

Mormon, which contains the truth and the word of God—

A 27. Which is my word to the Gentile, that soon it may go to the Jew, of whom the Lamanites are a remnant, that they may believe the gospel, and look not for a Messiah to come who has already come.

1-C 28. And again, I command thee that thou shalt pray vocally as well as in thy heart; yea, before the world as well as in secret, in public as well as in private.

2-C 29. And thou shalt declare glad tidings, yea, publish it upon the mountains, and upon every high place, and among every people that thou shalt be permitted to see.

B 30. And thou shalt do it with all humility, trusting in me, reviling not against revilers.

C 31. And of tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost.

D 32. Behold, this is a great and the last commandment which I shall give unto you concerning this matter; for this shall suffice for thy daily walk, even unto the end of thy life.

E 33. And misery thou shalt receive if thou wilt slight these counsels, yea, even the destruction of thyself and property.

F 34. Impart a portion of thy property, yea, even a part of thy lands, and all save the support of thy family.

G 35. Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage.

H 36. Leave thy house and home, except when thou shalt desire to see thy family;

I 37. And speak freely to all; yea, preach, exhort, declare the truth, even with a loud voice, with a sound of rejoicing, crying—Hosanna, hosanna, blessed be the name of the Lord God!

J 38. Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing—yea, even more than if you should obtain treasures of earth and corruptibleness to the extent thereof.

3 39. Behold, canst thou read this without rejoicing and lifting up thy heart for gladness?

A 40. Or canst thou run about longer as a blind guide?

4-C 41. Or canst thou be humble and meek, and conduct thyself wisely before me? Yea, come unto me thy Savior. Amen.

SECTION 20.

REVELATION on Church Organization and Government, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, April, 1830. Preceding his record of this revelation the Prophet wrote: We obtained of him [Jesus Christ] the following, by the spirit of prophecy and revelation; which not only gave us much information, but also pointed out to us the precise day upon which, according to his will and commandment, we should proceed to organize his Church once more here upon the earth. — The Lord again attests the genuineness of the Book of Mormon—He gives commandment respecting baptism—Defines the

o. see o, sec. 18. p. Om. 14—19. Moa. 25:2—4. Al. 22:30—32. He. 6:10. 8:21. q. see b, sec. 18. r. see h, sec. 3. s. see h, sec. 3. t. see m, sec. 5. u. see c, sec. 4.

Text Analysis: Page 29

A	W.A.	BC
B	W.C. which	BC
C	W.C. you	BC
D	W.C. to thyself	BC
E	W.C. to	D&C:1844-46; MS:8
F	W.A.	BC; D&C:1835; MHC; TS; MS:4
G	W.D. a	BC

Text Analysis: Page 29 (continued)

H	W.C.	printer's debt	BC
I	W.C.	them	BC
J	W.D.	the	MHC
1-C	S.C.	jew	MHC
2-C	S.C.	Gospel	MS:14; HC:1902
3	S.C.	Saviour	MS:4, 8, 14; D&C:1845L, 1849- 1920
4-C	S.C.	spirit	MS:4; D&C:1849-1869

Footnote Analysis: Page 29

1 1

## SECTION 20 OF THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS

### Historical Background

*When?*

The historical background of Section 20 is somewhat clouded by the inability of anyone to attach a date to it. Most of the entries in Table 20 omit the date, and those three that have it are anywhere up to three months in disagreement. The Manuscript History of the Church has the general date of 1830 for this section, the D&C has April 1830, and the Book of Commandments has June 1830. In the History of the Church, Section 20 (undated) precedes Section 19 (March 1830). Since all the revelations in the History of the Church are supposed to be in chronological order, this arrangement suggests Section 20 was received sometime prior to March 1830. Elder Orson Pratt believed Section 20 was given on April 6, 1830,<sup>1</sup> and in a feature article in the Millennial Star, Elder A.A. Ramseyer agreed with Elder Pratt. He wrote:

This revelation was, no doubt, given April 6, 1830, as it recites the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ in these last days, and immediately precedes Section 21, a revelation given on April 6, 1830, in which revelation the Apostleship of Joseph and Oliver is mentioned again.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Orson Pratt, Address delivered at Salt Lake City, October 10, 1880, Journal of Discourses, reporter George F. Gibbs, XXII (London, England, 1882), 32.

<sup>2</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], September 6, 1900, p. 566.

In actuality, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery may have received some of the information in this section in 1829, as they were making preparations to organize the Church. Many of the churches of that time had confessions, creeds, platforms, or articles of faith wherein they gave a brief statement about their church. Such a document included something about their basic beliefs, doctrine, expectations of the members of the church, and other such items that would be useful to the investigator or non-member.<sup>3</sup> Section 20, which became known as the Articles and Covenants of the Church, has many parallels to the confessions of the Christian churches of the day. Section 20 is composed of short statements about basic doctrines, ordinances, duties of members and priesthood bearers, and finally, the baptismal and sacrament prayers.

What appears to be an early draft of the Articles and Covenants of the Church, in Oliver Cowdery's handwriting, and housed in the Historical Department of the Church, is given in toto at this point because of its importance to the discussion:

A commandment from God unto Oliver how he should  
 build up his church & the manner thereof--  
 Saying Oliver listen to the voice of Christ your

---

<sup>3</sup>Milton V. Backman, Jr., American Religions and the Rise of Mormonism (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1970), pp. 451-464. See also William Walker, ed., Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism (New York, 1893); 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.

Lord & your God & your Redeemer & write the words which I shall command you concerning my Church my Gospel my Rock & my Salvation. Behold the world is ripening in iniquity & it must needs be that the children of men are stirred up unto repentance both the Gentiles & also the House of Israel for behold I command all men every where to repent & I speak unto you even as unto Paul mine apostle for ye are called even with that same calling with which he was called [Section 18:9] Now therefore whosoever repenteth & humbleth himself before me & desireth to be baptized in my name shall ye baptize them [See Section 20:37] And after this manner did he command me that I should baptize them Behold ye shall go down & stand in the water & in my name shall ye baptize them And now behold these are the words which ye shall say calling them by name saying Having authority given me of Jesus Christ I baptize you in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Ghost Amen And then shall ye immerse them in the water & come forth again out of the water & after this manner shall ye baptize in my name [Section 20:73] For behold verily I say unto you that the Father & the Son & the Holy Ghost are one & I am in the Father & the Father in me & the Father & I are one.

And ye are also called to ordain Priests & Teachers according to the gifts & callings of God unto men [Section 20:60] & after this manner shall ye ordain them Ye shall pray unto the Father in my name & then shall ye lay your hands upon them & say In the name of Jesus Christ I ordain you to be a Priest or if he be a Teacher I ordain you to be a Teacher to preach repentance & remission of sins through Jesus Christ by the endurance of faith on his name to the end Amen And this shall be the duty of the Priest He shall kneel down & the members of the Church shall kneel also which Church shall be called The Church of Christ & he shall pray to the Father in my name for the church & if it be so that it be built upon my Rock I will bless it And after that ye have prayed to the Father in my name ye shall preach the truth in soberness casting out none from among you but rather invite them to come And the Church shall oft partake of bread & wine & after this manner shall ye partake of it The Elder or Priest shall minister it & after this manner shall he do he shall kneel with the Church & pray to the Father in the name of Christ & then shall ye say O God the Eternal Father we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ to bless & sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it that they eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son & witness unto thee O God the Eternal Father that they are willing to take upon them the

name of thy Son & always remember him & keep his commandments which he hath given them that they may always have his spirit to be with them Amen And then shall ye take the cup & say O God the Eternal Father we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ to bless & sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it that they do in remembrance of the blood of thy Son which was shed for them that they may witness unto thee O God the Eternal Father that they do always remember him that they may have his spirit to be with them Amen [Section 20:75-79] And now behold I give unto you a commandment that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh & blood unworthily when ye shall minister it for whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh & blood unworthily eateth & drinketh damnation to his soul Therefore if ye know that a man is unworthy to eat & drink of my flesh & blood ye shall forbid him nevertheless ye shall not cast him out from among you but ye shall minister unto him & shall pray for him unto the Father in my name & if it so be that he repenteth & is baptized in my name then shall ye receive him & shall minister unto him of my flesh & blood but if he repenteth not he shall not be numbered among my people that he may not destroy my people For behold I know my sheep & they are numbered nevertheless ye shall not cast him out of your Synagogues or your places of worship for unto such shall ye continue to minister for ye know not but what they will return & repent & come unto me with full purpose of heart & I shall heal them & ye shall be the means of bringing Salvation unto them Therefore keep these sayings which I have commanded you that ye come not under condemnation for wo unto him whom the Father condemneth-- [III Nephi 18:29-32]

And the church shall meet together oft for prayer & supplication casting out none from your places of worship but rather invite them to come And each member shall speak & tell the church of their progress in the way of Eternal life. And there shall be no pride nor envying nor strifes nor malice nor idoletry nor witch crafts nor whoredoms nor fornications nor covetiousness nor lying nor deceits no manner of iniquity & if any one is guilty of any or the least of these & doth not repent & show fruits meet for repentance they shall not be numbered among my people that they may not destroy my people

And now I speak unto the Church Repent all ye ends of the Earth & come unto me & be baptized in my name which is Jesus Christ & endure to the end & ye shall be saved Behold Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father & there is none other name given whereby men can be saved Therefore all men must take upon them the name which is given of the

Father for in that name shall they be called at the last day Therefore if they know not the name by which they are called they cannot have place in the Kingdom of my Father [Section 18:22b-25] Behold ye must walk uprightly before me & sin not & if ye do walk uprightly before me & sin not my grace is sufficient for you that ye shall be lifted up at the last day [Section 17:8b] Behold I am Jesus Christ the Son of the living God I am the same which came unto my own & my own received me not I am the light which shineth in darkness & the darkness comprehendeth it not these words are not of men nor of man but of me [Section 18:34a] Now remember the words of him who is the first & the last the light & the life of the world And I Jesus Christ your Lord & your God & your Redeemer by the power of my Spirit have spoken it Amen-- And now if I have not authority to write these things judge ye behold ye shall know that I have authority when you & I shall be brought to stand before the judgment seat of God Now may \_\_\_\_\_ [missing] of God the Father & our Lord Jesus Christ be & abide with you all & \_\_\_\_\_ [missing] tly save you Eternally in his Kingdom through the Infinite atonement which is in Jesus Christ Amen-- Behold I am Oliver I am an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God the Father & the Lord Jesus Christ Behold I have written the things which he hath commanded me for behold his word was unto me as a burning fire shut up in my bones & I was weary with forbearing & I could forbear no longer Amen--

Written in the year of our Lord & Saviour 1829--  
A true Copy of the articles of the Church of Christ  
O.C. [Underscoring not in the original.]<sup>4</sup>

There are some items in this document that should be emphasized. First of all, it was a commandment from God for Oliver Cowdery to write these articles of the Church. If it was a commandment, how that commandment was received is important. If the procedure was the same then as now, such a commandment would have come through the Prophet. Secondly, most of this holograph consists of quotations taken from

---

<sup>4</sup> Oliver Cowdery, Articles of the Church of Christ, located in the HDC.

earlier revelations and the Book of Mormon. Most of these same Book of Mormon quotes are retained in the current form of Section 20. Finally, this document was called the Articles of the Church of Christ. This is just about the same name given Section 20 during the first decade of the Church.

If this document really is a forerunner to Section 20, two problems concerning this section are, in part, answered. First, this section has had numerous additions and deletions. In the Kirtland reprint of the Evening and Morning Star, this section, basically as it appears in the D&C, is entitled: "The Articles and Covenants of the Church [With a few items from other revelations.]"<sup>5</sup> At one time Section 22 was part of this section, and then later deleted.<sup>6</sup> Also, verses 66 and 67 are later additions.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, if Section 20 is a composite, then these additions and deletions would be a natural part of the process of such a compilation.

The second item involves an angry letter that Oliver Cowdery wrote to the Prophet Joseph Smith in July or August of 1830 demanding that part of verse 37, which he considered to be in error, be taken out of the record of the

---

<sup>5</sup>Evening and Morning Star (reprint) [Kirtland, Ohio], January, 1835, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Evening and Morning Star [Independence, Missouri], June, 1832, pp. 1, 2. See also: Book of the Law, Covenants and Commandments, Book B, pp. 10, 11, located in the HDC.

<sup>7</sup>Millennial Star [Liverpool, England], April 25, 1857, p. 260.



revelation.<sup>8</sup> A portion of this early document is similar to verse 37 in Section 20, but does not contain that part of the verse Oliver Cowdery wanted removed. He may have felt that this addition was an unwarranted intrusion on what he had written by assignment. Later, however, he recanted when the Prophet explained to his satisfaction the need to include this addition.

*Read*

*The Creation of Scripture*

If these bits and pieces of evidence really do fall into the pattern suggested here, then this is a classic example of what Latter-day Saints later had revealed to them in Sections 67 and 68 of the D&C. In Section 67, we are informed that the revelations were given in the language of the Prophet Joseph Smith with all of the imperfections he had in expressing himself. And in Section 68, we are told that when a servant of the Lord is moved upon by the Holy Ghost, what he says is the mind and the will of the Lord, and is scripture. The historical background of Section 20, therefore, appears to be the struggle of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to put into words the basic beliefs and tenets of the Church, and to organize their thoughts, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, into a document that is not a word-for-word dictation from the Lord, but one that was inspired by his Spirit, and therefore, scripture.

On June 9, 1830, the first conference of the Church

---

<sup>8</sup>Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, The Doctrine and Covenants Commentary (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1957), p. xx. See also HC, I, 104, 105.

was held as directed by the Articles and Covenants of the Church. The complete Articles and Covenants were read in this conference by Joseph Smith as one of the first items of business. This document was then received by the, "unanimous voice of the whole congregation."<sup>9</sup> Thus Section 20 became the first revelation of this dispensation canonized by the Church. From that point on, many of the basic practices of the Church have been conducted in accordance with this revelation. In succeeding conferences the Articles and Covenants were read in order that the Latter-day Saints, both old and new, might remember the policies and procedures they were to follow.<sup>10</sup>

#### Extant Copies of Section 20

The importance attached to Section 20 by the early members of the Church is evident in the number of manuscript copies extant, and the number of times it was published. Such men as Zebedee Coltrin, Orson Hyde, A. Sidney Gilbert, (as seen in Table 20), Wilford Woodruff, Orson Pratt, and others had copies of this revelation. As they went on short missionary journeys, or preaching assignments, to far-removed branches of the Church, they took their copies of Section 20 with them, and they would read these Articles and Covenants along with The Law (Section 42) in the meetings

---

<sup>9</sup>Far West Record, p. 1, located in the HDC.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 2, 27, 36, 37.