

CHAPTER NINE

THE ARTICLES AND COVENANTS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

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In 1959 Brenda Daily and her brother Bill attended Ravenna High School in Ravenna, Ohio. They had recently moved there with their family from the Canal Zone, where their father, William D. Daily, served in the military. While in the Canal Zone, these two young people had learned conversational Spanish. They were anxious to study the language at their new school. Unfortunately the school was not large enough for a regular Spanish class; however, the principal, Wayne E. Watters, had experience teaching Spanish. He was willing to teach a class before school if Brenda and Bill could also get some other students to attend. They found several willing classmates, and soon they had an enthusiastic class functioning.

During the year, Mr. Watters found out that Bill and Brenda were Latter-day Saints. Once he knew that, he had several discussions with them about the Church. On one occasion he mentioned that his wife's father had an early document of the LDS Church in his possession. He told them that the family had preserved it through four generations. His wife's maiden name is Virginia Ryder, and she is a great-great-granddaughter of Symonds Ryder. He was an 1831 con-

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vert to the Church from Hiram, Ohio.¹ How Symonds Ryder obtained this document is an interesting story itself.²

Later in the year, during a serious illness, Wayne and Virginia Watters feared her father would soon die. They thought that he had no more use for the document, and so they gave it to Brenda.³ They felt it would be of greater value to a member of the Church than it was to them. Brenda took it to her father, and he immediately realized that it was a record of some worth. He conveyed it to the mission president in Ohio, who sent it to Church headquarters with the next missionary returning to Utah.⁴ The Church historian placed it in the archives of the Church, where researchers can have access to it today.

This document is in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery⁵ and is three pages in length. It begins, "A commandment from God unto Oliver how he should build up his Church & the manner thereof." It ends, "Written in the year of our Lord & Saviour 1829—A true copy of the Articles of the Church of Christ &c."⁶

The body of the document is composed of scriptures from the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants interspersed with inspired commentary by Oliver Cowdery.⁷ Through these, Oliver Cowdery established several important doctrinal truths. First, because the world is becoming a more wicked place, there is a great need to repent and be baptized. He then explained the procedures for proper baptism.

Second, he established that men are to be ordained to the priesthood, and he demonstrated the proper method of performing these ordinations. Those who are so ordained are to pray for the Church and teach the members the truths of the gospel.

Third, he explained the doctrine concerning the sacrament. The members are to meet together often to partake of it. He related from the scriptures the form of the ordinance, including the prayers that should be said. He also included the warning from 3 Nephi about partaking of the sacrament unworthily.

Fourth, he taught that the Church members should meet together often to tell each other of their progress toward eternal life, and he explained a standard of moral conduct which every member should live. He also explained that those who will not repent must be cast out of the Church.

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Finally, he issued a call for all people to come to Christ and take His name upon them. If they will walk uprightly before the Lord, then His grace is sufficient for them.

There is a close connection between this 1829 manuscript of Oliver Cowdery and section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The title of section 20 in the surviving manuscripts and early published copies is "The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ." The title of section 20 as it was published in *The Evening and the Morning Star*, in the June 1832 issue, is the same, and it is similar to the title of Oliver Cowdery's early manuscript, "The Articles of the Church of Christ." Section 20 also contains some of the Book of Mormon scriptures quoted by Oliver Cowdery in his manuscript. Oliver Cowdery's manuscript is an early forerunner to the more comprehensive section 20. The following is an attempt to reconstruct the events leading to the composition of both the 1829 "Articles" and our present Doctrine and Covenants 20.

In section 20 are short statements about the origin of the Church, the basic doctrines, and the ordinances. There are also statements about the duties of members and priesthood bearers. The intent of the articles and covenants was to provide members and investigators with a summary about the Church. In one short reading they could gain a comprehensive overview of the whole Church.⁸ The Lord may have inspired the Prophet Joseph Smith to assign Oliver Cowdery to write the early "Articles."

Oliver Cowdery had wanted to know what material to put into the "Articles of the Church" and approached the Prophet for help. Joseph Smith prayed about the matter and received the revelation known as Doctrine and Covenants 18. In verse 1 of section 18 we learn that the Lord gave this revelation because of "the thing" that Oliver Cowdery desired to know. Oliver Cowdery wanted to know what to write.

The Lord told Oliver Cowdery He had manifested to him many times that the things he had written were true (see D&C 18:2). Oliver Cowdery was the principal scribe for the Book of Mormon as the Prophet dictated it.

The Lord told Oliver Cowdery to rely on the things he had written that he already knew were true (see D&C 18:3). That is, he was

to get the information he needed for the 1829 “Articles” of the Church from the Book of Mormon.

The Lord said He placed “all things . . . concerning the foundation of [His] church” in the Book of Mormon (D&C 18:4). The Lord had already inspired prophets to put in that book the basic principles Oliver Cowdery needed for the earliest procedural statement of the Church of Christ. The Lord told Oliver to “build up my church, upon the foundation of my gospel” (D&C 18:5). If he did, the gates of hell could not prevail against him. Note that Oliver Cowdery included the phrase “build up my church” in the introduction of the Ryder document. Oliver Cowdery then composed his three-page version of the articles of the Church from Book of Mormon scriptures. This is the same document that Symonds Ryder acquired.

Oliver Cowdery must have submitted his manuscript to Joseph Smith, but the 1829 Articles were superceded in the first half of 1830 by the articles and covenants. Cowdery’s document remained with the official papers of the Church until Ryder acquired them in the summer of 1831.⁹

The importance attached to Doctrine and Covenants 20 by early members of the Church is obvious from the many historical accounts of its use. Joseph Smith had the articles and covenants of the Church read aloud at the first conference of the Church in June 1830. The members of the Church then received it as the word of the Lord by the “unanimous voice of the whole congregation.”¹⁰ Thus, section 20 became the first revelation of this dispensation canonized by the Church.¹¹ Since that time, the leaders of the Church have made sure that the basic practices of the Church correspond with this revelation. Possibly the earliest example of this is the issuance of ten priesthood licenses during the June 9, 1830, conference.¹² Joseph Smith and other leaders read the articles and covenants to the congregation at succeeding conferences. Presumably they did that so members and new converts might retain in their minds the truths revealed in it.¹³

Such men as Zebedee Coltrin, Orson Hyde, A. Sidney Gilbert, Orson Pratt, and others had manuscript copies of this revelation. They took their copies with them when they went on short missionary journeys or on preaching assignments to branches of the Church. They read the articles and covenants of the Church aloud in the meetings they conducted for the benefit of those people.¹⁴

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A major division of section 20 is correlated to the priesthood of God. Many priesthood certificates of that time recorded that the bearer had been ordained “according to the Articles and Covenants of the Church.”¹⁵

Several other revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants refer to the articles and covenants of the Church, including 28:12, 14; 33:14; 42:13; 51:4; 68:24; and 107:12, 63. The Lord, in each of these passages, requested the Saints to remember the articles and covenants and to obey the principles revealed there.

The articles and covenants of the Church may have served an additional purpose. Some researchers feel that it may be the certificate of incorporation that the state of New York required of churches. Any group that wanted recognition as a legally organized religious society had to submit such a certificate. Researchers have never found any document submitted by this Church in the government archives in New York. There is even a possibility that no one ever submitted it.¹⁶ The beginning verses of section 20 are certainly reminiscent of a legal document, and some think it may be the missing certificate.

The importance of section 20 has not diminished over the years. For example, President Harold B. Lee emphasized the principles revealed in section 20 during his administration.¹⁷ Also, according to my own statistics, the General Authorities since 1974 cite only sections 84, 88, and 121 from the Doctrine and Covenants more often than they cite section 20.¹⁸

Doctrine and Covenants 20 contains some passages of scripture quoted directly from the Book of Mormon. Several other passages are paraphrased or summarized. The sacrament prayers are probably the most widely known of these scriptures. Moroni recorded them in Moroni 4:3 and 5:2, and Joseph Smith published them as verses 77 and 79 of section 20. Joseph Smith also included the instruction in Moroni 6:6 to partake of the sacrament frequently as verse 75 in section 20.

Verse 73 of section 20 contains the baptismal prayer from 3 Nephi 11:25. The phrase “having authority given me of Jesus Christ” appears in all sources of section 20 before 1835, including the extant manuscripts of section 20 and the published accounts in the Book of Commandments and *The Evening and the Morning Star*. Joseph Smith altered the phrase to read “having been commissioned of Jesus

Christ” in the 1835 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. That is the form of the prayer we use today. Joseph Smith also included the additional instructions concerning baptism from 3 Nephi 11:23–26 in verses 73 and 74 of section 20.

Moroni taught, in Moroni 3:4, how men are to be ordained to the priesthood. Joseph Smith included these same instructions in verse 60. He also placed in verse 37 the prerequisites for baptism that are given in Moroni 6:1–3.¹⁹

The elders are to conduct Church meetings as the Holy Ghost directs them. This teaching comes from Moroni 6:9. Joseph Smith published this same doctrine in verse 45. Moroni recorded his teachings concerning transgressors in Moroni 6:7, and Joseph Smith included this material in verses 80 through 83.

President Ezra Taft Benson said: “In the twentieth section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord devotes several verses to summarizing the vital truths which the Book of Mormon teaches (see D&C 20:17–36). It speaks of God, the creation of man, the Fall, the Atonement, the ascension of Christ into heaven, prophets, faith, repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost, endurance, prayer, justification and sanctification through grace, and loving and serving God.

“We must know these essential truths. Aaron and Ammon and their brethren in the Book of Mormon taught these same kinds of truths to the Lamanite people (see Alma 18:22–39), who were ‘in the darkest abyss’ (Alma 26:3). After accepting these eternal truths, the Book of Mormon states, those converted Lamanites never did fall away. (See Alma 23:6.)”²⁰

Joseph Smith included a large number of passages from the Book of Mormon in Doctrine and Covenants 20. The placement of these scriptures in the articles and covenants of the Church affirms that present Church leaders are to implement the same doctrines and teachings that the Savior gave anciently to the people of the Book of Mormon. Many of these passages of scripture come from the book of Moroni. We can be eternally grateful that Moroni was granted the time and had the inclination to include this book in the record, because including it was “contrary to that which [he] had supposed” (Moroni 1:4).

Doctrine and Covenants 20 also instructs us about the Book of Mormon. Verses 6–9 include information about the origin of the

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Book of Mormon and the mission of Moroni to Joseph Smith. The Lord states in verse 9 that the Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the gospel of Christ. Moroni revealed this truth to Joseph Smith in his first visit to the Prophet in September 1823 (see Joseph Smith—History 1:34). The Lord further stated it in Doctrine and Covenants 27:5 and 42:12. President Benson explained precisely what this phrase means:

“The Lord Himself has stated that the Book of Mormon contains the ‘fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ’ (D&C 20:9). That does not mean it contains every teaching, every doctrine ever revealed. Rather, it means that in the Book of Mormon we will find the fulness of those doctrines required for our salvation. And they are taught plainly and simply so that even children can learn the ways of salvation and exaltation. The Book of Mormon offers so much that broadens our understandings of the doctrines of salvation. Without it, much of what is taught in other scriptures would not be nearly so plain and precious.”²¹

In Doctrine and Covenants 20:10, the Lord uses the testimony of the Three Witnesses and the Eight Witnesses to declare to mankind that the Book of Mormon is true.²² Those testimonies are part of every copy of the Book of Mormon, and every reader of the book has access to them. Angels who ministered to the witnesses “confirmed” the testimonies they bear. Elder Sterling W. Sill of the Seventy made an interesting point about the power of the testimony of these witnesses:

“I said to my friend, ‘If you were on trial for your life and you had this kind of testimony out against you, you wouldn’t have a chance. This kind of testimony where eleven men say they saw and they heard and they know would be accepted in any court of law, either human or divine.’ And I patted him on the leg again and said, ‘Now my friend, I think you have great abilities, but if you understood this testimony then I don’t think you [would] have enough courage to disbelieve in the Book of Mormon. In this case, you have the kind of courage my little granddaughter has. I have a granddaughter two years old and she is very courageous. If you were to put her here on the floor with three rattlesnakes around her she would not have the slightest fear where I would be almost scared to death. The difference being that I know more about the situation than she does.’ And I

would say about anyone in this assembly who understands this testimony that he would not dare disbelieve the Book of Mormon or disobey its counsel."²³

Verse 11 of Doctrine and Covenants 20 adds two additional truths concerning the Book of Mormon. First, the Book of Mormon proves to the people of the world that the Bible is true. President Brigham Young taught, "No man can say that this book (laying his hand on the Bible) is true, is the word of the Lord, is the way, is the guide-board in the path, and a charter by which we may learn the will of God; and at the same time say, that the Book of Mormon is untrue; if he has had the privilege of reading it, or of hearing it read, and learning its doctrines. There is not that person on the face of the earth who has had the privilege of learning the Gospel of Jesus Christ from these two books, that can say that one is true, and the other is false. No Latter-day Saint, no man or woman, can say the Book of Mormon is true, and at the same time say that the Bible is untrue. If one be true, both are; and if one be false, both are false."²⁴

The Book of Mormon verifies the truths of the Bible in several ways. The Book of Mormon testifies that the Bible is a true record of God's dealings with Israel (see Mormon 7:9, for example). It also states that wicked men have removed many "plain and precious" truths from the record. The Book of Mormon tells of the modern Bible and how early settlers brought it to the Americas. Also, prophets in the Book of Mormon quote many Old and New Testament passages in their writings. Finally, many historic events in the one are corroborated in the other.

The second truth we learn in Doctrine and Covenants 20:11 is that the Book of Mormon establishes the actuality of prophets in our own day. President Benson explained how the Book of Mormon does that:

"We are to use the Book of Mormon in handling objections to the Church. God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ revealed themselves to Joseph Smith in a marvelous vision. After that glorious event, Joseph Smith told a minister about it. Joseph was surprised to hear the minister say that there were no such things as visions or revelations in these days, that all such things had ceased [see Joseph Smith—History 1:21].

"This remark symbolizes practically all of the objections that have

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ever been made against the Church by nonmembers and dissident members alike. Namely, they do not believe that God reveals his will today to the Church through prophets of God. All objections, whether they be on abortion, plural marriage, seventh-day worship, etc., basically hinge on whether Joseph Smith and his successors were and are prophets of God receiving divine revelation. Here, then, is a procedure to handle most objections through the use of the Book of Mormon.

“First, understand the objection.

“Second, give the answer from revelation.

“Third, show how the correctness of the answer really depends on whether or not we have modern revelation through modern prophets.

“Fourth, explain that whether or not we have modern prophets and revelation really depends on whether the Book of Mormon is true.

“Therefore, the only problem the objector has to resolve for himself is whether the Book of Mormon is true. For if the Book of Mormon is true, then Jesus is the Christ, Joseph Smith was his prophet, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true, and it is being led today by a prophet receiving revelation.”²⁵

In Doctrine and Covenants 20:12, the Lord teaches that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This conclusion can be drawn because the Book of Mormon establishes the truth of the Bible and because there are living prophets on the earth. Living prophets and additional scripture are features of all past dispensations. This dispensation is no different from past ones, and so God is the same today.

The Lord reveals in Doctrine and Covenants 20:13 that He will judge those who “come to a knowledge” of the Book of Mormon. Those who accept the Book of Mormon and who obey the commandments in it will “receive a crown of eternal life” (D&C 20:14). Those who reject the Book of Mormon will find that that decision “shall turn to their own condemnation” (D&C 20:15).²⁶

One important truth that the Lord revealed in section 20 is that He will hold all those who “come to a knowledge” of the Book of Mormon accountable for what they know (D&C 20:13). Moroni said he will meet every person who has had knowledge of the Book of

Mormon at the judgment bar of God. In Ether 12:38–39, Moroni says they will then know that his garments are not spotted with their blood. He taught them all God commanded him to teach them, and they are now accountable for their own actions.

In Moroni 10:27–29, Moroni says the Lord will ask every one of them if they had the words “written by this man.” God will then declare that He revealed His word to Moroni. He will also declare that Moroni wrote the truth. Moroni then urges those who have the Book of Mormon to come to Christ and forsake all evil so they won’t be condemned.

Moroni made a third statement to the readers of the Book of Mormon in Moroni 10:34. This is the last verse of scripture in the Book of Mormon. Moroni promises he will meet them at the “pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead.” Judgment will be a pleasant experience for those who have made their lives conform to the standards taught in the Book of Mormon. They will stand with Moroni at the judgment bar of God and receive a crown of eternal life (see D&C 20:14).

Nephi also promised that he would meet the readers of the Book of Mormon at the time of judgment. In 2 Nephi 33:11–15, Nephi attests that the Lord will then declare that Nephi wrote the truth. Nephi urges the readers to abide by the principles he taught. If they will not, he bids them an everlasting farewell. Nephi knew that he would have eternal life. He knew that those who read his record would not have the same reward unless they would also obey the truth.

Jacob, who was Nephi’s brother, also promised to meet the readers of the Book of Mormon at the time of judgment. In his account, Jacob 6:13, he speaks of the pleasing bar of God. The bar is pleasing to those who have not wasted their probation; however, this bar “strieth the wicked with awful dread and fear.” They are fearful because they are facing the condemnation the Lord promised in Doctrine and Covenants 20:15.

All the Book of Mormon scriptures found in Doctrine and Covenants 20 teach that the Book of Mormon is a significant component of the work of the Lord in this dispensation.

Until the revelations were put in chronological order in the 1876 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, section 20 was always the

second revelation in the book, immediately following the Lord's preface to this book of scripture. Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants integrates the teachings of the Book of Mormon into the Church of this dispensation. It emphasizes the eternal covenants and commitments required by the Lord of the Nephites and also of us. It sets the same standard of conduct for us that the Savior set during His ministry to the Book of Mormon people. It is, in reality, a constitution to guide us in these latter days.

NOTES

1. The Lord called Symonds Ryder on a mission. Unfortunately, Joseph Smith's scribe who wrote the letter notifying him of the call misspelled his name. Symonds Ryder complained about the Spirit that called him on a mission. If it could not spell his name correctly, then perhaps it erred in calling him on a mission. And so he refused to go. His name is still not spelled correctly in the Doctrine and Covenants and other Church publications. His tombstone and his signature give the spelling as *Symonds Ryder*, not *Symonds Rider* or *Simonds Ryder*.
2. In 1868, just two years before he died, Symonds Ryder told an acquaintance that when Joseph Smith and the other Church authorities visited Zion (Jackson County, Missouri) in the summer of 1831, they "left their papers behind." While not specifically identifying himself as one of the "new converts," Symonds described how the "new converts [took] an opportunity to become acquainted with the internal arrangement of their church" (Symonds Ryder to A. S. Hayden, February 1, 1868, published in A. S. Hayden, *Early History of the Disciples in the Western Reserve, Ohio* [Cincinnati: Chase & Hall Publishers, 1876], 221). In addition to Oliver Cowdery's 1829 articles, Symonds Ryder had in his possession manuscript copies of the following revelations: Doctrine and Covenants 20, 35, 36, 42, 52, and 56. This listing was noted by then LDS Church archivist Earl Olson in his May 27, 1964, type-written notation on William D. Daily's September 27, 1960 statement, in the Archives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter cited as Church Archives), that accompanied the documents to Salt Lake City. It seems that Ryder was concerned about the recent revelation on the law of consecration (D&C 42:30–39) and that his farm in Hiram might be taken from him for Church use. It is interesting to note that Ryder ended up with manuscript copies of Cowdery's 1829 articles, the 1830 articles and covenants (D&C 20), and the law of the Church (D&C 42).
3. Virginia Ryder Watters's father recovered, however, and was upset

that they had given the documents away. The Church Archives did supply him with a set of photocopies.

4. As mentioned in the note above, William D. Daily's September 27, 1960, statement accompanied the documents to the Church Archives in Salt Lake City.
5. Dean C. Jessee, then of the LDS Church's History Division, verified that the handwriting was that of Oliver Cowdery.
6. This is a *corrected* reading. It was originally misread as "O.C." (Oliver Cowdery's initials) at the time of my dissertation when, upon closer examination, the document actually reads "&c."—the archaic abbreviation for "etc." (see Scott H. Faulring, "An Examination of the 1829 'Articles of the Church of Christ' in Relation to Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants," *BYU Studies* [forthcoming]).
7. For the complete text of this document, see Faulring's upcoming article in *BYU Studies*.
8. Many other churches have formulated similar confessions of their faith. Some have designated these confessions as their creed, others as their platform, and still others as their articles of faith. In these confessions they intended to give a brief statement about their basic beliefs and doctrine. They also would include something about requirements for church membership and other information that would be useful to church members and investigators. These confessions have many parallels to Doctrine and Covenants 20. See an example in Milton V. Backman Jr., *American Religions and the Rise of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 446–56. See also Williston Walker, ed., *Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (New York, 1969), 367–402; and *The Confession of Faith and Covenant, of the Baptists Church of Christ in Middleborough, Bridgewater and Rayniam* (prepared by the Rev. Isaac Backus, and adopted by the First Baptist Church in Middleboro, at its organization, January 16, 1756). This document is subtitled Articles of Faith.
9. It is supposed that Ryder somehow gained access to these official papers at the second-floor office of the Prophet Joseph Smith in the Newel K. Whitney store in Kirtland, Ohio.
10. The Conference Minutes, and Record Book of Christ's Church of the Latter Day Saints (commonly called the "Far West Record"), Church Archives, 1. The Far West Record has been published in Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 1.
11. The members of the Church first voted on the other revelations when the Doctrine and Covenants was presented for a sustaining vote in 1835. They voted on the revelations again in 1880 after Brigham Young had Orson Pratt add twenty-six additional sections

to the book. In 1890 Lorenzo Snow presented Official Declaration 1 in general conference, and the members sustained it. In 1976 N. Eldon Tanner presented sections 137 and 138 in conference, and the members sustained them. He also presented Official Declaration 2 in 1978, and they sustained it.

12. Of the ten licenses written out by Oliver Cowdery that day, three have survived. All three refer to the authority of the articles and covenants (see Joseph Smith Sr. priest license, June 9, 1830, Joseph Smith Papers, Church Archives; John Whitmer elder license, June 9, 1830, Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University; and Christian Whitmer teacher license, June 9, 1830, Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library).
13. *Far West Record*, 1, 2, 11, 22; published in Cannon and Cook, eds., *Far West Record*, 1, 3, 20, 39.
14. See, for example, the following documents in the Church Archives: Evan Melbourne Green Journal (1833–35), 4, 15; Orson Pratt Journal, March 27, 1834; Wilford Woodruff Journal, February 26, 1836.
15. Cook, *Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 125. See also note 12 above.
16. Larry C. Porter, “A Study of the Origins of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the States of New York and Pennsylvania” (PhD dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1971), 374–86.
17. While I was doing research on the Doctrine and Covenants during the spring of 1973, Lauritz G. Petersen of the Historical Department of the Church requested a copy of anything I might find concerning Doctrine and Covenants 20. When I asked him why he wanted it, he said that President Lee had requested copies of any document historically connected with section 20. He wanted to administer the affairs of the Church using principles revealed in that section.
18. Database of scriptural quotations by General Authorities kept by the author.
19. The Prophet Joseph Smith added to these prerequisites that persons must also “truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto a remission of their sins.” During the summer of 1830, Oliver Cowdery wrote to the Prophet and commanded Joseph to delete this addition (see *History of the Church*, 1:104–5). Eventually Joseph was able to convince Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmer family (who agreed with Oliver that it should be removed) that the phrase was doctrinal and should be retained. Even though Oliver Cowdery was presumptuous in commanding the Prophet to remove this phrase, we can appreciate his forceful

approach when we remember that he wrote the earliest set of the articles of the Church and, as second elder, had a definite interest in the 1830 articles and covenants.

20. Ezra Taft Benson, "A New Witness for Christ," *Ensign*, November 1984, 7.
21. Ezra Taft Benson, "The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion," *Ensign*, November 1986, 6.
22. The Savior's own testimony concerning the Book of Mormon is in Doctrine and Covenants 17:6. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said of that testimony:
 "One of the most solemn oaths ever given to man is found in these words of the Lord relative to Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. 'He [meaning Joseph Smith] has translated the book, even that part which I have commanded him,' saith the Lord, 'and as your Lord and your God liveth it is true.' (D&C 17:6.)
 "This is God's testimony of the Book of Mormon. In it Deity himself has laid his godhood on the line. Either the book is true or God ceases to be God. There neither is nor can be any more formal or powerful, language known to men or gods" ("The Doctrine of the Priesthood," *Ensign*, May 1982, 33).
23. Sterling W. Sill, "Mormon and Moroni," address delivered at Salt Lake Institute of Religion devotional assembly, October 26, 1973, 8–9.
24. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855–86), 1:38.
25. Ezra Taft Benson, "The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God," *Ensign*, May 1975, 64–65.
26. This same doctrine is also taught in Doctrine and Covenants 5:15–19, and to a lesser extent in Doctrine and Covenants 10:23 and D&C 93:32.