

General Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 89

The text presents dietary laws for the modern Church, a divine *caveat emptor*, and blessings associated with their observation.

Theology

The theological message of this section is the ecclesia needs to be wary of men, who seek to profit from them at their financial and temporal expense. Instead, the ecclesia should listen to the Lord, who will bless them with good health and the mysteries of heaven if they are obedient.

This message is largely lost in discussion of the Word of Wisdom, as we tend to focus on the historical interpretation and application of the restrictions of v. 5-9. Instead of it being seen as a key to the mysteries of the kingdom, it is seen as a set of restrictions on worldly behavior.

Scriptural History of Dietary Laws

Throughout the Scriptures, the Lord has always handed down dietary laws in one form or another for the benefit of His people. Initially, Adam and Eve were vegetarians both before (cf. Gen. 1:29) and after the Fall (cf. Gen. 3:18-19, 23). The consumption of animal flesh was permitted after the Flood (cf. Gen. 9:1-3), however the consumption of blood was prohibited (cf. Gen. 9:4). With the Law of Moses, food became part of ritual purity (cf. Lev. 11). These restrictions were lifted in the Christian era with the fulfilment of the Law of Moses (cf. Acts 10). The Lord gives new restrictions and admonitions to the latter-day ecclesia for their own benefit.

Historical Context of the Revelation

Why did Colonial Americans drink tea, coffee, and fermented drinks in the first place? Obviously, there were neurological effects associated with caffeine and alcohol. Today, clean water is taken for granted owing to the technologies we enjoy. However, in pre-Industrial Revolution times, clean drinking water was not taken for granted (Andrew Barr, 2003, *Drink: A Social History of America*, pages 31-34). There was no understanding of water-borne pathogens until the 1870's with the

discoveries of Robert Koch and Joseph Lister. Cholera and typhoid dysentery, as well as other waterborne pathogens, were major killers, and remained so until the early 1900's when municipal water treatment became commonplace.

Boiling the water to make tea, coffee and beer killed waterborne pathogens, and alcohol in fermented drinks kills them as well. The people knew full well what made them sick and what didn't, and they acted accordingly, even though they did not understand the science behind the practice. This explains why Johnny Appleseed was a popular folk hero, as apple cider ferments easily and the climate and environs of Colonial America were well suited to growing apples (Michael Pollan, 2002, Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World, chapter 1).

Fulfilled Predictions

This section contains 8 predictions which have all been fulfilled in modern times:

1. Conspiring men in the last days (v. 4). The legal activity of the 1990's against the Tobacco industries has exposed deliberate attempts to target and addict persons to their products. The marketing of harmful products containing addictive substances shows people are willing to harm others for profit.
2. Strong drink is not good (v. 5). Modern medicine has amply shown the deleterious effects of alcohol, which is a carcinogenic neurotoxin. The [social consequences of ethanol consumption](#) are also frequently exhibited in the high incidence of alcohol-related crimes, specifically car accidents and domestic violence.
3. Strong drinks are for washing (v. 7). Alcohol is antiseptic.
4. Tobacco is bad for you (v. 8). Tobacco use causes a host of health problems, particularly cancer.
5. Hot drinks are bad (v. 9). Coffee and tea have been shown to contain caffeine and other chemicals which are addictive and harmful to the health.

6. Eat little meat, or none at all if circumstances permit (v. 12-13). Contemporary medicine encourages people to cut back on meat consumption, particular red meats, because of saturated fats. Meat processing, designed to maximize profit, resulting in contamination, illness and fatalities.

7. Grain, fruit and vegetables are to be used (v. 14). Contemporary dietary science encourages more grains and vegetables in the diet.

8. Do these things and you will be sound in body and mind (v. 18-20). Studies show lifestyle and dietary habits significantly impact longevity and quality of life.

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 89

1 A word of wisdom, for the benefit of the council of high priests, assembled in Kirtland, and the church, and also the saints in Zion-- 2 To be sent greeting; not by commandment or constraint, but by revelation and the word of wisdom, showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days-- 3 Given for a principle with promise, adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints.

v1-3 An introduction by Smith. Verse 1 addresses first the immediate audience of High Priests, but then generally applies the text to all of the saints. Verse 2 states it is not sent by way of commandment, but by way of admonition for the temporal well-being of the saints. Verse 3 states the requirements are adapted to even the weakest of those who are or would be called saints, probably making reference to it's presentation as admonition rather than commandment in v. 2.

In the 1835 edition of the Doctrine & Covenants the text of these verses was separate from the text of v. 4-21, as an introduction to the revelation, appearing in italics. The text of these verses was directly incorporated into the text of the revelation in the 1876 edition.

SECTION LXXX.

A word of wisdom for the benefit of the council of high priests, assembled in Kirtland, and church; and also, the saints in Zion: to be sent greeting; not by commandment, or constraint: but by revelation and the word of wisdom: showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days. Given for a principle with promise, adapted to the capacity of the weak, and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints.

1 Behold, verily thus saith the Lord unto you, in consequence of evils and designs which do, and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation, that inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling yourselves together, to offer up your sacraments before him. And behold, this should be wine, yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine, e

v4-21 Where v. 1-3 is an opening statement by Smith, v. 4-21 is a quotation of the Lord.

4 Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation-- 5 That inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacraments before him. 6 And, behold, this should be wine, yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make. 7 And, again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies. 8 And again, tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill. 9 And again, hot drinks are not for the body or belly.

v4-9 Prohibitions in consequence of evil designs. Especially note these warnings are presented as reactionary to conspiring people with evil designs.

The three most heavily consumed drugs by the population of the United States are all addressed here: [caffeine](#), [nicotine](#), [ethanol](#). All three are addictive, and can therefore be a means of financial gain by causing consumers to become physically dependent on the product.

Verse 4 presents the Word of Wisdom as the Lord's *caveat emptor*. One of the pitfalls of capitalism is unscrupulous people selling flawed or harmful products. The Lord is warning us evil men will try to profit at our expense, and we should be on guard against that.

This principle clearly applies to much more than the specific warnings and prohibitions contained within this text. There are many ways evil conspiring men seek to defraud us, and we need to be on guard against all of them. If the Lord gave us a list today, it would probably be much longer and include things we would be as loathe to give up as the contemporary ecclesia was.

v5-6 Wine or "strong drink", i.e., liquors, are prohibited. Only when partaking of the sacrament should wine be consumed, and this wine should be of our own making and "pure". The requirement that it be "pure" presumably means it was new wine, not yet fermented, as fermented wines are prohibited in v. 5.

v7 Strong drinks are not be consumed, but are for external use,

cp. Luke 10:34.

v8 Tobacco use is prohibited, but is endorsed as a medicinal plant. Such endorsements of plants for medicinal purposes is not uncommon to the LDS canon, cf. Alma 46:40, D&C 42:43. Prior to the advent of modern medicine tobacco was used as a deworming agent in sheep and cattle.

v9 Hot drinks are prohibited. As observed by the LDS Church today these "hot drinks" are referring to coffee products and tea proper.

There is always ongoing debate amongst members over whether this is due to caffeine content, other chemicals or the effect of drinking scalding hot liquids. The most conservative approach would be to voluntarily avoid all caffeinated beverages as well as all high-temperature beverages regardless of content. Caffeinated colas are also known to cause kidney stones.

10 And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man-- 11 Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving. 12 Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly; 13 And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine. 14 All grain is ordained for the use of man and of beasts, to be the staff of life, not only for man but for the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, and all wild animals that run or creep on the earth; 15 And these hath God made for the use of man only in times of famine and excess of hunger. 16 All grain is good for the food of man; as also the fruit of the vine; that which yieldeth fruit, whether in the ground or above the ground-- 17 Nevertheless, wheat for man, and corn for the ox, and oats for the horse, and rye for the fowls and for swine, and for all beasts of the field, and barley for all useful animals, and for mild drinks, as also other grain.

v10-17 The Lord includes a list of good things to eat to compliment the list of things to be avoided.

v10-11 Wholesome fruits and vegetables are endorsed as food, to be used with prudence.

v12-13 Animal flesh is approved for use as food, but the Lord

encourages us to use it sparingly, or better yet, not at all. However, it is not strictly forbidden as a principle of doctrine or a commandment, cp. D&C 49:18-21. In this verse avoiding meat is encouraged but strict vegetarianism is not forwarded.

In the Garden of Eden, vegetarianism is forwarded (cf. Gen 1:29), mankind is not generally permitted to eat the flesh of animals until after the Deluge (cf. Gen. 9:1-4), and in the Millennium it appears that vegetarianism will again be the order of the day (cf. Isa. 11:7).

v14 Grains are endorsed as the staff of life, or primary source of nourishment, for all living animals including people.

v15 This verse is a parenthetical statement where the "these" in the first line is referring to the "beasts...fowls...and all wild animals...on the earth" of v. 14. Again, the theme of only eating the flesh of animals in extreme conditions is presented, as was the case in v. 13.

v16-17 All types of vegetable matter including grains, fruits from vines or tubers are endorsed for human consumption (v. 16). However, under the ideal circumstances certain grains are best suited for certain consumers, with wheat being the best suited for mankind (v. 17).

Given the significant changes to [modern wheat](#) verses Colonial era wheat, one has to wonder if the Lord's would still endorse what we call wheat today.

Verse 17 also endorses barley and other grains for "mild drinks". Obviously, "mild" necessarily means not "strong" per v. 7 and not "hot" per v. 9. This definition likely included pre-industrial revolution beer, which contained relatively little or no alcohol (e.g., small beer). Post-industrial revolution beer, the product we are familiar with today, is a significantly different product with respect to both quantity and quality ([cit.](#), [cit.](#), [cit.](#), [cit.](#), [cit.](#), [cit.](#)).

18 And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones; 19 And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures; 20 And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint. 21 And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel,

and not slay them. Amen.

v18-21 Spiritual and physical blessings associated with this law. Those who observe these words of wisdom will enjoy blessings of physical health and vigor (v. 18). They will also enjoy blessings of knowledge and wisdom (v. 19, cp. D&C 63:23, 76:7-10).

v20 This verse is typically interpreted to be referring to physical stamina. However, I would interpret this verse spiritually following the lines of Isa. 40:28-31. Especially note that this verse is a quote of the last two lines of the KJV Isa. 40:31. One could obviously develop a physical interpretation to this verse using passages such as Deut. 9:9, Deut. 34:7, 1 Kings. 18:46, but given its connection to Isaiah and the setting of that quote, the primary interpretation must be a figurative spiritual one.

v21 This verse states that an additional blessing is that they will be spared the destroying angel, i.e. they will obtain divine protection, and/or be spared the wrath of God. As indicated by the footnote to Exod. 12, the theme of the verse is based upon the original Passover.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 89

Three sets of excerpts follow. The first set contains two recountings of the origin of the revelation: one by Brigham Young and the other by David Whitmer. It should be noted Whitmer had left the church in 1837 and was rather hostile towards the Church and Smith at the time the quote was published.

The second is a set of texts discussing what "hot drinks" consist of.

The final set of excerpts are intended to show the attitude of the leaders of the Church towards the Word of Wisdom. The quotations are placed in chronological order so the evolving attitude can be easily discerned. Overall, it is plain people were expected to observe the word of wisdom, with particular emphasis on Church leaders. But, it is also plain that the early interpretation was not one that required complete abstinence but one that prohibited persistent or conspicuous consumption.

This is hardly surprising as the Word of Wisdom permitted the use of wine with the sacrament. Early in Church history, the sacrament was commonly a meal of bread and wine, not the symbolic abbreviated gesture we participate in today. As such, partaking of the sacrament then included the consumption of a considerable amount of wine. Granted the wine was supposed to be "pure" and "new", but given the lack of preservatives and refrigeration even freshly pressed grape begins to ferment noticeably within hours given the right conditions.

In any case, it is plain the leaders of the Church vehemently and persistently pressed the members to abandon the things prohibited in the Word of Wisdom from its revelation and it wasn't until the late 1860's that observance became general. It wasn't until May of 1870 that people using chewing tobacco were prohibited from attending conference and it was in 1886 that strict observance was required for Temple recommends.

For a thorough review of the history behind the Word of Wisdom, see Paul H. Peterson's [An Historical Analysis of the Word of Wisdom](#).

The text was first published in December 1833 or January 1834 as a broadsheet in advance distribution of printing in the 1835 Kirtland edition Doctrine and Covenants. It was published in the Millennial Star, volume 1, number 9, pages 226-227, dated

January, 1841. It was published in Times and Seasons, volume 5, number 23, page 736, dated December 15, 1844.

Origin of the Revelation

When the school of the prophets was inaugurated one of the first revelations given by the Lord to His servant Joseph was the Word of Wisdom. The members of that school were but a few at first, and the prophet commenced to teach them in doctrine to prepare them to go out into the world to preach the gospel unto all people, and gather the elect from the four quarters of the earth, as the prophets anciently have spoken. While this instruction prepared the Elders to administer in word and doctrine, it did not supply the teachings necessary to govern their private or temporal lives; it did not say whether they should be merchants, farmers, mechanics, or money changers. The prophet began to instruct them how to live that they might be the better prepared to perform the great work they were called to accomplish. I think I am as well acquainted with the circumstances which led to the giving of the Word of Wisdom as any man in the Church, although I was not present at the time to witness them. The first school of the prophets was held in a small room situated over the Prophet Joseph's kitchen, in a house which belonged to Bishop Whitney, and which was attached to his store, which store probably might be about fifteen feet square. In the rear of this building was a kitchen, probably ten by fourteen feet, containing rooms and pantries. Over this kitchen was situated the room in which the Prophet received revelations and in which he instructed his brethren. The brethren came to that place for hundreds of miles to attend school in a little room probably no larger than eleven by fourteen. When they assembled together in this room after breakfast, the first they did was to light their pipes, and, while smoking, talk about the great things of the kingdom and spit all over the room, and as soon as the pipe was out of their mouths a large chew of tobacco would then be taken. Often when the Prophet entered the room to give the school instructions he would find himself in a cloud of tobacco smoke. This, and the complaints of his wife at having to clean so filthy a floor, made the Prophet think upon the matter, and he inquired of the Lord relating to the conduct of the Elders in using tobacco, and the revelation known as the Word of Wisdom was the result of his inquiry. You know what it is, and can read it at your leisure. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 12, page 158,

February 8, 1868)

"...quite a little party of the brethren and sisters being assembled in Smith's house. Some of the men were excessive chewers of the filthy weed, and their disgusting slobbering and spitting caused Mrs. Smith to make the ironical remark that 'It would be a good thing if a revelation could be had declaring the use of tobacco a sin, and commanding its suppression.' The matter was taken up and joked about, one of the brethren suggesting that the revelation should also provide for a total abstinence from tea and coffee drinking, intending this as a counter 'dig' at the sisters. Sure enough the subject was afterward taken up in dead earnest, and the 'Word of Wisdom' was the result." (David Whitmer, The Des Moines Daily News, Saturday, October 16, 1886)

Interpretation of the Revelation

I understand that some of the people are excusing themselves, in using tea and coffee, because the Lord only said "hot drinks" in the revelation of the Word of Wisdom. Tea and coffee are what the Lord meant when he said "hot drinks." (A second-hand quotation of Joseph Smith by Joel Johnson, a close friend of Joseph's, in a book by John A. and Leah D. Widtsoe, The Word of Wisdom, page 85, published July, 1833)

And again 'hot drinks are not for the body, or belly;' there are many who wonder what this can mean; whether it refers to tea, or coffee, or not. I say it does refer to tea, and coffee. (Hyrum Smith, Times & Seasons, volume 3, number 15, page 800, published June 1, 1842)

Many try to excuse themselves because tea and coffee are not mentioned, arguing that it refers to hot drinks only. What did we drink hot when that Word of Wisdom was given? Tea and coffee. It definitely refers to that which we drink with our food. I said to the Saints at our last annual Conference, the Spirit whispers to me to call upon the Latter-day Saints to observe the Word of Wisdom, to let tea, coffee, and tobacco alone, and to abstain from drinking spirituous drinks. This is what the Spirit signifies through me. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 12, page 117, August 17, 1867)

We have heard considerable of late, especially since twelve

months to-day, on the subject of the Word of Wisdom. Almost every elder who has spoken from this stand has felt the necessity and importance of calling the attention of the people to this subject. We are told, and very plainly too, that hot drinks--tea, coffee, chocolate, cocoa and all drinks of this kind are not good for man. We are also told that alcoholic drinks are not good, and that tobacco when either smoked or chewed is an evil. We are told that swine's flesh is not good, and that we should dispense with it; and we are told that flesh of any kind is not suitable to man the summer time, and ought to be eaten sparingly in the winter. (George Q. Cannon, Journal of Discourses, volume 12, page 222, April 7, 1868)

Adoption of the Revelation as Requirement

March 1833

March 18.-Great joy and satisfaction continually beamed in the countenances of the School of the Prophets, and the Saints, on account of the things revealed, and our progress in the knowledge of God. The High Priests assembled in the school room of the Prophets, and were organized according to revelation; prayer by Sidney Rigdon.

"Doctor" Hurlburt was ordained an Elder; after which Elder Rigdon expressed a desire that himself and Brother Frederick G. Williams should be ordained to the offices to which they had been called, viz., those of Presidents of the High Priesthood, and to be equal in holding the keys of the kingdom with Brother Joseph Smith, Jun., according to the revelation given on the 8th of March, 1833. Accordingly I laid my hands on Brothers Sidney and Frederick, and ordained them to take part with me in holding the keys of this last kingdom, and to assist in the Presidency of the High Priesthood, as my Counselors; after which I exhorted the brethren to faithfulness and diligence in keeping the commandments of God, and gave much instruction for the benefit of the Saints, with a promise that the pure in heart should see a heavenly vision; and after remaining a short time in secret prayer, the promise was verified; for many present had the eyes of their understanding opened by the Spirit of God, so as to behold many things. I then blessed the bread and wine, and distributed a portion to each. Many of the brethren saw a heavenly vision of the Savior, and concourses of angels, and many other things, of which each one has a record of what he saw. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 1, pages 334-335, March 18, 1833)

February 1834

At a church meeting, held in Pennsylvania, Erie county, and Springfield township, by Orson Pratt and Lyman E. Johnson, High Priests, some of the members of that church refused to partake of the Sacrament, because the Elder administering it did not observe the Word of Wisdom to obey it. Elder Johnson argued that they were justified in so doing, because the Elder was in transgression. Elder Pratt argued that the church was bound to receive the Supper under the administration of an Elder, so long as he retained his office or license. Voted that six Councilors should speak upon the subject.

The Council then proceeded to try the question, whether disobedience to the Word of Wisdom was a transgression sufficient to deprive an official member from holding office in the Church, after having it sufficiently taught him.

Councilors Samuel H. Smith, Luke S. Johnson, John S. Carter, Sylvester Smith, John Johnson and Orson Hyde, were called to speak upon the case then before the Council. After the Councilors had spoken, the President proceeded to give the decision:

No official member in this Church is worthy to hold an office, after having the Word of Wisdom properly taught him, and he, the official member, neglecting to comply with or obey it; which decision the Council confirmed by vote. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 2, pages 34-35, February 20, 1834)

May 1834

Sunday 11.-Elder Sylvester Smith preached, and the company received the Sacrament of bread and wine. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 2, page 65, May 11, 1834)

December 1834

The blessing of Hyrum Smith who was born in Tunbridge, Orange County, Vermont, February 9, 1800: [...] Thou has always stood by thy father, and reached forth the helping hand to lift him up when he was in affliction; and though he has been out of the way, through wine, thou has never forsaken him nor laughed him to scorn: for all these kindnesses the Lord my God will bless thee. [...] [Joseph Smith, Sr., December 9, 1834, [Patriarchal Blessing Book](#) 1:1-2]

Joseph Smith, junior was born in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont, December 23, 1805. [...] Thou hast stood by thy father, and like Shem, would have covered his nakedness, rather than see

him exposed to shame: when the daughters of the Gentiles laughed, thy heart has been moved with a just anger to avenge thy kindred. [...] [Joseph Smith, Sr., December 9, 1834, [Patriarchal Blessing Book](#) 1:3-4]

April 1835

Proceeded 1st. to business. Heard reports from the different churches represented....

3d. After receiving the above reports, there was a call from the chair, on all Elders and Delegates present who had matters of difficulty to adjust in their respective churches, to present them for the consideration of this conference.

Whereupon, brother Reuben Hadlock, presented a charge against Chester L. Heath, an Elder in the Avon and Genesee church for breach of covenant and not observing the word of wisdom.

4th. Moved by Elder J. [John] Murdock, that C. L. Heath be expelled from the church. The motion was duly seconded. The evidence heard, and the question distinctly put and carried without a dissenting voice, that the said C. L. Heath be expelled. (Messenger and Advocate, volume 1, number 7, April 1835, pages 101-102)

January 1836

Returned home and spent the afternoon. Towards evening President Cowdery returned from Columbus, the capital of the State. I could spend but little time with him, being under obligation to attend at Mrs. Wilcox's, to join Mr. John Webb and Mrs. Catherine Wilcox in matrimony: also Mr. Thomas Carrico and Miss Elizabeth Baker, at the same place; all of which I performed in the customary manner in the midst of a large assembly. We then partook of some refreshments, and our hearts were made glad with the fruit of the vine. This is according to the pattern set by our Savior Himself, and we feel disposed to patronize all the institutions of heaven. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 2, page 369, January 14, 1836)

January 1836

Wednesday, 20.—Attended school at the usual hour, and spent the day in reading and lecturing, and made some advancement in our studies.

In the evening I attended a matrimonial occasion with my family, at Mr. John Johnson's, having been invited to join Elder John F. Boynton and Miss Susan Lowell in marriage; a large and

respectable company assembled, and were seated by Elders Orson Hyde and Warren Parrish, in the following order—The Presidency and their companions in the first seats, the Twelve Apostles in the second, the Seventy in the third, and the remainder of the congregation seated with their companions. Elder Boynton and lady, with their attendants, came in and were seated in front of the Presidency.

A hymn was sung, after which I addressed the throne of grace. I then arose and read aloud a license, (according to the law of the land) granting any minister of the Gospel the privilege of solemnizing the rights of matrimony....

Elders Orson Hyde, Luke S. Johnson, and Warren Parrish, then presented the Presidency with three servers of glasses filled with wine, to bless. And it fell to my lot to attend to this duty which I cheerfully discharged. It was then passed round in order, then the cake in the same order; and suffice it to say, our hearts were made glad while partaking of the bounty of earth which was presented, until we had taken our fill; and joy filled every bosom, and the countenances of old and young seemed to bloom alike with cheerfulness and smiles of youth; and an entire unison of feeling seemed to pervade the congregation, and indeed I doubt whether the pages of history can boast of a more splendid and innocent wedding and feast than this, for it was conducted after the order of heaven, which has a time for all things; and this being a time of rejoicing, we heartily embraced it and conducted ourselves accordingly. Took leave of the company and returned home. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 2, page 377-378, January 20, 1836)

June 1836

At a conference convened at the house of br. S. Utley, Chalk level, Benton county, Tennessee, agreeably to previous notice, on the 28th and 29th days of May, 1836: the congregation being called to order, Elder D. [David] W. Patton was called to the Chair, and Elder Warren Parrish appointed Secretary; the conference was then opened by singing and prayer and proceeded to business....

Elder Woodruff represented the Academy branch consisting of 10 members in good standing, with the exception of their not observing altogether the word of wisdom. (Messenger and Advocate, volume 2, number 9, June 1836, pages 331-332)

November 1836

To the Churches of Latter Day Saints.

As we have frequent applications by letter and otherwise, for advice respecting official members of this church relative to their observance of the word of wisdom, we have thought proper, that the churches need not be deceived nor official members think of living in transgression and hold their stations in said church, to publish below the decision of the High Council on that important item of our faith, given Feb. 4th, 1834.

"That no official member in this church is worthy to hold an office after having the words of wisdom properly taught to him, and he, the official member, neglecting to comply with, or obey them, after which the counselors voted according to the same." (Messenger and Advocate, volume 3, number 2, November 1836, page 412, article written by John Whitmer)

June 1837

MINUTES

Of a Conference of Elders held in West Township, Columbiana Co. O. commencing Friday, June 16, 1837....

On Monday morning the Conference again convened to inquire into the affairs of the church and to transact such business as might be thought necessary.

It appeared from the statements of the officers of the church that there were in all 30 members; that there had been but little faithful teaching and preaching among them for some time past, and that but very few among them observed the word of wisdom. After some remarks from the Elders, and also from President Stoddard on the importance of observing the word of wisdom, and also of keeping all the commandments of God, the church almost or quite unanimously covenanted to keep the word of wisdom in future and to perform such duties as were binding upon them.

Eld. L. [Lorenzo] Barnes, from Portage, stated that the church in that place consisted of about 100 members, and that he believed they generally kept the word of wisdom.

Eld. G. [George] A. Smith, from Kirtland, stated that he had been about two weeks from home, that on his way to this place he passed through the town of Suffield, found a small church of eight members, who, he believes, were obeying the word of wisdom; also, that they had an Elder residing in the town who seemed to be anxious to know and do his duty.

After hearing from the members individually, and partaking of the Sacrament, the Conference adjourned. (Messenger and Advocate, volume 3, number 9, June 1837, pages 525-526)

August 1837

Minutes of a Conference of the elders of the church of Latter Day Saints, held in Lyman, Grafton Co. -- N. H. on the 26 and 27 of Aug. 1837....

Met again pursuant to adjournment; conference opened by singing. The throne of grace was addressed by the Chairman, who then proceeded to give such instruction as the holy Spirit manifested. The subject of the word of wisdom was introduced and after many able remarks from the Chair, and elders J. [James] C. Snow, W. [Winslow] Farr and A. Butler the conference unanimously voted to abide by the word of wisdom excepting two, and they felt determined to try. Many important instructions were given concerning the gathering by the chairman and elders present. -- Brother Zadock Parker was then chosen by the unanimous vote of the conference to preside over the branch of the church in Lyman, Grafton county, N. H. Brother Artimus W. Lockling priest was duly elected to preside over the branch in Lyndon, Vt. Caldonia county, by the unanimous voice of the conference. (Messenger and Advocate, volume 3, number 11, August 1837, pages 559-560)

February 1838

The Elders met in the house of the Lord. Meeting was opened by singing & prayer. Warren Smith was elected Clerk. The former one [Alexander Cheney] had moved away. Pres [Reuben] Hadlock made some remarks Concerning moving to Zion. [At this time "Zion" meant Far West, Missouri, and vicinity.] and then proceeded to appoint a Councilor Martin H Peck was ordained under the hand of pres Hadlock to that office. A vote was called and carried that no one should have a letter of recommendation to go to Zion [Three elders or a bishop needed to sign a recommendation to move to Missouri (see D&C 72:25)] unless they kept the word of wisdom. after many remarks being made on different subjects The pres proceeded to ordain Thomas B. Fisher, John Lamoreaux Wm [William] McClary Elders. (Milton V. Backman Jr., Writings of Early Latter-day Saints, page 40, an excerpt from the Kirtland Elder's Quorum Record on a meeting held February 26, 1838)

June 1842

We had a very instructive, impressive, and salutary discourse delivered us in the City of Nauvoo, last Sabbath on the above subject, to a large and attentive congregation, by

Pres't. Hyrum Smith.

He stated "that there were many of the commands of God that seemed to be overlooked by this generation, and he was fearful that many of the Latter Day Saints in this respect were following their old tradition, and former practices of spiritualizing the word of God, and through a vain philosophy departing from the pure principles of eternal truth which God had given by revelation for the salvation of the human family; but, that every word of God is of importance, whether it be the word contained in the Bible, in the Book of Mormon, or in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, for 'man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.'

...

The Lord has told us what is good for us to eat, and to drink, and what is pernicious; but some of our wise philosophers, and some of our elders too, pay no regard to it; they think it too little, too foolish, for wise men to regard (fools)! where is their wisdom, philosophy and intelligence? from whence did they obtain their superior light? Their capacity, and their power of reasoning was given them by the great Jehovah: if they have any wisdom they obtained it from his: and have they grown so much wiser than God that they are going to instruct him in the path of duty, and to tell him what is wise, and what is foolish. They think it too small for him to condescend to tell men what will be nutritious or what will be unhealthy. Who made the corn, the wheat, the rye, and all the vegetable substances? and who was it that organized man, and constituted him as he is found? who made his stomach, and his digestive organs, and prepared proper nutriment for his system, that the juices of his body might be supplied; and his form be invigorated by that kind of food which the laws of nature, and the laws of God has said would be good for man? And has God made his food, and provided it for the use of man; and shall he be ashamed to speak of the work of his hands: has he become so fantastical, so foolish, so weak and effeminate, that it has become impolitic for him to tell what is the best distribution to make of the work of his hands? Oh shame! let it not be heard among the saints; let that man who inculcates such principles hide his face. We are told by some that circumstances alter the revelations of God -- tell me what circumstances would alter the ten commandments? they were given by revelation -- given as a law to the children of Israel; -- who has a right to alter that law? Some think that they are too small for us to notice, they are not too small for God to notice, and have we got so high, so

bloated out, that we cannot condescend to notice things that God has ordained for our benefit? or have we got so weak that we are not fit to be called saints? for the word of wisdom is adapted to the capacity of all that '(are) or (can be called saints).' Listen not to the teaching of any man, or any elder who says the word of wisdom is of no moment; for such a man will eventually be overthrown. These are principles that I have always acted upon; that I have always practiced; and they are what my family practices; they are what Brother Hyrum has always contended for, and what I now contend for; and I know that nothing but an unwavering, undeviating course can save a man in the kingdom of God.

The Lord has told us that 'Strong drinks are not good,' who is it that will say they are? when the Lord says they are not. That man who says 'I can drink wine or strong drink, and it will not hurt me,' is not wise. But some will say, 'I know it did me good, for I was fatigued, and feeble, on a certain occasion, and it revived me, and I was invigorated thereby, and that is sufficient proof for me.' It may be for you, but it would not be for a wise man, for every spirit of this kind will only produce a greater languor when its effects cease to operate upon the human body. But you know that you are benefitted, yes, so does the man who has mortgaged his property, know that he is relieved from his present embarrassments; but his temporary relief only binds the chords of bondage more severely around him. The Lord has not ordained strong drink for the belly; 'but for the washing of your bodies.' And again 'tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly; and it is not good for man; but as an herb for bruises, and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill.' Tobacco is a nauseous, stinking abominable thing, and I am surprised that any human being should think of using it -- for an elder especially to eat, or smoke it, is a disgrace to him; -- he is not fit for the office, he ought first to learn to keep the word of wisdom, and then to teach others. God will not prosper the man who uses it. And again 'hot drinks are not for the body, or belly;' there are many who wonder what this can mean; whether it refers to tea, or coffee, or not. I say it does refer to tea, and coffee. Why is it that we are frequently so dull and languid? it is because we break the word of wisdom, disease preys upon our system, our understandings are darkened, and we do not comprehend the things of God; the devil takes advantage of us, and we fall into temptation. Not only are they injurious in their tendency, and baneful in their effects, but the importation of foreign products might be the

means of thousands of our people being poisoned at a future time, through the advantage that an enemy might take of us, if we made use of these things that are thus spoken of as being evil; and be it remembered -- that this instruction is given 'in consequence of evils that do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men.' (Hyrum Smith, Times & Seasons, volume 3, number 15, pages 799-801, published June 1, 1842)

March 1843

Tuesday, March 7th

[...]

Brother Manhard brought and gave 2 loads of corn and 1 to President from Iowa. Reconciled with Theodore Turley, who enquired what was wisdom concerning a brewery in this place? Reconciled with Dymic Huntington. East wind through the day.

[...]

Friday, March 10th 1843

[...]

Joseph decided that he had no objection to having a brewery put up by Theodore Turley. (Scott H. Faulring, 1989, An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, pages 328-329)

May 1843

Wednesday, 3.-Called at the office and drank a glass of wine with Sister Jenetta Richards, made by her mother in England, and reviewed a portion of the conference minutes. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, volume 5, page 380, May 3, 1843)

June 1844

Saturday, June 1st 1844 At home. Some gentle showers. 1.P.M. Rode out with Dr. Richards and Orrin Porter Rockwell called on Davis at the boat. /Paid Manhard \$90.00/ Met George J. Adams and paid him \$50.00 to John P. Green paid him and another brother \$200.00 to [blank]. Exchanged \$100 Gold and a check. Drank a glass of beer at Moissers. Called at William Clayton's while Dr. Richards and Rockwell called at Dr. New House. Home 4 1/2. [P.M.] (Scott H. Faulring, 1989, An American Prophet's Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith, page 486)

June 1844

Before the jailor came in, his boy brought in some water,

and said the guard wanted some wine. Joseph gave Dr. Richards two dollars to give the guard; but the guard said one was enough, and would take no more.

The guard immediately sent for a bottle of wine, pipes, and two small papers of tobacco; and one of the guards brought them into the jail soon after the jailor went out. Dr. Richards uncorked the bottle, and presented a glass to Joseph, who tasted, as also Brother Taylor and the doctor, and the bottle was then given to the guard, who turned to go out. When at the top of the stairs some one below called him two or three times, and he went down. (History of the Church, volume 6, page 617, June 27, 1844, immediately before the Martydom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith)

September 1851

Conference being called to order, and opened in the usual manner. The Patriarch John Smith, said he had been through the whole scene of persecution, of mobbing, and murders, from 1832 to the present time; and alluded to the night of the murder of Joseph and Hyrum in Carthage Jail, and called on the people to pay their tithing, that it may be said of us, well done good and faithful servants; and was followed in similar remarks by President Kimball, Edward Hunter, W.W. Phelps, Isaac Chase, and Zera Pulsipher.

The Patriarch again arose to speak on the Word of Wisdom, and urging on the brethren to leave off using tobacco, &c.

President Young rose to put the motion and called on all the sisters who will leave off the use of tea, coffee, &c., to manifest it by raising the right hand; seconded and carried.

Then put the following motion; calling on all the boys who were under ninety years of age who would covenant to leave off the use of tobacco, whisky, and all things mentioned in the Word of Wisdom, to manifest it in the same manner, which was carried unanimously.

The Patriarch then said, may the Lord bless you and help you to keep all your covenants. Amen.

President Young amongst other things said he knew the goodness of the people, and the Lord bears with our weakness; we must serve the Lord, and those who go with me will keep the Word of Wisdom, and if the High Priests, the Seventies, the Elders, and others will not serve the Lord, we will sever them from the Church. I will draw the line and know who is for the Lord and who is not, and those who will not keep the Word of Wisdom, I will cut off from the Church; I throw out a challenge to all men

and women. Have I not always counseled you right? I would rather you would cut me into inch pieces, than to flinch from my duty, the Lord being my helper. I would rather live with a few men who will serve the Lord, than live with ten thousand hypocrites. He then exhorted the men and the women never to quarrel, to cease all contentions. If a man abuses you, settle with him with kind words, but never go to law. Let every head of a family gather their family together night and morning, and wait on the Lord until his Spirit rests on you like a cloud, and I say unto you in the name of the Lord God of Israel, be you blest. (Millennial Star, publication date February 1, 1852, page 35, reviewing minutes of a conference held September 9, 1851).

March 1855

For this purpose, in 1833, the Saints commenced to build a Temple in Kirtland, the cost of which was not less than one hundred thousand dollars. A mere handful of Saints commenced that work, but they were full of faith and energy, and willing, as they supposed, to sacrifice everything for the building up of Zion. In a few weeks some of them apostatized; the trials were too great, the troubles were too severe. I know persons who apostatized because they supposed they had reasons; for instance, a certain family, after having traveled a long journey, arrived in Kirtland, and the prophet asked them to stop with him until they could find a place. Sister Emma, in the mean time, asked the old lady if she would have a cup of tea to refresh her after the fatigues of the journey, or a cup of coffee. This whole family apostatized because they were invited to take a cup of tea or coffee, after the Word of Wisdom was given. (George Albert Smith, Journal of Discourses, volume 2, page 214, March 18, 1855)

April 1855

I feel that it is good to be here, and I can say that I have tried to appreciate the blessings we enjoy in common with my brethren. It is indeed a privilege to rise before an assembly of Saints in the Valleys of the Mountains, before those that are now so comfortably and favorably located in this place; and while brother George A. Smith was speaking upon the "Word of Wisdom," there was a dream occurred to my mind that I heard related by one of the brethren a short time ago. He said there was a proclamation issued by the President of the Church of Jesus Christ, for the Elders of Israel to collect those together who had kept the commandments of God, for there was a work that

the Lord had for them to perform. The people came together very slowly and reluctantly; once in a while a few would come along, but a leader off was wanted, and perhaps an Elder would be seen coming up, but it seemed to be slow work collecting the people together. After a while there was another proclamation issued for the people to come together in masses, those that were true, and that were known to be trying to keep the commandments of God, and they then came up by thousands, by tens of thousands, and by hundreds of thousands. I felt that it was so this morning, that those that had been speaking had touched the right subject, and it was very good; and I felt that there would be very few in this vast congregation, (if they were called out,) who had kept the "Word of Wisdom;" if all such were called for, I am persuaded that there would be very few that would come forth, but if the word were, "Come forth, all ye Latter-day Saints that are trying to keep the Word of Wisdom," I feel that there would be many that would come forth, and I believe I would be among that number that would be found trying to keep the Word of Wisdom.

When we first heard the revelation upon the Word of Wisdom many of us thought it consisted merely in our drinking tea and coffee, but it is not only using tea and coffee and our tobacco and whisky, but it is every other evil which is calculated to contaminate this people. The Word of Wisdom implies to cease from adultery, to cease from all manner of excesses, and from all kinds of wickedness and abomination that are common amongst this generation--it is, strictly speaking, keeping the commandments of God, and living by every word that proceedeth from His mouth.

This is the way that I understand the Word of Wisdom, consequently we have to keep all the commandments, if I understand the matter correctly, in connection with this Word of Wisdom, in order to obtain the blessings, for unless we do keep the commandments of God, and not offend in any one point, we have not a full claim upon the blessings promised in connection with this portion of the word of the Lord.

The Lord says, in reference to these things mentioned in the Word of Wisdom, that they are not good for the body! I know that my brethren and sisters feel as I do, they have a desire to keep the Word of Wisdom and know it is the wish of the Presidency that the Elders of Israel should preach upon the Word of Wisdom, and establish it in the minds of the people, and suffer not themselves from desire to be overcome by the habits of those among whom they travel to preach the Gospel, but be an

example in all things. (Ezra T. Benson, Journal of Discourses, volume 2, page 358, April 8, 1855)

April 1855

It is an old proverb, that as the old birds crow the young ones learn. There are a great many habits, a great many customs which our fathers have imbibed, and which their children have been induced more or less to practice, which are decidedly in opposition to the true principles of life and prosperity; now for us who are young, we are full of life and vigor, to think, because our fathers or mothers indulged in a good cup of tea, or cup of coffee, and a hundred other different luxuries which are at variance with the Word of Wisdom, that we must follow the same track, pursue the same course, and not only ourselves become slaves to the same habits, but transmit them to our posterity, and continue them, that we may preserve the old Gentile customs which have been established under a system of tactics that have been introduced by medical men, to injure the health of the community and to make for themselves a growing business! I do not believe in the constant use of tobacco and hot drinks, although they have been for a long time steadily recommended by men in the medical profession as beneficial to health; I believe that learned doctors do know, when they are doing so, they are introducing a system of things to make men sick throughout their lives, weaken the human race, and make business for medical practitioners. If men wish to grow up in these mountains, free from disease, and from the power of the destroyer, and become strong and powerful like tigers--like giants in Israel, let them observe the principles laid down in the words of wisdom, let them observe them when they are children, let them grow up breathing a pure atmosphere, drinking pure water, and partaking of the wholesome vegetation, observing the words of wisdom, and they will grow up mighty men; one of them will be worth five dozen of those who are steeped and boiled by hot drinks, and tanned in tobacco juice.

While I address you, brethren, upon this subject, I speak more from observation of the conduct of others than from my own experience; I have observed considerable upon this matter; I know that indulging in habits of this kind, however simple they may seem, they lead in the end to great evil, and I know from experience that our tastes are in a great measure artificial....

I know that many men have persisted in the use of these stimulating articles until they cannot do without them, or they think they cannot....

I believe, brethren, many of us have accustomed ourselves to using articles prohibited in the Word of Wisdom, which prohibition is designed for the benefit of the Saints in Zion, and in all the world; we frequently use them merely out of compliment. For instance, I call in a brothers house, the lady of the house knows I am an Apostle, and she wishes to treat me with marked respect, and she supposes I am entirely unmindful of the precepts contained in the Word of Wisdom, makes me a cup of tea or coffee; well, I think it is a pity to throw it away, after it has spoiled half a gallon of the best American creek water, and I drink it to save it. This is not only the case with me, but with other young men also, (for I can call myself a young man with a perfect grace now, for I have as fine a head of hair as any of you); a great many of us take these stimulating drinks for the sake of fashion. If I should happen to come across those who know how to use "the good crater," they will invite me to partake with them; if I refuse, they will then begin to urge; but the best policy to be observed in cases of this kind is to do as we have a mind to; if we do not want "the intoxicating drink," let them take it all; and if we do, we will take it without urging, and bear the responsibility ourselves. This is the best policy I would wish to be governed by, though I have had to say, once or twice in my life, "Gentlemen, I do not wish to be urged." If a man refuses to drink with those who indulge in the use of strong drinks, it is customary to consider it a want of friendship. Let us be our own masters, and not believe we must be chained down to these foolish and hurtful traditions. (George Albert Smith, Journal of Discourses, volume 2, pages 363-365, April 8, 1855)

May 1855

The spirit upon us should enable us to do that which is right, and that which is our duty. For instance, take the Word of Wisdom, which is given for our benefit and temporal salvation. It is true, disobedience to that is not so gross a sin as some others; but still, it is given for our temporal salvation, and should be observed. Now, it would require the servants of God to preach it every two weeks, or at least every month, to persuade this people to hearken to it; and yet they know it is the word of the Lord. If I were to call a vote, I presume that there would not be one that has come to the years of understanding but what would say it is the word of the Lord.

They go away, after hearing a most glorious discourse upon this and other revelations, and perhaps they will keep the Word

of Wisdom two or three days; but it makes their head ache, and then they take a little tea, and it does them good for the moment, and they think the Lord don't know what they need as well as they do. I do not say that you do say this, but your actions bespeak this. But it is such a trial! It must be a terrible trial, which the Lord said the weakest of all that are or can be called Saints could obey. A thing like tea to have influence over us, so that we can only obey the Word of Wisdom two days, and then break it, until we hear another discourse, and thus breaking our covenants, it shows the folly and weakness of man. It shows how the influence of one man prevails over another.

Why cannot you be independent beings, and say, "I will do this, and that, and the other, let my neighbor do as he may; let my neighbor do as he will, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord?" This is what ought to be.

In making these remarks I take them to myself, although I have, as an individual, been very strict in relation to the Word of Wisdom since I have been in the Valley, and years before. Do not I like the good old tea? Yes I do, and when it is sweetened up, and a little cream turned in, it is very pleasant, as no doubt also was the forbidden fruit; but it is for me to use my endeavors to have it observed, by setting a good example, that I may have influence over my neighbor and over my family; and I do use that influence as far as is consistent, but it is difficult to persuade persons from their old habits.

I wonder what those persons would do, if called to be martyred for their religion, who cannot do without violating the Word of Wisdom! I am aware that it is not by constraint, and a man should not constrain his family to obey it, but every man will have to give an account of his doings, and abide the consequence, whatever it may be, if it be the destroying angel going through the land to slay the disobedient.

A man may keep the Word of Wisdom so far as tea, coffee, and tobacco are concerned, and still come very short. If he wishes and intends to be right, he must obey this, together with all the commandments and Words of Wisdom. We must regulate our thoughts, our comings in, our goings out, and all our doings and our minds by the Spirit of the Lord, and by the counsels of His servants. Can the destroyer have influence over such a man?

Let such a man stand up and say, "Lord, I have done as you told me, I have kept your words." Could such a man be destroyed before he had accomplished his work on the earth? I question it. Well, we shall undoubtedly see a time when we shall need such

confidence as this. (Orson Pratt, Journal of Discourses, volume 3, page 20, May 20, 1855)

March 1860

I have my weakness, and you have yours; but if I am inclined to do that which is wrong, I will not make my wrong a means of leading others astray. Many of the brethren chew tobacco, and I have advised them to be modest about it. Do not take out a whole plug of tobacco in meeting before the eyes of the congregation, and cut off a long slice and put it in your mouth, to the annoyance of everybody around. Do not glory in this disgraceful practice. If you must use tobacco, put a small portion in your mouth when no person sees you, and be careful that no one sees you chew it. I do not charge you with sin. You have the "Word of Wisdom." Read it. Some say, "Oh, as I do in private, so I do in public, and I am not ashamed of it." It is, at least, disgraceful to you to expose your absurdities. Some men will go into a clean and beautifully-furnished parlour with tobacco in their mouths, and feel, "I ask no odds." I would advise such men to be more modest, and not spit upon the carpets and furniture, but step to the door, and be careful not to let any person see you spit; or, what is better, omit chewing until you have an opportunity to do so without offending. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 8, page 362, March 10, 1860)

April 1861

You know that we all profess to believe the "Word of Wisdom." There has been a great deal said about it, more in former than in latter years. We, as Latter-day Saints, care but little about tobacco; but, as "Mormons," we use a vast quantity of it. As Saints, we use but little; as "Mormons," we use a great deal. How much do you suppose goes annually from this Territory, and has for ten or twelve years past, in gold and silver, to supply the people with tobacco? I will say \$60,000. Brother William H. Hooper, our Delegate in Congress, came here in 1849, and during about eight years he was selling goods his sales for tobacco alone amounted to over \$28,000 a year. At the same time there were other stores that sold their share and drew their share of the money expended yearly, besides what has been brought in by the keg and by the half keg. The traders and passing emigration have sold tons of tobacco, besides what is sold here regularly. I say that \$60,000 annually is the smallest figure I can estimate the sales at. Tobacco can be raised here

as well as it can be raised in any other place. It wants attention and care. If we use it, let us raise it here. I recommend for some man to go to raising tobacco. One man, who came here last fall, is going to do so; and if he is diligent, he will raise quite a quantity. I want to see some man go to and make a business of raising tobacco and stop sending money out of the Territory for that article.

Some of the brethren are very strenuous upon the "Word of Wisdom," and would like to have me preach upon it, and urge it upon the brethren, and make it a test of fellowship. I do not think that I shall do so. I have never done so. We annually expend only \$60,000 to break the "Word of Wisdom," and we can save the money and still break it, if we will break it. Some would ask brother Brigham whether he keeps the "Word of Wisdom." No: and I can say still further, as I told one of the teachers in Nauvoo, I come as near doing so as any man in this generation. It is not using tobacco that particularly breaks the "Word of Wisdom," nor is that the only bad practice it corrects; but it is profitable in every path of life. If our young persons were manly enough to govern their appetites a little, they would not contract these bad habits; but they must have some weaknesses; they must not be perfect and exactly right in everything. It is a loathsome practice to use tobacco in any way. A doctor told an old lady in New York, when she insisted upon his telling her whether snuff would injure her brain, "It will not hurt the brain: there is no fear of snuff's hurting the brain of anyone, for no person that has brains will take snuff." I will say that the most filthy way of using tobacco is to smoke it. "What is the neat way? If you are going to direct any course for the people to use tobacco, let us know what it is. Cannot you who have used it for years point out a neat, modest, judicious way of using it?" The "Word of Wisdom" says that tobacco is good for sick cattle; and when you want another chew, down with it as you would a pill. It may make you vomit a little, but that is soon over, and it is good for sick cattle. That is the neatest way you can use tobacco. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 9, pages 35-36, April 7, 1861)

June 1863

You have read that piece of excellent advice called the "Word of Wisdom." I shall not say you must obey it; you can read it over again and refresh your memories, and I give the privilege to the Elders of Israel to cease using tobacco, and if they will not cease using it, then raise it; and then also, to

cease using spirituous liquors to excess. At the time Mr. Holladay kept store opposite the south gate of this block, he annually received not less than \$29,000 for the article, tobacco. His books will now show this. Into Livingston's store I presume this people annually paid for the article, tobacco, not less than \$35,000, and that, too, when we were but few; what must our bills be at the present time? I think I am safe in saying that we have paid, for tobacco alone, at least \$100,000 a year during the last thirteen years. Now, especially you Elders and leading men of Israel, will you do yourselves a favor by letting it alone from this time? Brother George A. Smith says that the two penny institution of Jackson and Stewart, in Provo, took over \$15,000 a year for tobacco alone. If you will let this article alone you will benefit both yourselves and the community. A man who indulges in any habit that is pernicious to the general good in its example and influence, is not only an enemy to himself but to the community so far as the influence of that habit goes. A man who would not sacrifice a pernicious habit for the good it would do the community is, to say the least of it, lukewarm in his desires and wishes for public and general improvement. Tobacco is not good for man; spirituous liquor is not good for a beverage, but in many cases it is good for washing the body.

Dare I venture to invite the sisters to favor themselves by letting alone the article called tea? Some of that which is imported to this country from California, and for which you pay from three to four dollars a pound, is not much better than hay. I merely wish to say that you now have the privilege and invitation tendered to you to cease drinking the filthy stuff. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 10, page 203, June 7 1863)

April 1867

I am happy to say that the "point" is already made so far as I am concerned. It is "to be one" in everything that pertains to the building up of the Kingdom of God. And if we are to believe what we have heard during this Conference it is to be one in keeping the Word of Wisdom, and in living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Almighty through His servants. It is true that we have heard this for years, and it will have to be sounded in our ears until we are one in Christ as He is one with the Father.

We have been taught during this Conference to dispense with everything in eating, drinking, and wearing that is not in

accordance with the will of God; and I do not know what greater things could be taught to the Latter-day Saints. We all know that there are a great many things that we now eat, drink, and wear, with which we could dispense to our own advantage, but because one has a thing another must have it too, and there is no peace until all these wants are supplied.

Talking about happiness, I told a lady to-day at noon that we, generally, are very ignorant of it. We think that a good bonnet, hat, a fine coat, a good cup of tea, or a pipe of tobacco to smoke will make us happy, but it is a mistaken notion. God never ordained such things for that purpose. We can be happy only in keeping the commandments of God and in being wholly devoted to the things of His Kingdom. Some of our Elders think if they were sent on a mission it would make them happy, but I have been told that there is no better field for missionary labor than here in the mountains; and every man here, bearing the Priesthood, has got a mission to preach the gospel at home, where his labors are most needed, and where he can do the most good. At this Conference every presiding officer, Bishop, Elder, Priest, Teacher, Deacon, and member of the Church has got a text to preach from in his future ministrations; to bring this people to a oneness in all things is, henceforth, the object of our labors. We are already united on many points; for instance, we are one here to-day in partaking of the Sacrament in remembrance of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But there are other things that require our attention. We should be one in all our movements in sustaining ourselves.

This is a portion of the text that has been given to us, and I feel that much good will result from the counsel we have had on this subject, and I intend to lay hold of it with all my might. And let us all endeavour by the help of God to leave off our tea, coffee, liquor, and other things, that are neither good for the body nor for the belly. We can overcome, for God will not require more of us than we can do. He has borne with us these many years; but, if I can discern the signs of the times, He is now going to require these things at our hands. Supposing He had given the Word of Wisdom as a command, how many of us would have been here? I do not know; but He gave this without command or restraint, observing that it would be pleasing in His sight for His people to obey its precepts. Ought we not to try to please our Heavenly Father, and to please His servants who are paving the way for us into the Kingdom of God? Can we get there without them? No; we cannot, and we need not try. (Ezra T. Benson, Journal of Discourses, volume 11, pages 366-367, April

7, 1867)

April 1867

We have been taught the Word of Wisdom. It was given to us many years ago, and the Lord said it was applicable to the weakest Saint. Very few of us have kept the Word of Wisdom; but I have no doubt that if the counsel of President Young were carried out it would save the people of this Territory a million of dollars annually. I feel that we ought to put these things into practice. We ought to unite together in all matters required of us in order to carry out the purposes of the Lord our God. The people are able to do it if they feel disposed. Why, Bishop Hardy told me here this morning that he had laid aside his tobacco; he has loved it almost ever since he was born, and if he can leave it off every man in Israel ought to be able to do it. It was said to-day that whisky-drinking makes fools of men; it does. Its effects are much worse than they used to be, for the liquor made now-a-days contains so much strychnine and arsenic that it is enough to kill anybody, and unless those who use it do lay it aside many will die. Lay aside whisky, tobacco, tea, and coffee, and use none of them unless it be as a medicine. We can all do it, and there is not a man or woman in Israel, with any faith in this work, but is required to do so. (Wilford Woodruff, Journal of Discourses, volume 11, page 370, April 7, 1867)

April 1867

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 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 whisky?" "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 whisky in his house, in which he will occasionally indulge. Go to another ward, and

perhaps the Bishop does not drink whisky 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 whisky, 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....

Now I want you should recollect--Bishops, Elders of Israel, High Priests, Seventies, the Twelve Apostles, the First Presidency, and all the House of Israel, hearken ye, O, my people! keep the word of the Lord, observe the Word of Wisdom, sustain one another, sustain the household of faith, and let our enemies alone....

Now, Elders of Israel, if you have the right to chew tobacco, you have a privilege I have not; if you have a right to drink whisky, you have a right that I have not; if you have a right to transgress the Word of Wisdom, you have a right that I have not. If you have the right to buy and sell and get gain, to go here and there, to do this and that, to build up the wicked and the ungodly, or their cities, you have rights that I have not got. I have the right to build up Zion, but I have no right to build up a city in wickedness. It is time to close our morning's meeting. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 12, pages 28-31, April 7, 1867)

May 1867

With regard to the Word of Wisdom, I must say I was agreeably surprised to see how generally the people are taking hold of it [Woodruff was speaking of the members in the Southern States--Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky where he had recently served a mission]. We did not see much coffee or tea, and I do not think that one in the company drank a drop of it. I rejoice in this; it is going to make the people more wealthy, it will save us a great deal of means, besides preventing our being poisoned to death, for these things are poisoned, and the Lord understood that when He gave the Word of Wisdom many years ago. The people are improving in a great many things. There is a very good spirit and feeling among them, and the feeling to carry out the purposes of God is general. (Wilford Woodruff, Journal of Discourses, volume 12, pages 13-14, May 19, 1867)

May 1867

As we have just returned from a journey from the south [i.e., Southern Utah] I presume it would be interesting to you to hear some little about how the Saints generally are getting on.... I noticed, too, that there was a very general disposition among the people to observe the Word of Wisdom. Of course we had to keep it--we could not for shame do anything else--and if we had been disposed to do otherwise we could hardly have helped ourselves, for nobody offered us either tea, coffee, tobacco or liquor. There seemed to be a general disposition among the people to obey, at least, that counsel, although they had not heard much preaching upon it until we went down and talked things over together. (John Taylor, Journal of Discourses, volume 12, pages 48-49, May 19, 1867)

May 1867

I am now going to say few words for myself with regard to my own situation and circumstances in the midst of this people, the joy and thankfulness that seem to surround the people and their leaders. The increase that is perceptible to those who live in the faith of the holy gospel is heart-cheering, comforting, and consoling, and is praiseworthy to the Latter-day Saints. To illustrate, I will refer to one item of our proceedings at Conference. While assembled there I told the people what my feelings were in regard to the Word of Wisdom. I said to them--"The Spirit signifies to me that we should cease drinking tea, coffee, and liquor, and chewing tobacco." On our journey south I saw one old lady over eighty years of age drink a little coffee, and that was the only coffee I saw while from home. I think there was one of our sisters in the company who was sick one day, and she had a little tea; with this exception, from the time we left home until we returned, I did not see a drop of tea or coffee offered to the company. Is not this marvellous? Was there any command given to the people, or any coercion used towards them at Conference in relation to these things? Not the least in the world, and the strongest term I used was that "the Spirit signifies to me that this people should observe the Word of Wisdom."

It has been said to me--"This reformation in the midst of the people is too hasty to be permanent." I have replied--"I trust not; I have not been hasty in my reflections and considerations to honor the purposes and to do the will of God." (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 12, page 52, May 26, 1867)

August 1867

We can enjoy the blessings of heaven, or we can deprive ourselves of that enjoyment. Intelligent beings have the power to exercise their free will and choice in doing evil. All have the privilege of doing evil if they are disposed so to do, but they will always find that the wages of sin is death. The Latter-day Saints, by their righteousness, can enjoy all the blessings which the Lord has promised to bestow upon His people, and they can, by their unrighteousness, deprive themselves of the enjoyment of those blessings. We, for instance, exhort the Saints to observe the Word of Wisdom, that they may, through its observance, enjoy the promised blessing. Many try to excuse themselves because tea and coffee are not mentioned, arguing that it refers to hot drinks only. What did we drink hot when that Word of Wisdom was given? Tea and coffee. It definitely refers to that which we drink with our food. I said to the Saints at our last annual Conference, the Spirit whispers to me to call upon the Latter-day Saints to observe the Word of Wisdom, to let tea, coffee, and tobacco alone, and to abstain from drinking spirituous drinks. This is what the Spirit signifies through me. If the Spirit of God whispers this to His people through their leader, and they will not listen nor obey, what will be the consequence of their disobedience? Darkness and blindness of mind with regard to the things of God will be their lot; they will cease to have the spirit of prayer, and the spirit of the world will increase in them in proportion to their disobedience until they apostatize entirely from God and His ways.

This is no new or strange thing that you are required to do. Thirty-five years ago we were called upon to reform our lives, by giving heed to the same Words of Wisdom; and if any man comes to you and tells you that you must have a little tea and a little coffee, by the same rule he may urge you to take a little tobacco and a little intoxicating liquor, or a little of any other substance which is hurtful to man. This destroys their claim and right to the spirit of revelation, and they go into darkness. There is not a single Saint deprived of the privilege of asking the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, if it is true that the Spirit of the Almighty whispers through His servant Brigham to urge upon the Latter-day Saints to observe the Word of Wisdom. All have this privilege from the apostle to the lay member. Ask for yourselves. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 12,

May 1868

After the Latter-day Saints are gathered together, I repeat, that we do not improve as fast as we should. This word of wisdom which has been supposed to have become stale, and not in force, is like all the counsels of God, in force as much to-day as it ever was. There is life, everlasting life in it--the life which now is and the life which is to come. We have had this Word of Wisdom thirty-five years last February, and the whole people have not yet learned to observe it after the true spirit and meaning of it. There is within a few years past a great improvement in this, so much so that I very much doubt whether a tobacco spittle could be found upon the floor of this tabernacle after this congregation is dismissed. Tobacco is not good to receive into the human system; hot drinks are not good. We will use cold drinks to allay thirst and warm drinks for medicine. Flesh should be used sparingly, in famine and in cold. The people are beginning to listen to these things. The Spirit of the Lord is urging the people to cease from everything that is evil, and to reform in their lives; for unless the spirit urged the people to do right, we might as well talk to the sides of this house. We are urged by the spirit to refrain from articles which tend to death, to preserve this life, which is the most precious life given to mortal beings preparatory to an immortal life. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 12, page 209, May 10, 1868)

May 1868

Keep the Word of Wisdom. There are but few of the Elders now who use tobacco, and our sisters can do without their tea and coffee. They can keep the Word of Wisdom, for many of them do keep it. I only saw one cup of coffee last summer during my trip south, and it was for an old lady eighty years of age. She asked me if she might not take her cups of coffee; and I told her to take it, and blessed her and her coffee. We can stop the use of liquor. We can be wise in our work and not labor beyond our strength. We can cease running in debt and purchasing things that we could do without. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 12, page 218, May 17, 1868)

April 1869

Brother Orson has spoken on the Word of Wisdom. The people have done pretty well in keeping it for the last year or two.

But are they going to continue, or will they return to their old habits like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow that is washed, to her wallowing in the mire? The sale of tobacco, tea, and coffee is increasing in the midst of this people at the present time. What does this prove? It proves that, stealthily or openly, the people are eating and drinking that which is not good for them. Hot drinks, tobacco, and spirits are not good for them. Will the people continue to keep the Word of Wisdom, or will they become like the brutes in the parable, or, like fools return to that which will injure and destroy them? The elders of Israel have talked a great deal to the people upon the principles of life and about the course they should pursue to lay a foundation for health. Let a mother stimulate her system with tobacco, tea, coffee, or liquor, or suffer herself to hanker after such things at certain times, and she lays the foundation for the destruction of her offspring. Do they realize this? No, and in very many instances they care nothing about it. With all the teachings given to this people I think they are very much like the rest of the world, or like the dumb brute beasts that are made to be taken and destroyed. And it almost seems that the last comparison is the most appropriate, for intelligence is given us to preserve ourselves, to preserve our health and prolong our natural lives, preserve our posterity, preserve and beautify the earth and make it like the Garden of Eden. But what is the disposition of the people? It is true we are in advance of the world, but we are only just commencing to learn the things of God. I know that some say the revelations upon these points are not given by way of commandment. Very well, but we are commanded to observe every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 13, page 3, April 7, 1869)

April 1869

Although a great advance has been made within the last two years in the observance of the "Word of Wisdom," there is yet room to talk on that subject. We find that the tobacco trade is still very considerable in this Territory, and we cannot yet lose sight of the fact that we are compelled to pay a tribute to the Emperor of China for tea, and to the Emperor of Brazil for coffee; and there are still men in Israel who do not seem to realize the importance of observing the "Word of Wisdom." It is, therefore, necessary to preach, teach, and exhort, and to enforce upon the Saints the importance of its observance, for it is preparatory to great blessings which God has in store for the

faithful. The elders will instruct us in relation to these matters as the Spirit of the Lord may dictate. (George Albert Smith, Journal of Discourses, volume 13, page 21, April 6, 1869)

April 1869

I do not know but what it would be perfectly reasonable to make every man and woman, before leaving their native lands, covenant before God to observe the Word of Wisdom, let liquor alone, use no language unbecoming a Saint, and, in a word, live their religion after arriving here. Whether it would be reasonable and consistent to lay such injunctions on the people before assisting them to gather I do not know. If we were to say to them, before leaving their homes, "Now if we gather you home, will you live your religion?" they would jump up, clap their hands together, shout "hallelujah," and say, "Yes, we will do anything you require if you will only gather us to Zion."

Do you now see that I am perfectly tied up? and so are all the elders of Israel in this respect. We may lay all these injunctions on the Saints, and some would break them all. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 13, page 32, April 8, 1869)

May 1870

There is another subject I wish to refer to. Last Sabbath this front gallery, the gentleman's gallery, was very full. After meeting was dismissed I took a walk through it, and to see the floor that had been occupied by those professing to be gentlemen, and I do not know but brethren, you might have supposed that cattle had been there rolling and standing around, for here and there were great quids of tobacco, and places one or two feet square smeared with tobacco juice. I want to say to the doorkeepers that when you see gentlemen who cannot omit chewing and spitting while in this house, request them to leave; and if such persons refuse to leave, and continue their spitting, just take them and lead them out carefully and kindly. We do not want to have the house thus defiled. It is an imposition for gentlemen to spit tobacco juice around, or to leave their quids of tobacco on the floor; they dirty the house, and if a lady happen to besmear the bottom of her dress, which can hardly be avoided, it is highly offensive. We therefore request all gentlemen attending Conference to omit tobacco chewing while here. To the Elders of Israel who cannot and will not keep the Word of Wisdom, I say, omit tobacco chewing while here. (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourses, volume 13, page

344, May 5, 1870)

August 1874

RULES THAT SHOULD BE OBSERVED BY MEMBERS OF THE UNITED ORDER.

RULE 1st.-We will not take the name of the Deity in vain, nor speak lightly of His character or of sacred things.

RULE 2nd.-We will pray with our families morning and evening, and also attend to secret prayer.

RULE 3rd.-We will observe and keep the Word of Wisdom according to the Spirit and meaning thereof.

RULE 4th....(Messages of the First Presidency, volume 2, Page 265, August 20, 1874)

February 1881

I will refer you to the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, to that simple principle called the Word of Wisdom. How many of this congregation have kept this law? and how many do keep it to-day? It would perhaps not astonish you very much were I to say that there were members of the Church of forty years standing and upwards, who take their tea, coffee, tobacco, etc., just as though God had not some forty-eight years ago, revealed the Word of Wisdom. I can point out men and women that have been in this Church some twenty-five or thirty years, that are no nearer keeping the commandments of God, in this respect, than they were twenty-five or thirty years ago, and some of them not so near. (Joseph F. Smith, Journal of Discourses, volume 22, page, February 6, 1881)

March 1886

We are pleased to be able to report that the Lord is abundantly blessing the labors of the brethren and sisters engaged in the performance of ordinances pertaining to the Temples of our God; and a great work is being done therein in the interest of both the living and the dead. We have been pained, however, to learn that in some few instances, either through misunderstanding, carelessness, or partiality, recommends have been given to unworthy persons. This is a grave error-one that should be guarded against with every possible care. The Bishops and Presidents of Stakes should take every precaution that the House of the Lord is not defiled by the

intrusion of the unworthy through their recommendation. We strongly advise more caution and greater care in this regard. To the Saints we say that those who desire the blessing of entering into and officiating in these houses dedicated to the Most High should render themselves worthy thereof. They should live in harmony and peace at home, they should settle all their differences before attempting to enter this holy place, which should be a house of peace, a house of order. They should pray with their families morning and evening, and not neglect secret prayer; they should honestly pay their debts to all men, and not only to man, but remember also that which is due, as tithes and offerings, to the Giver of all. They should observe the Word of Wisdom in the spirit and meaning thereof, for it is most inconsistent to carry the smell of whiskey and tobacco into the sacred precincts of the Lord's House. Or in a word, they should observe to do and to keep all God's holy laws and commandments, that when they enter His House they can enjoy that spirit which gives zest, power and efficacy to their administrations. (Messages of the First Presidency, volume 3, page 63, March, 1886)

October 1894

The Word of Wisdom applies to Wilford Woodruff, the President of the Church, and it applies to all the leaders of Israel as well as to the members of the Church; and if there are any of these leading men who cannot refrain from using tobacco or liquor in violation of the Word of Wisdom let them resign and others take their places. As leaders of Israel, we have no business to indulge in these things. (Wilford Woodruff, Millennial Star 56:737, October 7, 1894)

May 1898

"President Woodruff said he regarded the Word of Wisdom in its entirety as given of the Lord for the Latter-day Saints to observe, but he did not think that Bishops should withhold recommends from persons who did not adhere strictly to it." (Minutes of First Presidency and Council of Twelve Meeting, Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," May 5, 1898, LDS Church Archives)

December 1902

Reports concerning the Sunday schools of the Church indicate that the organizations are progressing favorably, and that they are advancing satisfactorily. The special efforts made

by the brethren of the Deseret Sunday School Union Board in the matter of teaching the payment of tithes and keeping the Word of Wisdom are bearing good fruit, and the reports show a gratifying increase in the number of officers and pupils who observe both these requirements of heaven. (Messages of the First Presidency, volume 4, page 50, December 1902)

October 1908

PRESIDENT JOSEPH F. SMITH

OPENING ADDRESS...

When I arose to my feet, I had in mind the thought of presenting before this conference one of the revelations that has come to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith, a revelation with which you are all familiar, which has been the text, perhaps many a time, of every officer in the Church. It is a revelation which has been sounded in the ears of all the people for the last seventy years, and yet it is a new theme, practically, for there is still great necessity for it to be held out to the Latter-day Saints and to all the world. We see great reasons for the principles contained in this chapter of the book of Doctrine and Covenants being taught to the world, and especially to the Latter-day Saints. It is nothing more nor less than that simple Word of Wisdom that was given in 1833, for the benefit, the help, and the prosperity of the Latter-day Saints, that they might purify and prepare themselves to go nearer into the presence of the Lord, that by reason of keeping this law they might fit themselves to enjoy the blessings that He is more than willing to bestow upon them, if they are worthy. I propose to read this revelation to you and, perhaps, make a few remarks upon it:

[text of D&C 89:1-2 quoted]

Here we are informed that it was not given, at that time, by way of commandment or restraint but by revelation, "a word of wisdom showing forth the order and will of God in the temporal salvation of all saints in the last days." Subsequently, years afterwards, from this stand, it was proclaimed from the mouth of the Prophet and President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brigham Young, that the time had now come when this word of wisdom-then given not by commandment or constraint-was now a commandment of the Lord to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Lord required them to observe this word of wisdom and counsel, which is the will of God unto the people for their temporal salvation.

[text of D&C 89:3-21 quoted]

Now, it may seem altogether unnecessary and out of place, perhaps, to many, for me to occupy the time of this vast congregation in reading 'this revelation, inasmuch as it is presumable that every man and woman present has access to this book and is more or less familiar with all its contents. I am sorry to say that I do not believe there is another revelation contained in this book, or another commandment given of the Lord that is less observed or honored than this "Word of Wisdom," and that, too, by members and officers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, male and female. Go where you will, you see a lack of appreciation of the counsel given in this revelation to the Latter-day Saints, by some of them. Some of our best men disregard in part this law; many do not fully observe it; some of our leading women do not keep the commandment of the Lord that is given here, and they excuse themselves in various ways, and for various reasons, for not observing the law of God. I simply want to say to you my brethren and sisters, that there is no other course that we can take in the world, in relation to our temporal welfare and health, better than that which the Lord God has pointed out to us. Why can we not realize this?... The man or woman who truly believes in the doctrines of the Church or professing to have membership in the Church, who believes and practices the principles contained in this "Word of Wisdom," will never be numbered among those who will bring this disgrace upon them, upon their neighbors or upon the Church to which they belong; they will never do it....

Now, my brethren and sisters, the subject that I had in view in reading these words is simply to emphasize, as far as it lies in my power, the Word of Wisdom, given to the Latter-day Saints to all that are or can be called saints to the weakest of the weak, for it is adapted to them, and the weaker they are, if they will observe this principle, they will become stronger by the observance of it....

Now, the Lord bless you, and in the name of the Lord I bless you -this congregation, the covenant people of the Lord, just as truly as ancient Israel were the covenant people of God, for you have entered into the solemn covenant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that you will keep the commandments of God, that you will eschew evil and wickedness. You know what you have done; you know the nature of the covenants you have entered into before God and witnesses and before the angels of heaven; and, therefore, you have entered into the bond of the new and everlasting covenant and are indeed the covenant people of God

in the latter days. Therefore, what manner of people ought we to be; what manner of individuals should we be? Should we not set an example worthy of our profession? Should we not live pure lives? Should we not be upright, virtuous, honest, God-fearing and God-loving in our souls every day of our lives and in every position in which we may be called to act; ought we not to set an example for good? Ought we not to be Christ-like, manly, true to every principle of the Gospel, and honorable out in the world and at home so that no man can justly point at us the finger of scorn or of condemnation? That is indeed the kind of people we ought to be. God help us to be such is my prayer, in the name of Jesus. Amen. (Messages of the First Presidency, volume 4, pages 178-186, October 4, 1908)

March 1913

We are greatly in need of more missionaries. We have received a number of requests from the various missions for more elders, and some of the mission presidents have written that if their forces are not reinstated it will be necessary to close down some of the fields where elders are now laboring....

Each bishop, before filling out the recommendation blank, should read the instructions thereon and follow them. Of late a number of brethren have been recommended who do not observe the Word of Wisdom. We feel that brethren should live up to this requirement before they are recommended for missions, and if a brother does not observe the Word of Wisdom, his bishop should take up a labor with him before sending his name to us to receive a missionary call, as brethren have reported at this office to be set apart who were users of tobacco and in some cases strong drinks. We feel that brethren should overcome their weaknesses at home and form good habits, so that it will not be necessary for them to overcome them in the mission field and bring reproach upon the other elders as well as the Church. (Messages of the First Presidency, volume 4, pages 283-284, March 15, 1913)

October 1919

INSTRUCTIONS TO MISSION PRESIDENTS

[...]

Temple Recommends

Presidents of Missions are not authorized to give temple recommends; these are issued by the President of the Church for mission members; upon obtaining suitable letters of recommendation from Mission Presidents for such members. Letters

of recommendation should be given only to those who have been members of the Church at least a year, and in good standing for one year prior to giving the recommend. It must be known that they keep the Word of Wisdom, pay their tithing and otherwise are good members. Each letter of recommendation should specify what particular blessing the person is recommended to receive. (Messages of the First Presidency, volume 5, pages 157-163, October 8, 1919)

October 1942

For more than half a century President Grant has on every appropriate occasion admonished the Saints touching their obligation to keep the Word of Wisdom. He has told them what it means to them in matters of health, quoting the words of the Lord thereon. He has pointed out that treasures of knowledge, even hidden knowledge, would come to those who lived the law. He has, over and over again, shown what it would mean financially to every member who would keep the law, what it would mean financially to our people, and what it would mean financially to a nation. He has told us what it would mean in ending human woes, misery, sorrow, disease, crime, and death. But his admonitions have not found a resting place in all our hearts.

We, the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, now solemnly renew all these counsels, we repeat all these admonitions, we reinvoke obedience to God's law of health given us by God Himself.

We repeat here the directions heretofore given by President Grant: We ask that every General Authority, every stake and ward officer, every officer of Priesthood quorums, every auxiliary officer in ward, stake, or general board, every president of mission, every regular or stake missionary, in short, every officer in every Church organization, strictly to keep the Word of Wisdom from this moment forward. If any feels too weak to do this, we must ask him to step aside for someone who is willing and able so to do, for there are thousands of Latter-day Saints who are willing to obey the commandments and who are able to carry on the work of the Lord.

We ask all Church presiding officers immediately to set their official houses in order.

The Lord will not otherwise fully prosper us in our service in His cause, wherefore we shall stand accused before Him that we walked not in the lead of His flock in the full stature of worthy, righteous example. Furthermore, we make a like call upon all these officers to keep also the law of tithing, to live the

law of strictest chastity, and to observe and do the commandments of the Lord.

That in these dire days, we may, each in his own place, enjoy the abundant physical blessings of the righteous life, we call upon all true Latter-day Saints, in or out of office, to keep this law of health, -completely to give up drink, to quit using tobacco, which all too often leads to drink, to abandon hot drinks and the use of harmful drugs, and otherwise to observe the Word of Wisdom. We urge the Saints to quit trifling with this law and so to live it that we may claim its promises. (Messages of the First Presidency, volume 6, pages 172-173, October 3, 1942)

October 1989

Some have even used as an alibi the fact that drugs are not mentioned in the Word of Wisdom. What a miserable excuse. There is likewise no mention of the hazards of diving into an empty swimming pool or of jumping from an overpass onto the freeway. But who doubts the deadly consequences of such? Common sense would dictate against such behavior. ([Gordon B. Hinckley, October 1981, General Conference, Priesthood Session](#))

Copyright © 2021 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurt.neumiller@gmail.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.