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DISCOURSE

Delivered by President George Q. Cannon, at the Parowan Stake Conference, Parowan, Monday, June 20, 1892.

REPORTED BY ARTHUR WINTER.

As I see a good many of the youth present, I would like to give our boys a little chapter of my experience. My hair is growing white now, and although I do not think I am old, I suppose everybody else would call me old. I therefore may say something that if I were younger might not be deemed proper. When I was a boy I made up my mind that I would be just as good a boy as I possibly could be. When I was quite a young fellow I had a very dear friend. He was the most brilliant young man, of his age, that I ever knew in this Church. Some of our associates would drink whisky when they could get it, and he found fault with me because I did not drink whisky. Said he, "George, you are unsociable. Why can't you drink a little whisky with the boys? It won't hurt you. I don't care anything about whisky, but I like to be sociable; and it don't look well for us to refuse to drink with them." I said, "All right, so far as you are concerned, but I don't drink whisky." And I refused to taste it. Well, I know that it made me an unsociable young man with them. He was a man of fine promise and occupied prominent positions; but when he was thirty-four years of age he filled a drunkard's grave, and left this reputation as a dreadful legacy to his family. When I talked and reasoned with him he did not think that he would ever become a drunkard. He said that he did not care about liquor. But that was his fate.

Since then I have been in a great deal of society where wine drinking has been common, and where smoking has been the rule, and it is my experience that I was always more respected than if ever I had either drunk or smoked. I lost no credit in any society that I have ever been in for not partaking of these things. On the contrary, I found that I had more influence, because men will respect others who are firm in these matters. There is no man who drinks that does not in his soul feel that he would be better off if he did not drink, and he admires a man

who does not drink. Now, I am at my present age and I have never drunk a glass of liquor in my life. I made up my mind when I was a boy that I would neither smoke nor chew tobacco, and I never have. I made up my mind also that I would not drink tea or coffee, and I have observed that through my life, and I know I am healthier and better for it.

I started out in life in that way. I wanted to be a Latter-day Saint, and I wanted to be an Elder in this Church. That was the highest ambition I ever had. I never wanted to hold any other office; but I did desire exceedingly that I might be considered worthy to preach the Gospel of the Son of God. When that office was conferred upon me, that was all I desired. I have shrunk from holding office. I have besought my brethren not to choose me to fill positions. I knew when I was a boy that I should be chosen one of the Apostles, and I have gone out more than once in secret and besought the Lord to choose somebody else, for I did not want to fill that position. I dreaded it, for I knew how serious a thing it would be to hold so sacred an office as that of an Apostle. I have asked God, if I could be saved and exalted without that office, to choose someone else. When I was chosen one of the First Presidency I besought President Taylor and my brethren not to choose me; that there were others who were far more capable than I to fill the position. But it was so ordered, and I have endeavored to the best of my ability, in humility, to fill that position.

I do not speak in this strain to excite in your minds ambition for office; but to encourage you to put yourselves in positions where you can be useful. Do not acquire these miserable habits. Do not allow intoxicating beverages to touch your lips. Do not fall into the destructive habit of smoking cigarettes and chewing tobacco. Do not give way to drinking tea or coffee and other things of this kind. Be Latter-day Saints. Be firm wherever you are, and set an example to everybody.

I want to say that much to the young boys. I need not say it to the girls; for it is a remarkable thing that women, as a rule, do not drink liquor nor use tobacco. They are not given to these evil practices, and in this respect they set an example to their brothers, to their sons, to their husbands, and in some instances, no doubt, to their

fathers. The women in this Church are worthy of all praise. They are more attentive to their meetings, more faithful in the observance of the duties that devolve upon them, and have proved stauncher advocates of the truth and shown less treachery in our recent troubles than the men have. I know that God is exceedingly pleased with the women of this Church, for they have shown characteristics that are worthy of the angels in heaven. I know that God will bless the mothers and the daughters of Zion for their fidelity to the Gospel and for the devotion that they manifest. And the men of this Church might take lessons from the sisters in the way they attend to meetings and perform the other duties that devolve upon them. Therefore, I say it is not necessary to talk to our sisters about drinking. I do not know a woman in the Church, of any standing, that ever touches any intoxicating drinks. I do not know a woman in the church that smokes or chews tobacco. A young man would think he was courting a queer sort of a girl if, when he went to visit her, she should pull out a cigarette and commence smoking, and ask him if he would not take a smoke; or she should produce a bottle of beer and ask him if he would not take a glass of beer with her. And why have they not just as much right to do that as the boys have? Why have not the girls as much right to drink liquor or beer and smoke or chew tobacco as the boys have? I cannot see why one sex should have liberties of this kind that it is considered improper for the other sex to take. I think if a man drinks he should not be startled if his wife does the same; and if he makes a drunkard of her by his example, he will have a great deal to answer for.

These are things, my brethren and sisters, that enter into our everyday lives. I would like myself to see a generation of young men growing up that would abstain from these vices. And we who are fathers should set examples of this kind. I know it is not necessary to be talking to our families all the time about the Word of Wisdom, if we set a proper example ourselves; but if we do not set such an example, then we have to be continually talking in order to counteract the influence of our own example. I feel that fathers will have much to answer for in these matters; for if a man takes a correct course in this direction, his