

ELDER CHARLES H. HART

Of the First Council of Seventy and President of the Canadian Mission

I am very grateful, my brethren and sisters, for all of the blessings of this conference and for all the blessings unto me personally and unto the missionaries over whom I have the honor of presiding.

In this centennial year, the world may well ask, as never before, is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints of divine origin?

The purpose of all intellectual research should be to discover the truth. Truth is defined by revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith as "knowledge of things as they are, and as they were and as they are to come." And that "the spirit of truth is of God."

Strictly speaking, truth has no degrees. A thing is either true or not true. To ascertain the truth we use evidence. While the word proof is sometimes loosely used as a synonym for evidence, yet more correctly it indicates the amount and quality of evidence which brings conviction to the mind. When evidence carries assent or conviction to the mind, the matter is said to be proved. However the matter may be in theory, the word proof is constantly used where the state of mind which is brought about by the evidence does not amount to that absolute certainty which is involved in a mathematical demonstration; it does not produce absolute or necessary truth as to which a supposition to the contrary is not and cannot be true. In investigations of every kind it is important that a correct estimate be made of the kind and degree of assurance of which the subject admits. Moral certainty, not mathematical demonstration, is the highest degree of assurance of which some truths admit. Even in the realm of the administration of the criminal law, where proof beyond a reasonable doubt is necessary to convict, mathematical certainty is not required. An abiding conviction to a moral certainty is sufficient.

In the noted controversy during the middle of the last century, in which Lord Brougham, a distinguished Scotchman, who was once Lord Chancellor of Great Britain, answered another distinguished Scotchman, Mr. David Hume, somewhat a skeptic in his views, who had claimed that proof of a miracle was impossible, Lord Brougham, although he thought his opponent's arguments went to the very denial of the possibility of the proof of any revelation, and realizing the importance of combating such an idea, yet did not pretend to use more than moral evidence; did not pretend to use mathematical demonstration.

Lord Brougham said:

"The degree of excellence and of strength to which testimony may rise seems almost indefinite. There is hardly any cogency which it is not capable of by possible supposition of attaining. The endless multiplication of witnesses, the unbounded variety of their habits of thinking, their prejudices, their interests, afford the means of conceiving the force of their testimony augmented *ad infinitum*, because these circumstances afford the means of diminishing indefinitely the chances of their all being mistaken, all misled, or all combining to deceive us."

Along the same line Lord Brougham in his argument with the skeptic Hume further said :

"Let any man try to calculate the chances of a thousand persons who come from different quarters, and never saw each other before, and who all vary in their habits, stations, opinions, interests, being mistaken or combining to deceive us, when they give the same account of an event as having happened before their eyes, these chances are many hundreds of thousands to one. And yet we can conceive of them multiplied indefinitely; for one hundred thousand such witnesses may all in like manner bear the same testimony; and they may all tell us their story within twenty-four hours after the transaction and in the next parish."

In law, evidence is classified as direct and circumstantial, the latter meaning "the evidence afforded not by direct testimony of an eye witness to the fact to be proved, but by the bearing upon that of other and subsidiary facts which are relied upon as inconsistent with any result other than the truth of the principal fact."

I am not disposed to place in contrast direct and circumstantial evidence since they are not naturally opposed. Both kinds have a legitimate place in the proof of disputed facts. It should be noted that while there is a popular impression that circumstantial evidence is unreliable or unsatisfactory, yet many jurists are strong in its praise and only a few overstate its probative force. Both kinds of testimony support the divine inauguration of Mormonism.

Lord Chief Baron MacDonald, a jurist of England, said of circumstantial evidence :

"It is almost impossible for a variety of witnesses speaking to a variety of circumstances, so to concert a story as to impose upon a jury by a fabrication of that sort, so that where it is cogent, strong and powerful, where the witnesses do not contradict themselves, it may be evidence more satisfactory than even direct evidence, and there are more instances than one where that has been the case."

The same judge said :

"Where the proof arises from the irresistible force of a number of circumstances, which we cannot conceive to be fraudulently brought together to bear on one point, that is less fallible than under some circumstances direct testimony may be."

Sir Alfred Wills in the preface to the sixth edition of the book of his father William Wills on Circumstantial Evidence, refers to several cases in which a single penstroke no longer than an eighth of an inch was the critical test upon which important cases turned (such as *Cresswell vs. Jackson* and *Howe vs. Burckhardt*, and other cases). A legal authority says that circumstantial evidence "although not invariably so, is frequently superior in proving power to the average strength of direct evidence, and that under safeguards and qualifications which have been stated, it affords a secure ground for the most important judgments in cases where direct evidence is not to be obtained."

The principles and the nature of the mental processes involved are the same in forensic inquiry as in the ascertainment of truth in

any other department of human activity, and are made use of consciously or unconsciously by everyone in the daily course of life, religious inquiries included.

I have thus spoken particularly of the value of circumstantial evidence, not because I would minimize in the least the importance of the direct evidence in support of the divinity of the restored Gospel, but because I appreciate the great importance of circumstantial evidence in the consideration of the multitude of incidents making up the case of the divinity of the restored Gospel. Many thousands of these items are to be found in the six volumes of Church history mentioned in this conference.

The Prophet Joseph Smith was and always will be the most important of the direct witnesses to the divine origin of the restored Gospel and priesthood. In comparing his experience with the experience of Saul of Tarsus, who saw the light and heard the voice, Joseph Smith said:

"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 that 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 my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually 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."

There are many other witnesses giving direct testimony as to one or another of the important items comprised in the coming forth of Mormonism. For instance, the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon each gave direct testimony to the facts declared by them. The Eight Witnesses speak of facts known to them by the physical senses of sight and feeling, and the muscular sense of weight. Joseph's parents and other members of the family gave direct testimony to other items. During the past century there have been hundreds of other witnesses giving direct testimony to facts which fit into and interlock with the case of circumstantial evidence in support of the divine restoration of the Gospel. Some of the most important of these testimonies were given under conditions making them more weighty than if given under the sanction of an oath. Some gave declarations admissible as evidence under rules of common law and the decisions of our state and federal courts, Utah included, as dying declarations made in consciousness of early approaching death, although not made in court nor under the sanction of an oath.

Shakespeare must have well understood this rule of the English common law, for in the play of King John, his character, Melun, when mortally wounded and in fear of early dissolution, in announcing the intended treachery of King Lewis and upon finding himself disbelieved, is made to exclaim:

"Have I not hideous death within my view,
 Retaining but a quantity of life
 Which bleeds away even as a form of wax
 Resolveth from his figure 'gainst the fire?
 What in the world should make me now deceive
 Since I must lose the use of all deceit?
 Why should I then be false since it is true
 That I must die here, and live hence by truth?"

For more than forty years I have had the opportunity of considering many of the circumstances and incidents making up the great case of so-called Mormonism, in the light of the rules and principles laid down by the great jurists for the discovery of the truth and for the detection of error. Joseph and Hyrum went knowingly like lambs to the slaughter, sealing their testimony with their precious blood. Hundreds of their followers willingly gave their lives in the same cause.

One non-Mormon writer asks:

"Is it not beyond all reason that a lad, born of poor parents, devoid of any save the commonest education, too poor to buy books, should have accomplished what he did in less than forty years unless there was some great reason for it?"

It required more than worldly wisdom to produce such books as the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price, and to formulate a system of Church government which has been praised by non-members as having no superior on earth.

From my consideration of the testimony and the circumstances that have come to me in support of this great cause which is now before the world of the divinity of the restored Gospel, I can truly say that I have an abiding conviction to a moral certainty of the truth of the claims of Mormonism, of the truth of its divinity.

We have had many experiences in the Canadian mission indicating the blessings of the Lord, and what a great thing it is to know that God lives, and be able to appeal to him and to know that he answers our prayers. I found on my last trip a newly made convert whose right arm was withered. Her husband had fought in five of the fiercest battles of the great war and had evidently become shell-shocked and had wandered off. She was losing control of her children as well. Her prayer in connection with her baptism was that she might have the use of her right hand, that she might be able to support her children, that her husband might be restored to her and that she might regain control of her children. When I saw her a short time after her baptism she told me that when she went into the waters of baptism she felt that withered hand was being revived. When she came out of the water she was able to wring out her wet clothes with the hand that had been useless for a long time. There was only the little finger that had not fully straightened but was much improved and she expected to obtain the full use of the same. She had regained control of her children and expected to find her husband.

I rejoice in the many blessings of the Lord to us, and aside from any test such as might be applied to Mormonism by the jurist, it is my testimony in the light of the spirit of truth, the Spirit of the Lord, that

God lives, that Jesus is indeed the Christ, and that this is the restored Gospel, and that the power of the living God to Joseph Smith, the prophet, has been conferred upon his successors and now is upon President Grant and his associates. May God help us to realize these truths and to act in accordance with the great case that has been partly presented in this conference and which abides in the hearts of the people, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER RICHARD R. LYMAN

THE RESULT OF A BOY'S APPEAL.

Who can imagine an event more romantic than for a boy hardly more than fourteen to go upon his knees and appeal successfully for the Creator of the universe to give him light and guidance? Strange as this may seem to many it was nevertheless the experience that came to Joseph Smith the founder of the Mormon Church.

Of this experience he made a written record—that it was revealed to him at the age of fourteen that God had a great work for him to do; that his name "should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds and tongues." (Pearl of Great Price, P. 51, Verse 33.) How, may I ask, without some sort of assistance, could a boy of fourteen have such an experience with such marvelous results?

Contrast that lone boy one hundred years ago with the multitudes that have here assembled, their hearts filled with thanksgiving and gratitude, celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the organization of the Church. One boy then appealing; hundreds of thousands now listening in.

"Behold, saith the Lord, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder." (Isaiah 29:14.)

Where can you find, or has there ever been, a work more marvelous, more wonderful?

THE VIEWS OF AN ECONOMIST

My purpose is to draw your attention to the words and views of Dr. Thomas Nixon Carver of Harvard, one of the greatest authorities on economics. In an article for "The Westerner" (April, 1930) he has expressed his views of the work and accomplishments of the Church, whose history began with the prayer of a boy. I urge that copies of this article be placed in the hands of our seminary students and missionaries. The demand for it has been such that "The Westerner" has provided an ample supply of reprints.

Those who have difficulty in seeing things with the eye of faith will, I think, have their faith stimulated and supported by the scientific and logical presentation which Dr. Carver gives:

FACTORS IN STATESMANSHIP.

"Statesmanship," Dr. Carver says, "is the art of nation-building. One can