Contributions for Emigrating the Saints—Word of Wisdom

Remarks by President George A. Smith, delivered in the New Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, April 6, 1869.

I am glad, my brethren and sisters, of meeting with you again in General Conference. Our Conferences form a peculiar feature in our history, and the people in all parts of the Territory look forward to these occasions with far more than ordinary interest, and make calculations to participate therein.

The past six months have been a period of remarkable interest. There has been a marked advancement in the progress of the work of the Lord and a great increase and improvement in the knowledge, sentiments, and feelings of the Saints since our last Conference, perhaps more so than in the same space of time at any period in the history of the Church since its organization. The Saints are becoming more united in their business relations, and in all their associations for the purpose of accomplishing the work that is before them, and if the old adage, "Union is strength," be true, we are certainly growing stronger.

The teachings during this Conference will, as a matter of course, have a tendency to increase this union, to enlarge the understandings and judgments of the Saints, and to banish certain antiquated ideas which, more or less, have been woven into our being, and have formed part of our existence, enable us to free ourselves from the shackles of tradition and ignorance and to move forward more effectually in the discharge of those duties devolving upon us in connection with the great and glorious work which God has entrusted to our charge. It will also be necessary for us to take into consideration the different points pertaining to the progress of that work.

It was a saying of Joseph Smith, that he taught the people correct principles and they governed themselves. A feeling has been engendered and sent abroad that the Latter-day Saints are subject to bondage; but instead of this being so, they are controlled wholly on the principle to which I have just referred, as having been enunciated by Joseph—they are taught correct principles and then govern themselves. When the elders of Israel have succeeded in informing the minds of the Saints in relation to any topic pertaining to the work of God in the last days, they have accomplished a great work, and that work is followed by a feeling of willingness and obedience to carry out that principle on the part of the great mass of the Saints.

Last year we made an effort to bring home the Saints from the Old World, and a pretty strong emigration was the result. It will be remembered that when the matter was first agitated, it seemed as if there was but a small amount of means to be obtained. Many of the brethren in the wards felt that they could do but little, but they went to work and brought home some five thousand Saints. This same work is still before us, and appeals to our sympathy, and we still have occasion to call the attention of each other to the importance of the work of bringing home to Zion our brethren and sisters in foreign lands who are deprived of the privileges that we enjoy because of their inability to gather. An appeal is to be made from this Conference to the Saints generally throughout the Territory, to contribute again of their substance to bring home the Saints from foreign lands.

The facilities for gathering the Saints are far greater than they have been heretofore. We wish to say to any of those who are already gathered, who may be indebted to those who are left behind, that they should remember and discharge their obligations. We also advise the Saints to write to their friends abroad and inform them how things are progressing here. I am aware that when the people land here there are many inconveniences with which they have to contend, and they have to struggle for a time before they can again make a start in the world; but they should not, on that account, forget the brethren and sisters they have left behind, and especially those who may have advanced means to aid them in emigrating. One of our first great duties should be to square our accounts and to stand honorably with our fellow beings.

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.

It has been my privilege this last month to visit most of the branches in the southern part of the Territory. At a large portion of those branches I have attended meetings, and have seen many of the brethren and sisters, and I feel to testify that in all my travels in Zion, I have not found a better spirit, a more united determination, or a warmer feeling with regard to the work of the Lord, and to build up His kingdom, than I found on this visit. I felt thankful to learn that our brethren in the cotton country were filled with the spirit and were zealous for the accomplishment of their work, and that they were progressing very satisfactorily in the accomplishment of their mission, or at any rate that portion of them who have taken hold of it with the zeal which becomes men who are honored with the privilege of laboring in any department for the building up of Zion. The testimony of the work of the Lord in the hearts of the Saints is a living and abiding testimony. While the work is progressing we must be alive to the fact, and we must not get behind, we must be faithful, live humble before the Lord, observe His counsels and laws, not even forgetting the principles contained in the “Word of Wisdom.” If we take this course the blessings of life and peace will continue to abide with us, which may God grant in the name of Jesus. Amen.