

THE WORD OF WISDOM

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT BRIGHAM YOUNG, DELIVERED IN THE TABERNACLE,
GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, APRIL 7, 1867

Reported by David W. Evans

I will take the liberty of suggesting to my brethren who address the congregation that our sermons should be short, and if they are not filled with life and spirit let them be shorter, for we have not time at this Conference to let all the Elders who speak preach a long sermon, but we have time to say a few words in bearing testimony, to give a few words of counsel to encourage the Saints, to strengthen the weak, to endeavor to confirm those who are wavering, and so forward the Kingdom of God. I have a few words to say to the Bishops and others who are leading men in the House of Israel, including your humble servant now addressing you. There are certain rights and privileges belonging to the Elders in Israel, and there are certain things that it is not their privilege to indulge in. You go through the wards in the city, and then through the wards in the country, and ask the Bishops—"Do you keep the Word of Wisdom?" The reply will be "Yes; no, not exactly." "Do you drink tea?" "No." "Coffee?" "No." "Do you drink whiskey?" "No." "Well, then, why do you not observe the Word of Wisdom?" "Well, this tobacco, I cannot give it up." And in this he sets an example to every man, and to every boy over ten years of age, in his ward, to nibble at and chew tobacco. You go to another ward, and

perhaps the Bishop does not chew tobacco, nor drink tea nor coffee, but once in a while he takes a little spirits, and keeps whiskey in his house, in which he will occasionally indulge. Go to another ward, and perhaps the Bishop does not drink whiskey nor chew tobacco, but he "cannot give up his tea and coffee." And so it goes through the whole church. Not that every Bishop indulges in one or more of these habits, but most of them do. I recollect being at a trial not long since where quite a number of Bishops had been called in as witnesses, but I could not learn that there was one who did not drink whiskey, and I think that most of them drank tea and coffee. I think that we have some Bishops in this city who do not chew tobacco, nor drink liquor nor tea nor coffee to excess.

The Word of Wisdom is one thing, and ignorance, superstition, or bigotry is another. I wish people to come to an understanding with regard to the Word of Wisdom. For illustration, I will refer to a certain brother who was in the church once, and President of the Elder's Quorum in Nauvoo. While living at that place there was a great deal of sickness among the people, and he was sometimes called in to lay hands on the sick, but if he had the least doubt about their drinking tea, if he even saw a teapot, he would refuse.