass us by and not slay us. That does not mean, that no one among the Saints shall die and pass away. We are under the great edict of life, that is, sooner or later, we must lay down our bodies and pass into the spirit world, and the change will come to all of us; but the promise is made, nevertheless, and the Lord will have respect for his people. He will bless them and he will preserve them and carry them along until they shall have fulfilled the measure of their creation and accomplished their work, if they will observe to keep and do these sayings and render obedience to his law.

MARRIAGE AN ETERNAL INVESTMENT.

What think you, brethren and sisters, of marriage as an investment? One of the most important steps that a man or woman can take in the world. There are two kinds of marriage. One is rather a poor investment, that is, it is not as good as the other. There is marriage for time; there is marriage for time and all eternity. Here is the choice of two investments to every young man and to every young woman in the Church. Which will you have? That which is of eternal value or the thing that is of mere temporal ease? So I repeat, always distinguish between what is of eternal value and what is of a mere temporal ease."

The Lord bless us and help us to make the proper choice and to do the right thing; always to give ear to the voice of counsel, and walk in the way of life, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER CHARLES H. HART

(Of the First Council of Seventy)

The strong testimonies given by the brethren during this conference, of the great vision, and developments connected therewith, and the unexpressed testimonies represented by those in attendance here,—are partly due to the gracious wisdom and foresight of our heavenly Father in carefully providing direct evidences sufficient to satisfy reasonable minds of the truths of these important events. There is no exact standard of the amount of evidence which should be sufficient to convince each reasonable mind.

HOW EVIDENCE IS MEASURED.

You cannot measure evidence or testimony by the ounce or by the pound, nor even by the number of witnesses, although the number may be of importance. I am persuaded that the Lord does not place a premium upon undue credulity. While he leaves a wise margin for faith, hope and confiding belief, he also provides proper evidence. We are told in the scriptures that, "The simple believeth every word, but the prudent man looketh well to his going." This is a good pro-

verb for the brethren to bear in mind when some oily-tongued agent comes to them with a beautifully lithographed certificate of stock in some "wild-cat" corporation, concerning which Brother Clawson has just told us. If they are in the frame of mind to believe every word and are not like the prudent man who "looketh well to his going," they will have time afterwards to repent of their over-confidence.

In the coming forth of "Mormonism," the Lord provided ample testimony,—a goodly number of witnesses. As I said before, the number does not count for everything, because there is a more delicate test for reaching the truth than in the mere weight of numbers, although some importance is properly placed upon the number of witnesses. It was foreordained that there should be three special witnesses, besides Joseph, to the coming of the Book of Mormon. In the Constitution of the United States, two witnesses are necessary to convict for treason, and there must be two witnesses to the same overt act. Under the law of Moses, two or three witnesses were required to establish guilt punishable by death. (17 Deut. 6.) This rule was later perverted by the Jews, as the Talmud informs us that a witness though truthful might be punished if he were unfortunate enough not to have another witness to corroborate his story.

I think the American frame of mind is somewhat illustrated in an event which occurred some years ago, wherein one of the large dailies of New York represented that it had performed a certain experiment in order to prove the incompetency of the editors of the magazines of the day, and asserted that the paper had sent out copies of good stories from Kipling, without disclosing the authorship, and that those stories had been rejected by magazines of supposed good judgment and literary skill. The statement went unchallenged for some time, until Mr. Edward Bok, editor of the *Ladies' Home Journal*, came forward and said: "We would like proof of that; we would like to be shown."

In connection with the coming forth of "Mormonism," for a long while the burden rested upon the testimony of Joseph alone, and it was a tremendous weight that he carried, and how relieved he felt when there were others who were to share the responsibility with him! Yet I take it that his uncorroborated statements, so far as having other witnesses to support him, would carry conviction to the earnest seeker of truth. What are jurors instructed to do when they are considering the weight to be attached to testimony which will result, perhaps, in the conviction for a high crime or misdemeanor? They are charged that they may consider the demeanor of the witness, his means of information, the opportunities which he has had for knowing the truth of which he testifies; the interest, if any, which he has in the case, his intelligence, or lack of intelligence; and from all the circumstances appearing upon the trial, determine what credence should be given to his testimony, and to give weight accordingly; that in case of a conflict in evidence they may believe one witness as against many, and that they are to search for the truth, believing that which carries conviction to them.

THE TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH SMITH THE PROPHET.

We have before us the printed record. We do not have the advantage of hearing the oral word. Perhaps only a few present ever heard the oral testimony of those concerned. But we can read the printed word; and that is the means which the great courts of our land have, because our supreme courts are courts of appellate jurisdiction, and most of the cases considered by them come to them by appeal, and they do not see nor hear the witnesses but they read the printed record, and determine from that, the weight that should be attached to the testimony. You may read the testimony of Joseph, and the testimony of Oliver, and with no other testimony supporting it, it will carry conviction to your soul.

To illustrate what I mean, my brethren and sisters, may I read a few words from the testimony of Joseph. He is comparing his responsibility and knowledge with that of Paul of old, and he goes on to say:

So it was with me, I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two personages, and they did in reality speak to me, and though I was hated and persecuted for saying I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision, and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it; neither dared I do it, at least, I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation. (Pearl of Great Price.)

There is printed here as a note to the Pearl of Great Price, a letter from Oliver Cowdery, that rings with that same spirit of sincerity. It should carry conviction to the heart, it seems to me, of all who read it in sincerity, and with a desire to know the truth.

IMPROBABILITY OF SUPERNATURAL EVENTS.

Some will say: "What of the improbability of these supernatural events which were testified to by Joseph, and particularly by the three witnesses?" Well, the fact that an occurrence is improbable does not interfere with its being established. In fact, it is proverbial that "the unexpected happens." It is one of the established rules of evidence that the improbable may be established where the testimony is sufficient. The term improbable simply means what appears unreasonable to the individual to whom the testimony is given, in the light of his knowledge and experience. As an illustration, a scriptural illustration of what I mean by establishing the improbable,—when Jacob was informed that Joseph was alive and was a ruler in Egypt, we are told in the scriptures that "Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not;" but, of course, sufficient testimony was brought to prove what seemed to Jacob at first to be an improbability. So, if some of these matters seem to be improbable, it does not, under the rules of evidence, prevent the establishment of them. Besides, the

improbable is based on man's experience, but the things which are impossible with man are possible with God.

I think Brother Joseph Fielding Smith reached the correct conclusion that there is no middle ground between accepting Joseph as a sincere prophet of the Lord, or a conscious deceiver: for you cannot conceive of Joseph being deceived in the experiences of which he testifies; that he could be baptized under the direction of a heavenly being, have other heavenly personages appear to him, laying their hands upon his head and conferring the holy Priesthood upon him, and he be deceived in all that,—deceived in a messenger appearing and showing the records and the precious relics contained in the stone box to which he was directed. It is out of the question to believe that he could be deceived, or that the three witnesses or the eight witnesses could be, in what they testify to. I grant that one man, or perhaps several, may sometimes be deceived in the sense of sight. You brethren and sisters perhaps have seen the phenomenon of the mirage of the desert. You have looked across a body of water and seen horses and cows that looked like poplar trees, or a train coming at a distance, which in the particular refraction of the light appeared many times as tall as it really was. But to suppose that these men could be deceived in what they said would be to assume the improbable, I was going to say the impossible, that a large group of men would be deceived, not only in the sense of sight, but in the sense of hearing, and in the physical sense of touch as well; because all these senses were appealed to.

FUTILITY OF ACCOUNTING FOR "MORMONISM" ON THE GROUND OF WILFUL IMPOSTURE.

Then if you take the other alternative and try to account for "Mormonism" on the ground of wilful imposture, there are many difficulties that you encounter. Did you ever consider just what would be involved in looking at the case from that viewpoint? A great jurist, says:

Where several persons conspire to commit perjury, there must be concert, they must first be persons so depraved that they are willing to join in the commission of high crime and so lost to all sense of shame as to be willing to confess their infamy one to another; they must likewise agree not only upon the main body of their story, but upon its details and upon the order in which they occurred, and if, while they are undergoing the ordeal of cross-examination, defects in their story are exposed, they will not dare to change it, for if they do, they will run the risk of being contradicted by their associates, and if they adhere to it, they know they will incur the hazard of detection together with all of its dangerous consequences.

And in connection with the number of witnesses testifying, if the Prophet Joseph had been an impostor, he would have appreciated the danger of having more people in league with him. Increasing the number of witnesses would tend to increase the probability of his being exposed.

Another authority on evidence, the author of a great text book, reminds us of this:

Increasing the number of false witnesses increases the probability of detection in a very high proportion: for it multiplies the number of points upon which their statements may be compared with each other and also the number of points where their testimony comes in contact with the truth, and therefore multiplies the danger of inconsistency and variance in the same proportion.

Again, the burden of proof is on the party who alleges fraud. It is never presumed, because fraud is a crime. Men are presumed to do right. One of the strongest and most far reaching presumptions of evidence is the presumption of innocence,—the presumption of right acting. It is easier for a person to tell the truth than to tell a falsehood, because in telling the truth it is an act of memory, simply recalling the actual experience; while falsehood involves invention, skill in invention, to make the story appear plausible.

Who could read Joseph's utterances throughout his life, who could read, for instance, that little diary, yet unprinted so far as I know, written in his own handwriting, at the time he took his mission to Canada, disclosing the prayerful nature of his heart day by day, and say that such a person could possibly be a deceiver? Or who could imagine one offering the highest test of fidelity that mortal man can give, going cheerfully and knowingly to his death, as a Socrates or as a Christ, and so offering his life for his testimony, sealing his testimony with his life's precious blood, and not be sincere? Every act, every utterance of the Prophet, is in accordance with this rightful position as the great prophet of latter days, and every word of it is directly inconsistent with any assumption that he was not sincere, that he was not what he professed to be.

For some years it was a matter of regret, serious regret upon my part as a boy, to think that some of the witnesses were weak enough to side-step from the straight and narrow path. But I think that even in that, there was a providence of the Lord in strengthening this case, because it is out of all question, in considering the attitude of Joseph toward those witnesses, both the three and the eight, and in considering their attitude, to suppose that any such a thing as a conspiracy was involved. The case in support of the restoration of the gospel is very greatly strengthened by the witnesses, being disciplined and yet remaining true to their testimonies.

May the Lord bless us and help us to realize in every deed, day by day, not only while we are in this presence or in the congregations of the Saints, but every day, and all the time, that these great facts are indeed truths, and that a great responsibility rests upon each one of us to act in accordance with these convictions, and in accordance with the responsibility placed upon us to bear this testimony to the world. May the Lord bless us, and help us to perform that high mission to the world, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.