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## Religious Validity: The Sacrament Covenant in Third Nephi

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# 1

## Religious Validity: The Sacrament Covenant in Third Nephi

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I have just finished another reading of the Book of Mormon, and what a wonderful rejuvenation this has been as vistas of doctrine open up. The spirit is a complex thing. It comes as it will, as Jesus said to Nicodemus (John 3:8). Sometimes you feel a burning and a warmth, and sometimes you feel a peace and clarity of thought. The latter is my experience in reading the Book of Mormon this time. In the first reading I felt the warmth intensely. I can remember my impressions of specific chapters – for instance, Alma 42, where I could not put the book down for the intensity of the feeling of its truth.

Years later I look back on a lifetime of historical study and writing. I now have experience with how history was written in many different periods. History is a record of both spectacular and commonplace events. So an authentic historical document may be dull, and the Book of Mormon has places like that. Having analyzed methods of ancient historians, I recognize the accuracy of the steps described by Nephi, Mormon, and Moroni in putting their documents together. Without any question, the Book of Mormon is a historically sophisticated book. A young person like Joseph Smith did not write it. When you add the spiritual clarity of the doctrine to that archival framework, the validity of the Book of Mormon is to me unquestion-

able. Full proof of the depth of the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price is that these books have held the attention of Hugh Nibley for a lifetime, with rich historical yields throughout five decades of intense scholarship. He is personally unsurpassed at any university in range of reading, languages mastered and utilized, facts retained, day and night hours given to his field, and spontaneous honesty.<sup>1</sup>

My topic of religious validity includes correctness of doctrine and also spiritual values in applying it. Because of the statement of Joseph Smith stressed by our current Prophet, we are aware of the correctness of the Book of Mormon.<sup>2</sup> Surprisingly, that book does not contain the full range of teachings revealed in the Doctrine and Covenants. However, the Book of Mormon is a guidebook for our age because it collects foundational doctrines, and these are bound together in the central practice of partaking of the sacrament. As will be seen, Joseph Smith singled out “precepts” or teachings in his “closer to God” statement about the Book of Mormon. And the concept of covenant is one of the essential doctrines of salvation. Indeed, the Book of Mormon makes the change of “many covenants” a sure mark of Christian apostasy (1 Nephi 13:26). The result of this study should be a far broader understanding of Nephi’s prophecy and of how completely it is justified by ancient and recent history of worship.

### **“Covenant” in the Bible and the Book of Mormon**

Joseph Smith’s well-known evaluation of the Book of Mormon will lead us to personal covenants as the heart of the religious message of the Book of Mormon. Yet the original source of the Prophet’s tribute to the Nephite scripture is little known. One reads the following in his official history under the date of November 28, 1841: “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct

of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”<sup>3</sup> But these words to the Twelve do not really come from the Prophet’s own journal. Like the Nauvoo Temple, the Prophet’s history was planned by him but was completed according to his format after his death. His clerks assigned to draft the history felt authorized to impose first-person style on appropriate documents after the martyrdom took place. When Joseph Smith died, the history had been basically compiled through the Missouri period. Wilford Woodruff, who recorded so much of Joseph Smith’s public and private discourse, wrote down the Prophet’s “most correct” comment. In the Woodruff journal of the above date, he outlines the Prophet’s visit with the Twelve, and adds: “Joseph said the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth and the keystone of our religion. And a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts than any other book.” So the quotation in the official history is exact, with the addition of one clarifying preposition, though shifted to the first person to reproduce as nearly as possible Joseph Smith’s original words.

Will the reader get “nearer to God” in every Book of Mormon chapter? About half of the Book of Mormon is political and military history. As in the Old Testament or classical chronicles, the reader is often shocked by bloodshed, one of the unfortunate realities in records of mankind. Another segment of the Book of Mormon consists of occasional long quotations from Old World prophets, about ten percent. But the remainder of this book—about forty percent—contains the teachings of New World prophets. Obviously these are the sections of the Book of Mormon that Joseph Smith referred to in saying that we would get “nearer to God by abiding its *precepts*.”<sup>4</sup>

There are tighter circles of significance in the Book of Mormon. Within the “teachings” category of this record,

main topics and terms appear. The dominating subject here is Jesus Christ. Reviewing the Book of Mormon after years of New Testament teaching, I am struck with the difference in audience on each side of the world. Christ often had to be subtle in teaching the Jews and used carefully wrought parables in his earlier ministry. Yet how plain he could be with the Nephites, a people educated by their own mighty exodus tradition. Scholars' vested interests were a huge barrier when the Savior sought to cut through Jewish ceremonialism and stand as a Messiah without earthly credentials. But his very direct American message is providentially preserved to correct our own false sophistication in the latter days. Here is a simple book, for simple and faithful people, then and now.

Within the Book of Mormon doctrinal circle, there is the tighter circle of teachings about Christ and from Christ. And within this is a precious core of what the Master expects of his disciples—his gospel as he very carefully outlined it in 3 Nephi 11 and 3 Nephi 27. A central principle of gospel relationships is “covenant,” a main term of God’s revelation on both hemispheres. That word appears in the Old Testament around 250 times, and scholarly literature on the subject is seemingly endless because of the importance of “covenant” in all of God’s dealings with Israel.<sup>5</sup> So it is a test of religious authenticity that “covenant” is woven into the Book of Mormon with patterns remarkably parallel to the Bible.

The word “covenant” appears in the Book of Mormon about a hundred times, so it is as historically prominent there as it is in the Bible. Both books have oaths and covenants made between private parties. Indeed, the human agreements of the Old Testament are extremely useful in assessing the kind of covenant God made with Israel’s patriarchs. They made the same type of covenant with God that they made in private situations. There were obligations and conditions on both sides. In pre-Christian sections of

the Bible and Book of Mormon, the most frequent use of “covenant” is the promise that God will honor the house of Israel, on the condition that Israel will faithfully serve God. Despite many theological assertions to the contrary, God’s consistent covenant relationship with Israel is that of a two-party covenant.

The English derivation of *covenant* is literally a “coming together,” a contract involving mutual obligations. Various Christian theologies struggle with applying such a concept to God. If he is the all-powerful sovereign, can his plans fail because mankind fails? If he is all-loving, does he not distribute his blessings without any condition? Controversial terms are not far below the surface: predestination, unconditional election, salvation by grace alone. Here we cannot directly discuss these issues, though they are doctrinally related to God’s covenant. Protestant explanations tend to emphasize a one-sided covenant—the sovereign giver and the unworthy receiver. But in only a very general sense do God’s promises appear without reciprocal obligations. Of course, Jesus acknowledged that the Father showers sun and rain “on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). Ancient and modern scriptures also teach the unconditional and universal gift of the resurrection, while at the same time indicating qualitative distinctions, for there is a higher “resurrection of life” (John 5:29), and there is the “first resurrection” of the faithful before all the rest are called up (Revelation 20:5). God reserves his greatest blessings not for those professing, but for those obeying (Matthew 7:21-23).

But much Christian literature rejects such personal responsibility by treating Moses’ revelations as a covenant of works and the New Testament as a covenant of grace. However, Paul argued that the Gentiles had strict obligations of faithfulness to maintain a covenant relationship with God (Romans 11:17-21). That Apostle characteristically quoted Jeremiah’s prophecy. Because Israel broke the

covenant of Exodus (Jeremiah 31:32), God would give a “new covenant” (Jeremiah 31:31). Israel would be forgiven, and Israel would truly “know the Lord” (Jeremiah 31:34). Although Jesus blessed bread and wine as symbols of newness, there is more than a free promise of grace as the “new covenant.” Jeremiah really promised no change in a reciprocal relationship, but saw the day when Israel would live up to its obligations. They would accept “my law” in their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33), actually meaning that the covenant relationship would not change, but that Israel would finally keep God’s requirements. And this conditional covenant is as religiously central in the New Testament as it is in the Old. “Covenant” appears about thirty times in the New Testament. The word summarizes God’s relationship with the Church, but “covenant” also is prominent in connection with the most frequent early Christian public ordinance, the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Although there are other sacraments, or sacred ceremonies, Mormons follow a Christian trend to use “sacrament” alone to refer to receiving the symbols of Christ’s body and blood. And “sacrament” here will refer to that particular ceremony.

### **The New Testament Sacrament Covenant**

Christ clearly established the sacrament. Three of the four Gospels plus Paul’s letter, 1 Corinthians, contain concise reports. First Corinthians preceded the Gospels. Its date is about A.D. 57, some twenty-five years after the upper room. Paul repeats what he has reliably learned, introducing the account with these words: “For I have received *of the Lord* that which also I delivered unto you” (1 Corinthians 11:23, emphasis added). Not claiming a vision, Paul has reports of what came from the Lord.<sup>6</sup> Luke also says that his own information is from “eyewitnesses” (Luke 1:1-4). And Matthew and Mark are similarly based.<sup>7</sup> Each of these four accounts has individuality, showing that

none simply copied another. Yet all agree on the basics. Significantly, each quotes Jesus as saying that the cup represents “the new testament.”

Today “testament” suggests “a solemn declaration” or “a formal witness.” However, the technical meaning of Christ’s “new testament” is “new covenant.” In Acts and in Paul’s epistles, Old Testament verses about the Hebrew “covenant” (*bərīt*) are translated by the Greek *diatheke*, which in secular Greek denoted a formal will, a legal bequest. Thus the Gospels, Acts, and epistles are reapplying the Old Testament “covenant,” with its strong background of reciprocal promises. Yet many Protestant commentators discuss the Greek “will” in the abstract, stating that New Testament writers considered the new covenant as God’s unilateral gift. But the Greek *diathēke* developed an expanded biblical usage, for it was consistently used to translate “covenant” in the Septuagint version long before Christ. So New Testament authors definitely use an Old Testament covenant concept, with its regular contexts of mutuality. Moreover, we shall see that Christ spoke of strict conditions on which the new covenant is offered.

Evidence from the Gospels suggests that Jesus privately spoke Aramaic, a language closely related to Hebrew. Thus, as Jesus held up the cup, he spoke the word “covenant,” calling up ancient images of continuity in the minds of the Apostles. Early Christian literature suggests no change in the idea of covenant – newness consisted in the change of the sacrifice that put the covenant into effect. In other words, the two-party promises between God and his people did not change. But the bloody sacrifices of Abraham and of Moses were modified – they prefigured the ultimate sacrifice of the Son of God. Here we are summarizing the argument of the last part of Paul’s letter to the Hebrews, where half of the New Testament usages of the Greek word for “covenant” appear. The Apostle there speaks of a “better testament” (Hebrews 7:22) or a “better

covenant" (Hebrews 8:6) because Jesus is superior to all former sacrifices.

This continuity is shown in the opening scenes of each Gospel in the New Testament, according to which John the Baptist comes to renew the relationship of God with individuals who would meet God's conditions. In the prophetic context this is nothing less than the renewal of the covenant, as John's father said in blessing his son. John was sent to announce the Messiah's mission, which was to reinstate God's compact with the patriarchs: "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we . . . might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:72-75). John's father saw "holiness and righteousness" as Israel's responsibility under the covenant, and his son single-mindedly preached that Israel must repent individually to have a relationship with God restored.

Christ reapplied the language of the Mosaic covenant in instituting the sacrament, a reality noted by most Bible commentaries on the Gospels. At the beginning of Exodus, Moses was called to remember the covenant of Abraham and lead Israel out of bondage. At Sinai, Jehovah's law was given only after Israel had promised to meet prerequisites. They would be "a peculiar treasure unto me above all people," with a major condition: "if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant" (Exodus 19:5). Here are mutual promises, and it is irrelevant that this is not an agreement between equals. Of course God's majesty and glory are on one side, and Israel's fallible abilities on the other. Nevertheless, the covenant is contingent. Eternal blessings will only come as the children of Abraham commit themselves to obedience and follow the commitment.

God gave the core Ten Commandments accompanied

by considerable expansion of their meaning. Soon after this, the covenant was reiterated and consummated after another agreement of the people. Moses “told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments,” and they unanimously agreed to follow them (Exodus 24:3). Moses then wrote these laws, clarifying what was required: “And he took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people. And they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words” (Exodus 24:7-8).

These events were the Jewish constitution. And in giving the sacrament, Jesus quoted or closely paraphrased Moses’ words in renewing the ancient covenant. Although this is obscured in the King James translation of “testament,” the Savior surely did not use Greek then. Thus modern translations are correct in having Jesus offer the cup as a sign of the “new covenant.” His words come in two closely related forms. The early converts—Paul and Luke—use the same phrase of offering the cup: “the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25). Matthew and Mark, Gospels based on apostolic testimony, use Moses’ words adapted by Jesus in offering the cup: “This is my blood of the new covenant” (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24).<sup>8</sup>

Jesus’ sacramental words are too often quoted in a vacuum. But here he had an audience skilled in scripture. The Lord was never outclassed in discussion with trained priests because he was steeped in Jewish tradition. So were the Apostles. If Jesus presented a form of covenant that departed from the divine format to Moses, he would not have used the words of Exodus. Repeating Moses meant repeating or renewing the covenant, with its mutuality. Full grace was offered to ancient Israel conditionally. In reiterating the ancient words, Jesus asserted that much

was expected to receive his grace. Jesus did not revoke the ancient covenant – he restored it.

Artificial walls are built by the existence of four different Gospels. Scholars intensify the problem by labeling John theological and not historical, as if one reporting Jesus could not be both. Indeed, Matthew, Mark, and Luke similarly present the public ministry, whereas John emphasizes intimate conversations among Christ and the Twelve. It came down to church historian Eusebius that John wrote last, that he looked over the other Gospels with approval but realized that a fuller story could be told. Thus John really wrote an appendix to the other Gospels.<sup>9</sup> This fits our records, because John's letters are preoccupied with what Jesus taught "from the beginning," a phrase that introduces many major references to the Last Supper discourse. Thus we know that John paid special attention to Jesus' teachings during and after the Christian sacrament. With such concern, he obviously took special care to preserve these teachings. To have the full picture of Christ's first sacrament, one must take the words of its establishment from the Synoptic Gospels and 1 Corinthians, adding the beginning of the Last Supper discourse, which appears only in John.

John's story of the Last Supper blends well with those of Matthew and Mark, but Luke's account does not as easily fit. Apparently he first surveys the meal, then portrays the sacrament as the main event of the Last Supper, and finally drops back to mention the accusation of Judas. This seems clear because the consecrated cup is described as "the cup after supper" (Luke 22:20). In any event, Matthew and Mark agree that Jesus accused Judas during the meal and before the sacrament. This is significant because John says that the betrayer left while others ate, which brings us nearly to the end of John 13. Next John reports four short segments of teaching by Jesus toward the end of the meal itself: the prophecy that Jesus will now be taken and his

disciples left (John 13:33-34); Peter's offer to die to prevent Christ's death (John 13:36-38); Christ's assurance that by leaving he will prepare for the coming of the Twelve into the Father's kingdom; and a question and answer about the Father (John 14:1-12). After this point Jesus speaks without interruption. The above topics would naturally arise from Jesus' introduction of the sacrament as the symbol of his atoning death.

Indeed, John's words of leaving and reuniting closely fit Matthew's report of Jesus' words immediately after distributing the bread and wine—that he would not drink again with them until all would reunite “in my Father's kingdom” (Matthew 26:29). This correlates with John's “my Father's house” (John 14:2). So a comparison of the two Gospels shows that the first part of the Last Supper discourse came right after blessing the bread and wine. Jesus' continuous comments begin in the middle of John 14, but John soon interrupts the flow of Christ's message before twenty verses have been given: “Arise, let us go hence” (John 14:31). While more of Jesus' farewell instructions follow, John sharply terminates the words of the upper room. The Apostle clearly intended the second half of chapter 14 to be Jesus' explanations right after distributing the bread and cup.

What insight do Christ's retrospective comments give on the sacrament? In the name of the Father, Jesus makes specific promises. On earth his followers will have the special relationship that insures answers to their deepest prayers (John 14:13-14). On earth they will have the peace and instruction of the Holy Ghost (John 14:16-17, 26-27). On earth they might have visions of the Father and Son, and their presence in the hereafter (John 14:19-23). Is all this given by totally unmerited grace? To the contrary, God required the identical condition of the covenant at Sinai: “All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exodus 24:7). That same commitment was required by the

Lord to validate the sacrament. “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15); “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me” (John 14:21); “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (John 14:23). Jesus not only paralleled Moses’ words in speaking of the “blood of the new covenant” – he required the same obedience of the ancient covenant. Jesus gave the sacrament and then outlined its obligations and promises. Because Jesus gave the bread and cup with mutual commitments, the sacrament itself is a covenant.

### **Changing the Baptismal Covenant**

The Book of Mormon provides a clearer picture of Christ, and the sacrament covenant is more completely explained there as well. President Benson reminds us that this American record was compiled for future readers – and for the conversion of unbelievers.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, except for the Gospels, the New Testament is the product of believers speaking to believers. The Book of Mormon records Hebraic treaty-covenants, but its overarching covenant is that of God with his people, tenuous because of the constant threat that these transplanted Israelites will forget their heritage and the miracles of their New World exodus. As John the Baptist reminded Judah, a national relationship can continue only to the extent of valid individual relationships with God – these add up to the general divine covenant. The Book of Mormon brings us closer to God because no scripture more specifically ties the Christian ordinances of baptism and the sacrament to the covenant concept. No book does more to bring the national covenant down to individual responsibility.

The sacrament renews the baptismal covenant in the Book of Mormon. American prophets taught the religious necessity of baptism and the clear doctrinal purposes for it. The most striking teaching is that baptism was required even for the Savior. The visionary Nephi saw the future

mission of Jesus, including Christ's baptism (1 Nephi 11:27). Speaking by inspiration afterward, Nephi explained the Savior's insistence on baptism at John's hands: "For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Since Nephi had a vision of this baptism, he evidently heard these words. He explains that Jesus' immersion was an act that "witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments" (2 Nephi 31:7). Here Nephi's language indicates more than the humility required to keep the commandment of baptism. He heard Christ's voice declaring immersion as a covenant for believers, who by that act "witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments" (2 Nephi 31:14). As quoted above, Nephi applies similar phraseology to Christ's immersion, really teaching that the Savior set the example by baptism as a promise of future virtue.

Thus Nephi presents a complete parallelism between the baptisms of Christ and of the believer. In this sermon, Christ was immersed to prove his obedience through baptism, but also as a pledge of future loyalty "that he would be obedient." The believer's baptism also indicates "that ye are willing to keep my commandments." "To be willing" is mainly future: it is the language of personal covenant in Book of Mormon religious contexts. Indeed, Nephi's sermon stresses the lifetime commitment to righteousness one makes through baptism (2 Nephi 31:15-21). Nephi's overall point is that the believer should follow Christ both in baptism and also in keeping the personal promises made then. Immersion is a means of forgiveness, but covenant baptism is also preventive medicine. It is a solemn promise not to sin – a promise even shared by Christ. He entered that baptismal covenant and lived up to it perfectly, so Nephi finally calls on everyone baptized to "endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God" (2 Nephi 31:16).

In the Book of Mormon, the baptismal contract is best

outlined when Alma reestablished the Church near the wilderness waters. He explained baptism as a “testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him” throughout life (Mosiah 18:13). These inspired doctrines were well known when Jesus later came to the New World. He gave baptismal messages at the beginning and end of his Nephite ministry. Christ taught the interrelationship of repentance and baptism; the formalism of immersion without a subsequent change of life is empty in the Lord’s sight. In summarizing his gospel, he identified baptism as a conditional promise of forgiveness: “whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world” (3 Nephi 27:16).

In the Book of Mormon purification by baptism always depends on righteousness. Does the New Testament support this doctrine? Each Gospel stresses Jesus’ own baptism, and in each Gospel John the Baptist challenges his Jewish generation to obtain forgiveness of past sins through baptism and retain that forgiveness by changing their lives. John’s baptism was for “remission of sins” (Mark 1:4), and the Apostles’ baptism had the same purpose (Acts 2:38). Based on this baptismal foundation, apostolic sermons and letters urge believers to retain a relationship with God through righteous living. Thus the New Testament follows the covenant-righteousness patterns of the patriarchal, Mosaic, and prophetic dispensations. In the fullest letter of free grace, Paul emphasizes baptism as the burial of old sins, and the resurrection to a new moral life, which comes by the exercise of prayerful self-control (Romans 6:3-13). Sometime later the Apostle repeats the baptismal-burial metaphor (Colossians 2:12), and insists on the baptismal commitment to live specific moral standards (Colossians 3:1-10).

Thus Paul holds out full salvation to those who effect

moral reform through their faith and baptism, and he denies entrance into the kingdom to Christians who will not conform to its laws (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Many Protestant scholars talk meaningfully of God's general covenant with his people but lack full understanding of baptism and the sacrament as specific promises to live the commandments. Protestantism in practice supports baptism, but in theory has difficulty explaining it. For instance, we are told that God promises eternal life in the "covenant of grace," but man's obligation is "faith in Jesus Christ as the only 'work' required of the believer (John 6:29)."<sup>11</sup> By Book of Mormon standards, such thinking is foggy. Peter did not invent baptism for the "remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). This interpretation went back to Christ, for Peter taught it on the day of Pentecost, a month after Jesus commanded "the eleven disciples" to go to the world and baptize believers (Matthew 28:16-20).

An infant cannot sin, nor know enough to promise not to sin. Yet the major Christian churches—Protestant and Catholic—divorce individual responsibility from baptism in the practice of baptizing infants. Adults must be proxy for infants who cannot personally take upon themselves the name of Christ. This thinking is reflected in the traditional Church of England ritual. The baby is presented, and the priest asks the sponsors: "Dost thou therefore, in the name of this child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world and the sinful desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them?" The answer is: "I renounce them all, and by God's help will not endeavor to follow nor be led by them." The priest asks again: "Having now, in the name of this child made these promises, wilt thou also on thy part take heed that this child learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and any other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health?" Sponsors answer: "I will by God's help."<sup>12</sup>

Such a ceremony has religious value in committing the godparent or parent to teaching the child. Yet the sponsor, not the child, makes the baptismal covenant. This is not the Lord's way, for there is no example of infant baptism in the Bible, and the Book of Mormon prophets denounce such practice by revelation. Since baptism is a covenant, infant baptism usurps the agency of a child not yet ready to make the promise for himself. Thus it is Catholic and Protestant practice to bring the child to the church for instruction and confirmation when old enough to be accountable. In this case, the baptismal covenant is shifted to a later confirmation covenant. So the unauthorized change in one ordinance has forced an unauthorized change in the purpose of another.

### **Christ's Words and the Nephite Sacrament Prayer**

The baptismal commitment is the companion covenant to the sacrament in the Book of Mormon. This is vivid in the Nephite manual of ordinances, found at the beginning of Moroni, the final book in the Book of Mormon. It compiles documents of Nephite practices authorized by the Lord. Here Moroni summarizes the baptismal covenant as taking upon them "the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end" (Moroni 6:3). And the accompanying sacrament prayer carries the same phraseology of personally taking the name of Christ. The baptismal commitment of serving Christ to the end is paralleled in the sacrament promise to "always remember him." Those baptismal vows more closely follow the sacrament prayer over the bread, which will be studied here because the prayer over the cup is a compressed restatement. In summary, the Book of Mormon presents the overall covenant of God with his people, with individualized promises made in baptism, to be renewed in the sacrament.

The Nephite sacrament prayer incorporates the "words of institution" when Christ gave the sacrament in America.

Background chapters are the Savior's explanation of baptism in 3 Nephi 11, followed by his discourse on the sacrament in 3 Nephi 18, the climaxing event of his first appearance to them. Jesus clearly unfolded the meaning of the bread and wine that should be administered "unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name" (3 Nephi 18:5). New World disciples were to witness through the symbols of his body and blood that "ye do always remember me." But their thoughts were to rise to plans for righteous acts, for the mutual covenant relationship was valid only "if ye shall keep my commandments"; only then would they "have my Spirit to be with you" (3 Nephi 18:11-14).

All these commitments combine in the Nephite sacrament covenant, the prayer consecrating the bread. Although Moroni gives it some centuries later, he leaves no doubt as to its source: "and they administered it according to the commandments of Christ" (Moroni 4:1). This probably means that the Savior gave the prayer. Each of its promises follow Jesus' Nephite sacrament sermon. As Mormon finished his selection of Christ's teachings, he mentioned the fuller record "of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people" (3 Nephi 26:6-8). Indeed, his son Moroni shows a special interest in rounding out the record with additional sayings of the Savior (Mormon 9:22-25), so perhaps Moroni took the sacrament prayers from a fuller account of Christ's teachings. This method parallels the manner in which Christ's teachings were kept in the New Testament and earliest Christian literature. Core collections were later supplemented by additional sources and recollections. Here is another of the many stylistic and structural patterns where the Book of Mormon has the marks of an ancient history. As stated, each phrase of the Nephite sacrament prayer has an exact equivalent in Christ's words of institution in 3 Nephi 18. And Moroni insists that "the

manner," or form, of the prayer is "true," meaning specifically that it was authorized by Christ (Moroni 4:1).<sup>13</sup>

Since the Savior established the sacrament on both hemispheres, the American consecration prayer can be tested by the Gospels. The above discussion has correlated the covenant doctrine, but there are also specific parallels in the Nephite pledges. Comparison suffers because the New Testament—and early Christian literature—is more fragmentary than the Book of Mormon. As we have seen, combining John with the three earlier Gospels enriches the record. To do this requires synthesis—blending corresponding Gospel details. Most New Testament scholars are untrained in this approach. Scholarly literature favors a dissecting method that sorts out and separates. But one can see the need of synthesis by reading newspapers and news magazines. In major stories, no single reporter will have the whole, but all responsible journalists will have pieces that finally combine well enough to re-create the original event. Such an analogy is essential in handling the first Christian literature, for the earliest stratum contains apostolic letters responding to specific problems, and the second stratum is the historical literature (the Gospels and Acts) outlining the general story of Christ and the rise of the Church. Nothing like Moroni's manual of ordinances has survived in the New Testament itself.

Nevertheless, the biblical sources intricately supplement each other for Christ's institution of the sacrament. In a like manner, in Mormon journal work I regularly find that several accounts of the same event agree on the basics, but each recorder selects differing details. I have come to recognize general agreement plus unique individual insights as sure marks of validity of independent accounts. The same is true with the four primary accounts of Christ's words about bread and wine, in the Synoptic Gospels and in Paul's review in 1 Corinthians 11. As noted by the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Their fundamental harmony amid dif-

ference of detail is a precious sign that they have faithfully transmitted the thought of Jesus in His institution of the Eucharist."<sup>14</sup> Though fragmentary, these accounts and John's support the phrases of the Nephite consecration prayer on the bread: "That they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him, and keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them" (Moroni 4:3).

Remembering Christ is the first purpose of the Nephite prayer and is also a characteristic of the biblical accounts of Luke and Paul, both of which give slightly fuller detail than Matthew and Mark. To repeat, Paul's first Corinthian letter was written before the Gospels, and specifically bases the information on what the first Christians had told him (1 Corinthians 11:23). Indeed, the letter suggests its sources. Paul mentions the Jerusalem Apostles and gives their personal testimonies of the resurrection as coming down to him (1 Corinthians 15:3-7). Since he knew the detailed history of the resurrection from them, his information on the Last Supper no doubt came from them also.

The American prayer follows "remembrance" by a recommitment "that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son." That fundamental acceptance is made through baptism, whether in the Bible or Book of Mormon. For instance, Paul talks of more than verbal confession: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). In fact, the most powerful insight into "putting on Christ" was given to the faithful Eleven immediately after Christ handed them the bread and cup. As discussed earlier, John supplemented the Synoptic Gospels, beginning Jesus' postsacrament discourse in the middle of chapter 14. The theme there is

intimacy with Jesus Christ. Theologians can mysticize the remarks, but Jesus' words fit the concepts of fellowship or communion. Right after ingesting the symbols of Christ's person, Christ explained that relationship. As Christ is in the Father, so are "ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20). Neither here nor in the subsequent prayer of John 17 is the individuality of any believer compromised. As in John 6, the act of eating signified total acceptance of the Lord. Likewise, the Nephite prayer underlines the meaning of the act of eating – as the elements are within the believer's body, the name of the Lord is upon and within the believer's soul.<sup>15</sup>

In the American consecration prayer, "remembering" and taking "the name" are followed by commitment to action. Imitating Christ follows meditating on him. This purpose is hardly seen in scholarly commentary, which focuses on Christ's "words of institution" preceding the bread and wine. But as discussed above, John gives the phrase "keep my commandments" (John 14:15) immediately following the bread and wine. Surprisingly, that is the exact sequence of the American ministry. After eating and drinking, Nephite Christians were told by the Savior that their act was a commitment "that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you" (3 Nephi 18:10). In both situations the Savior commented on the meaning of their act as they digested the elements. And there is another intricate parallel. John, present at the Last Supper, gives the challenge to love and keep the commandments just before the promise of the Holy Spirit. Commitment to "keep my commandments" (John 14:15) is immediately followed by the assurance of the Comforter, "that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). In the Nephite sacrament prayer the sequence is the same: revered remembrance, commandment keeping, with the reward "that they may always have his Spirit" (Moroni 4:3; cf. 3 Nephi 18:10-11).

These Bible-Book of Mormon correlations are more impressive because they are not superficially obvious. They come with the slight opacity that one would expect in moving through language and culture barriers. Close verbal parallels might suggest surface copying, but profound conceptual parallels show that Jesus' thinking is found in every element of the Book of Mormon sacrament prayer. Each petition is mirrored in Jesus' first instructions in the upper room. In the American prayer of consecration, we indeed hear Christ's voice.

### **The Early Christian Sacrament Covenant**

Does the Book of Mormon sacrament prayer fit the ceremony of the first generations of Mediterranean Christians? The answer is impressive, even though first-century worship is thinly documented. Yet the regularity of the sacrament appears in the first postapostolic sources. Early in the second century a guard escorted the bishop of Antioch across Asia Minor to martyrdom in Rome. Midway in this journey, Ignatius wrote seven letters exposing the strong apostate sects. Four letters mention the bread or wine of the sacrament, showing that it was a basic part of meetings. Since the Church was threatened by Christian seceders, Ignatius emphasized that true administration of the sacrament required authority: "Let that be considered a valid Eucharist which is celebrated by the bishop, or by one whom he appoints."<sup>16</sup> With other contemporaries, Ignatius uses "sacrifice" and "altar" in connection with the sacrament, but these are Mosaic metaphors rather than New Testament doctrines. Ignatius calls the broken bread "the medicine of immortality," a phrase alluding to eternal life with God, as used by Jesus in his bread of life sermon that foreshadowed the sacrament (John 6:48-51).<sup>17</sup> Thus the sacrament is associated with eternal salvation; this doctrine fits the thrust of every letter from this martyr bishop—honor Christ's name by living his teachings. In these let-

ters, that result comes through faithfulness to scripture, to true church and priesthood, to baptism and the sacrament.

Through Paul's correction of the Corinthians, we can actually part the curtain on a first-century "sacrament meeting." Their selfish feasting merged with the sacred symbols and was offensive to the Apostle. We have already seen that he reminded these Greco-Romans of Jesus' words inaugurating the first sacrament. Then Paul concisely discussed what the Christian ceremony should accomplish (1 Corinthians 11:26-32). What did the Apostle mean by warning careless Corinthians not to eat and drink "unworthily"? Many commentators are mechanical, suggesting that Paul only commented on the abuse of feasting before the sacred memorial. But his repeated phraseology is that of inner resolve.

In immediate connection with eating and drinking, Paul warns: "let a man examine himself." Paul adds that the thoughtless will eat, "not *discerning* the Lord's body." I emphasize "*discerning*" because the same verb (*diakrino*) soon introduces the culminating purpose of the sacrament: "For if *we would judge* ourselves, we should not be judged." English translations scarcely disclose that the two italicized words are the same. Paul uses a verb of intense evaluation. He elsewhere applies the noun form to the "discerning of spirits" (1 Corinthians 12:10) or discerning of "good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul first asserts that the unworthy do not *discern* the Lord's body, and then he repeats the verb to indicate that the faithful should *discern* themselves. Thus these are parallel processes that occur while taking the sacred symbols—as one thinks on the Lord, he evaluates himself in relation to the Lord. For this personal response to Christ, Paul uses three matching ideas: eating worthily, self-examination, and self-discernment. True, Paul is condemning a particular practice of gluttony, but the correction goes beyond narrow rebuke

to explain and teach why Christians took the bread and wine.

Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul starts with narrow errors concerning the resurrection and then broadens his discussion to encompass the entire range of that doctrine. And in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul corrects the malpractice and then outlines the true practice. In Paul's personal preaching, "he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come" (Acts 24:25, New King James Version). This is precisely his logic at the end of the Greek sacrament correction: "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:31-32). Thus the criticism closes by indicating that self-judgment in the sacrament prepares the Christian for the final judgment. The worldly Corinthians would be condemned with the world unless true repentance would come through remembering Christ in the sacrament. So Paul presents a double purpose – remembrance and resolve to live a righteous life.

With slight subtlety, Paul gave the same perspective in the previous chapter. Most visible in 1 Corinthians 10 is the inconsistency of social eating in pagan temples, and the most obvious sacrament teaching is that one cannot "be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (1 Corinthians 10:21). But again, many commentators see only the narrow correction and miss the larger scope of the sacrament that Paul stressed. This oversight comes mainly from underplaying the parallel that begins chapter 10. Paul's examples come from ancient Israel, but he is really warning volatile Greek converts. The Apostle was trained under Jewish scholars to use patterns and types. In this case Paul loosely compares Christian baptism to Israel's figurative immersion in the sea and under the cloud of God's presence in the Exodus (1 Corinthians 10:1-2).

Then Paul adds the symbolic “spiritual food” of the manna and the “spiritual drink” that Jehovah-Christ gave miraculously to “quench their thirst” (1 Corinthians 10:3-4; 1 Nephi 17:28-29). But the point is really what Christians commit to by taking the “cup” and the “bread” (1 Corinthians 10:16), and so Paul develops an intricate allegory, not only of Israel’s general unfaithfulness, but of Israel’s unfaithfulness after immersion and eating and drinking. Several recognize that this is simply Paul’s parable of Christian ceremonies: “The point of these illustrations is clear. The reception of sacraments will not by itself save anyone. Paul emphasizes the fact that all of the Israelites had these benefits, yet *most of them* were destroyed. Despite their sacraments at the present time, the Corinthians may likewise be destroyed.”<sup>18</sup>

When Paul names Israelite sins in the next seven verses, he is historically matching Corinthian sins. The idolatry of the Exodus is now eating at the idol’s feast (cf. 1 Corinthians 8 and 10); the adultery of the Exodus is the immorality that Paul corrects (cf. 1 Corinthians 5 and 6); the murmuring against Moses is the criticism of the Apostle (cf. 1 Corinthians 4 and 9). As in Christ’s “new covenant” at the Last Supper, we are again reminded of the relevance of the Old Testament to the Christian sacrament. The Jews of the Exodus had made a solemn covenant to obey and then rebelled through the above sins. Paul begins his warning with ancient types of baptism and the sacrament, showing clearly that Christian converts were obligated to avoid idolatry, immorality, and speaking against church leaders. Baptism and the sacrament had raised specific obligations of righteousness. Thus Paul treated these ordinances as Christian covenants.

A Roman governor confirmed this picture after investigating whether Christian assemblies were subversive. He reported to the Emperor concerning his province of Bithynia-Pontus, in the north of present Turkey. It bordered on

the province of Asia, where John spent his final known days. It was approximately A.D. 110, and Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan is used here because the Apostle John was historically known just before this. That generation of Christian leaders had been in touch with the last Apostle. Pliny's long letter to Rome describes how pagan worship had fallen off, blaming the vigorous Christian movement. Rome was suspicious of private associations, and the governor had power to forbid assemblies—he could also interrogate by torture and order death.

Pliny was a capable administrator who was puzzled by the resolution of Christians who preferred martyrdom to denying their faith. Although persecution details are intensely interesting, Pliny's report on Christian meetings is significant here. He asked Trajan to rule on punishing good citizens who were technically disloyal to the state because they would not offer pagan sacrifice. Pliny found a highly moral people behind this rebellious conduct. Trajan answered that the law required a penalty, unless the accused renounced Christ's name. The correspondence shows an Emperor and governor who are troubled. Pliny had carefully questioned former Christians and learned of their meetings:

They had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately among themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when called upon to restore it. After this ceremony it had been their custom to disperse and reassemble later to take food of an ordinary, harmless kind. But they had in fact given up this practice since my edict, issued on your instructions, which banned all political societies.<sup>19</sup>

From this source some envision prayer and reading in the morning, plus a later gathering to eat and partake of

the sacrament. But that does not fit Pliny's description. The reassembly did not take sacred food, but "food of an ordinary, harmless kind." Paul's Corinthian corrections suggest that the sacrament should be separated from the fellowship meal. Pliny's Christians easily gave up eating together, though they would not have renounced core worship without a struggle. In their early meeting, an "oath" was taken to avoid all evil. No weekly Christian practice fits such language except the sacrament, and this was while they gave "honor to Christ." So the Book of Mormon is historically on target to say that Christ gave the sacrament as both remembrance and commitment to live his commandments. Some second-century evidence also supports this, such as Justin Martyr's profile of Christian worship. But other second-century documents, including the miscellaneous collection known as the Didache ("Teaching"), give a more generalized worship. This suggests a loss of the concise sacrament covenant soon after the disappearance of directing Apostles. Even so, the Didache collects Christian practices of the midsecond century, many of which have earlier roots, and John W. Welch has pointed out half a dozen striking parallels between this work and the Savior's American instructions in connection with the sacrament. This is all the more impressive because the Didache was not discovered until half a century after the publication of the Book of Mormon.<sup>20</sup>

About a decade before Pliny's investigation, the Apostle John wrote his letters, and his Gospel not long before that. All of John's writings were composed in Asia Minor a little before Ignatius wrote to the same area about similar difficulties.<sup>21</sup> The surviving Apostle addressed the problem of how Christians could be faithful in the midst of worldly evils and major Christian apostasy (1 John 2:18-19; 4:1-3). These issues are more obvious in John's letters, where the relevance of the Christian sacrament is suggested by upper-room teachings. The Apostle asks for loyalty to what was

taught "from the beginning." And John repeatedly uses this phrase to underline two specific doctrines of Christ's Last Supper discourse. One is the command to love one another, given by Christ at the meal and afterward (1 John 3:11; 2 John 1:5). The other "beginning" doctrine is Jesus' postsacrament challenge to keep the commandments. John says it is really an "old commandment" after repeating Christ's challenge in the upper room (John 14:15): "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3). John paraphrases other teachings of Christ given right after the sacrament, such as the mutual indwelling, making the same point: "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him" (1 John 3:24). The key to understanding John's message is to realize that "from the beginning" is a Christian code for the Savior's teachings in connection with the first sacrament. In reality the Apostle is saying that Christians can only be true to Christ by honoring covenants of obedience made through the ordinance of baptism and the sacrament.<sup>22</sup>

The problems disclosed in John's letters already existed when John wrote his Gospel, no doubt in the same area and evidently but a few years before. His memory and probably his own records reached beyond half a century, when he had walked with the Lord. From his personal experiences John added teachings of Christ not yet recorded in any public Gospel. Since he could not write everything (John 21:25), he obviously chose what would help the Church in the war against evil and desertion. This new material included Jesus' Last Supper discourse and also Jesus' imagery of the bread and cup in the discourse after the feeding of the five thousand. In the case of the first sacrament, the three earlier Gospels had narrated the event but had not given Jesus' explanations afterward. John, on the other hand, did provide Jesus' teachings given both after the sacrament and after Jesus fed the multitude

and returned to the Capernaum synagogue to challenge the Galilee audience to accept him fully.

In the synagogue the Lord used the vivid comparison of eating and drinking his flesh and blood. Jesus regularly communicated to the Jewish culture in their striking metaphors, witness his illustration of straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel (Matthew 23:24). Jews applied language of eating and drinking to digesting or accepting great teachers and teachings. Indeed, Jesus had declined food from the Apostles in Samaria, saying that his real nourishment was spiritual: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). This eating-obeying equation was probably John's deliberate foreshadowing to help the reader understand Jesus' introduction of imagery of the sacrament two chapters later.

John relates how Capernaum Jews came back from across the lake, where they had eaten loaves and fishes miraculously supplied. In the synagogue Jesus began by offering eternal nourishment, not mere earthly food (John 6:27). Then he outlined that he would be their food, for he would give his flesh and blood "for the life of the world" (John 6:51). Those who took his flesh and blood to themselves would have intimate fellowship with him (John 6:56). These statements make a double prophecy – that Jesus would give his life, and that its significance would be commemorated by eating and drinking. In Capernaum Christ predicted not only the sacrament symbols, but the full meaning of the future ceremony: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:57). That is, the total obedience that Jesus gave the Father would be the commitment of the believer in eating and drinking in the future. At the end of the first century, John recorded Jesus' sacrament prophecy to teach the Church its duty. Jesus himself had insisted that the fellowship of the sacrament was

based on resolve to obey Christ as he had obeyed his Father.

### **The Sacrament in Christian History**

How do contemporary Christians view the sacrament? Most agree that it is an acceptance and memorial of Christ's atonement for sin. Luke and 1 Corinthians 11 say that Christ gave the elements as a remembrance of his blood shed for mankind. And Paul also insisted that eating and drinking are public affirmations of the atoning death. Through eating and drinking, "ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Here the LDS edition of the Bible notes that "shew" is not strong enough. The Greek verb (*katangelo*), as the footnote says, means "proclaim, announce," a term consistently used in Acts and the letters for preaching. Thus major translations say that the believer "proclaims" Christ's death in partaking of the sacrament. To whom? Obviously other human beings see this witness, but Paul's context of inner resolution highlights an act done in the presence of God. Thus the commitment clause of the Book of Mormon prayer closely fits Paul's context: "and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son."

Christians share several sacrament titles generated from the Bible. Many faiths use the term *Eucharist*, adapting the Greek word for giving thanks, which Jesus used in the accounts of the institution of the sacrament. But Jesus also gave thanks in blessing the food at the feedings of the four thousand and of the five thousand. Thus his characteristic appreciation to the Father at the Last Supper was evidently not intended to be a continuing part of the sacrament ceremony itself. Prayers of thanksgiving over the bread and wine are found in the second century, but they seem creative adaptations of the Gospels rather than common practices of the early church. Another regular Christian term

derived from the New Testament is *Communion*, coming from Paul's introductory remark to the Corinthians on the sacredness of the sacrament: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16).

"Communion" here is the simple Greek word "sharing," often translated "fellowship." There is a fellowship of the Saints throughout the letters of Paul and John, but there is also a fellowship with God, Christ, and the Holy Ghost. This divine fellowship is the main object of the sacrament in 1 Corinthians. Today's Christians increasingly emphasize brotherhood in their sacrament ceremony. Concern for others of the faith is a valid aspect of holy commitments to God, as indicated in the first sacrament services after the Gospels: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Yet 1 Corinthians 10:16 states a communion relationship primarily with body and blood, the symbolic sharing of Christ's person, which in application means the adoption of all that he stands for. Thus Paul's "communion" is deeply harmonious with the Nephite sacrament prayer – taking on the name of Christ and promising to keep his commandments. "Communion" in thought without comparable conduct is not a full one, since the argument of 1 Corinthians 10 is that Christians must not partake of baptism and sacrament and thereafter violate their covenants.

Roman Catholics go beyond taking Christ's name in the sacrament to sharing the very presence. The historical doctrine of transubstantiation asserts that the elements' appearance is not changed but the substance or reality becomes Christ at the words in the Mass: "this is my body . . . this is my blood." Yet Jews spoke in vivid personal metaphors. Jesus' command that Peter "feed my lambs" (John 21:15) simply linked lambs to followers in a

concise leadership parable. Since Jesus so regularly used metaphors as illustrations, one should not argue change of substance in the sacrament without Christ explaining such a strange doctrine. Through symbols of body and blood, Jesus gives an object lesson that we take him to our spirits as we take the elements into our bodies. The accounts must be read as a whole to get the entire meaning—the Lord’s full instruction to partake “in remembrance” is found in Luke, Paul, and 3 Nephi.

What do Christian churches stress in their sacrament memorials? The answer is complex, yet it can be outlined through handbooks of worship, explanations of religious leaders, or grass-roots understandings of the worshipper. Catholic traditions are more mystical. Many know through television at Christmas time that the Roman Mass is high drama. There is a place for some of this, as Mormons would agree in accepting the restored temple endowment. But there are major questions. Is traditional complexity man-made? Does it obscure the personal commitment to live Christ’s commands that the Master stressed while yet in the upper room?

Historians of every Christian persuasion document the radical changes from the primitive sacrament ceremony, though their judgments on the meaning of these changes are quite different. This paper can only name main modifications of the sacrament in the nineteen centuries after Christ established it. Since there is little disagreement on the highlights, one Catholic theologian’s summary will give a checklist of changes:

After 312 A.D., when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the size of the communities increased rapidly and the celebration of the Eucharist took on a more official character. . . . More ceremonies and rituals were added to these eucharistic celebrations, which more and more came to resemble official Roman ceremonies. . . . As the celebration of the

Eucharist became enlarged and more official, it lost some of the intimacy experienced in this sacrament in earlier times. . . . The celebration of the Mass, however, became locked into the Latin language for many centuries. . . . This sense of all the people participating in the celebration of the Lord's Supper began to be lost in the sixth century, when priests started saying Masses by themselves. Their original intention was to pray for special needs, but this practice detracted greatly from the original purpose of the Eucharist. . . . During the Dark Ages (eighth through eleventh centuries) the private character of the Mass began influencing community Eucharists. We see in the old missals the Mass prayers change from the use of "we" to "I," and gradually almost all the prayers were said silently by the priest alone. . . . The architecture of the churches reflected this understanding by setting the action of the priest farther and farther from the people. Since the people in the community were no longer actively participating in the eucharistic celebration, their main action became worshipping the sacred objects of the Mass. . . . This led to . . . less frequent reception of communion. Communion began to be received on the tongue while kneeling. Drinking from the cup was eliminated altogether. . . . The bread and wine once shared as a symbol of unity, sacrifice and commitment gradually became objects too "sacred" for the community to receive. With these developments the sacrament of the Eucharist lost much of its original meaning. We can also see in these developments the origins [of] the Benediction and processions with the sacred bread. The main action of the people had become adoration rather than communal sharing.<sup>23</sup>

As the above quotation vividly shows, Roman Catholics have led out in self-criticism of the older Mass. How Catholic worship could better conform to Christ's concerns has been debated – and papacy, priesthood, and scholars have united in the past decades to effect radical reforms

in the name of "liturgical renewal."<sup>24</sup> Catholicism in the twentieth century inherited the patterns of the medieval church. Consecration of the elements was then a transcendent sacrifice in which the priest was central and the people peripheral. How far the pendulum has reversed is too complicated for assessment here, but the basic trend is to restore personal involvement in the sacrament. New principles were adopted by the Second Vatican Council, meeting 1962 to 1965. Papal implementation afterward modified the Mass: "The general objectives were to make the liturgy more *simple*, more *participatory*, more *intelligible* and more *dynamic*."<sup>25</sup> Specific changes included "celebrating the liturgy in the language of the people, moving the altar to a more central place, giving more emphasis to the reading of scripture, encouraging more frequent reception of Communion, eliminating the many unnecessary signs and gestures that accumulated during the Middle Ages, and restoring the action of drinking from the cup."<sup>26</sup>

Note that the Mass early shifted to mystical sacrifice instead of the personal pledge documented in the Book of Mormon and early Christian literature. Such significant reversals are a red flag. The covenant function of the sacrament was obscured for over fifteen hundred years. Specialists agree on the trends. Until the current century, innovation moved from the simple to the complex in the ceremony, from personal participation to spectator status in the worshipper. For instance, in the pre-Vatican American Mass, the altar boy regularly spoke to the priest for the silent congregation, in the pattern of the baptismal sponsor making promises for the baby incapable of speaking for himself.<sup>27</sup> Catholic theologians would not dispute these patterns, but they would emphasize a theory of sacred presence and evaluate personal participation as desirable but not basic for continuous divine approval. But if Christ intended the sacrament as a personal covenant,

moving the worshipper to the fringes changed its central meaning.

Catholic spokesmen maintain that essentials were not lost but that unauthorized modifications were corrected: "The liturgical reforms mandated by Vatican II restored the Eucharist to its original purpose and structure."<sup>28</sup> Yet after reading and pondering the new English Missal, I still ask what is considered central. I sense great devotion to Christ, reverence for his incomprehensible sacrifice, recommitment to love and understand him, periodic promises to do his will. But measured by the Last Supper and first-century worship, the intricacies are confusing. What are the main purposes? Current Catholic literature says essentially that the church has preserved the mystery of the sacred presence while reemphasizing divine and brotherly communion and a responsive offering of the believer's life. This is a major move to restore essentials, but lengthy rituals wander. This is not seen as a weakness in current Catholic analysis: "At its present stage of development, therefore, the eucharistic liturgy is a multivalent religious ritual, that is, it is a complex sacramental sign which can express and reveal a variety of Christian values and meanings. . . . It is as though the eucharist today is not a single door to the sacred but a multiple door to sacred truth and mysterious reality."<sup>29</sup>

If current Roman rites do not highlight the primary self-examination of earliest Christianity, how successful was Protestantism in reestablishing the personal sacrament? The answer contains a paradox, for the traditional Reformation mainly stands for renewing the individual's relationship with God, a reaction against the authoritarian Medieval Church. Yet major Protestant churches of the sixteenth century were surprisingly conservative in modifying worship, whether from lack of knowledge of ancient models or doubts about authority for striking out in new directions. So the structure of the Mass was adapted by

the main Protestant groups. This inherited ceremonialism was typically mixed with the simple promises to remember Christ by being loyal to him, the underlying theme in formal Protestant worship services. These promises to serve and obey are traditionally sprinkled through devotional sections that broadly correspond to medieval categories. Some informal names for the main stages are: introduction, invitation, group confession, consecration, distribution, and thanksgiving.

The real issue of the sacrament covenant is how to remember Christ. Protestant services invariably incorporate Paul's or Luke's remembrance summary. But since reformers stressed justification through faith alone, even ceremonial words of loyalty to Christ may not be understood as an obligation to keep his commandments. The theology of grace is of course reflected in the traditional Lutheran service. The distribution closed with the admonition: "May this strengthen and preserve you in the true faith unto life everlasting." Then the thanksgiving closed with the prayer: "rule our hearts and minds by Thy Holy Spirit that we may be enabled constantly to serve thee."<sup>30</sup> This phraseology names the active work of God and adds a certain passive acceptance of it. To the degree that a worshipper takes active responsibility, he is committed to obey God. Indeed, in the whole range of formal and informal Protestant sacrament services, the duty is implicit to live a Christian life in gratitude for Christ's sacrifice. But does a Communion service emphasize only meditation? What explicit commitment is there to keep Christ's commandments?

The traditional Episcopal service invited those to the sacrament table who intend "to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways." This commitment was repeated in the closing thanksgiving – a prayer to be sustained to "do all such good works as Thou hast prepared for us to walk

in."<sup>31</sup> In the derivative Methodist worship, the opening call to a new life was retained, but salvation through grace was stressed in the final thanksgiving. There the worshipper offered himself to the Lord, but prayed not for good works but to "be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction."<sup>32</sup> Presbyterian worship was also influenced by the Episcopal ceremony. One invitation was extended to partake if one was willing to commit to a new life, in the same words as quoted above. And a closing thanksgiving was similar but verbally more passive: "So enrich us by Thy continual grace that . . . thy kingdom be furthered through all such good works as Thou hast prepared for us to walk in."<sup>33</sup>

The above churches represent the most structured Protestant groups. At the other end of the spectrum are decentralized communions represented by Baptists and Congregationalists. The latter inherited covenant concepts from their common Calvinistic heritage with the Presbyterians. But the present worship service is principally praise and gratitude for forgiveness, with general personal commitment in the thanksgiving section at the end of the service—a prayer "to strengthen our faith in thee and to increase our love toward one another."<sup>34</sup> Today's Protestant tendency is toward this less structured worship. The dilemma of the Reformation is how to end reform. Roman Catholic "liturgical renewal" finds a current parallel in Protestant revisionism in worship. Since traditional ceremonies are not biblical, modernizing creativity is an active force, as demonstrated by the recent papal statement asking for control of "outlandish innovations" in the Mass.<sup>35</sup>

Thus a Protestant historian projected a future of change: "The second half of the 20th century should produce a new and exciting chapter in the history of liturgies."<sup>36</sup> But the danger is variety for the sake of variety. Protestant reforms tended to bring back personal promises

into the Communion service, but recent revision tends to delete specific commitments of personal righteousness and obedience and make the believer's response to Christ very general. For instance, private handbooks give ceremonial options for less formal Protestant churches. A recent one presents well-written "traditional and contemporary approaches."<sup>37</sup> A dozen invitations to Communion are given, and just half suggest obligations of Christian obedience. Eight consecration prayers are given, and half include any commitment to keep the commandments. The essence of one is the request: "hear us as each in his own way seeks personal communion with Thee through Jesus Christ."<sup>38</sup>

Formal Protestant worship has generally been rewritten in recent decades. Besides simplified Christian loyalty, typically there is increased social awareness but less definite language on commandment-keeping and personal moral standards. An example of this interfaith trend is the revised Presbyterian service, printed in 1972, to "serve a new age in the church."<sup>39</sup> The old invitation to the table was for those "who do truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in His holy ways."<sup>40</sup> In the new summons, the Savior simply "invites those who trust him."<sup>41</sup> The old group confession was for "sins . . . by thought, word, and deed."<sup>42</sup> The current revision stresses human failings in selfishness and indifference—basically a failure to show love.<sup>43</sup> The older offering of self before blessing the elements is retained; the current language is: "we give ourselves to you."<sup>44</sup> But the older standard of biblical commandments is heavily shifted to community ethics. Thus the sacrament services reflect humanistic trends: "Among United Methodists, for example, the proportion of laity who regarded individual salvation as the chief goal for the church to pursue dropped

from 63 percent in 1958 to 55 percent in 1975 to 31 percent in 1983.”<sup>45</sup> Social action is not irrelevant to biblical covenants, but they included much more. Christ founded the sacrament above all as a commitment of living for eternal exaltation.

### **Loss, Restoration, and the Book of Mormon**

Recent developments in Christian worship are one more validation of the Book of Mormon. Liturgical reform has concerned all major faiths since midcentury. Tradition-oriented churches have tried to correct unauthorized additions to the ceremony that Christ intended. Such formal worship has been simplified, and a deeper personal commitment has been sought through the sacrament. On the other hand, less formal groups have reduced the sacrament ceremony to little more than remembrance and human fellowship. In America the Savior twice identified the twin dangers of either more or less than he intended (3 Nephi 11 and 27)—and historic Communion services continually illustrate both trends. The Book of Mormon gives blunt prophetic criticisms that churches will add ritual without authority and produce ceremony that does not promote Christlike lives. The many Book of Mormon prophecies concerning worship continue to be dramatically fulfilled.

Christ spoke of Satan sowing tares to spoil the wheat after his ministry, and Nephi saw that process in vision as the spoiling of the sacred biblical revelations. Nephi foresaw a Jewish record which contained the Old and New Testaments, since he saw that book carried to the New World by Gentile immigrants. That book contained “the covenants of the Lord” from the prophets and Christ’s Apostles (1 Nephi 13:23-24). Next the book passed through the hands of a “church,” which in context would include western and eastern churches. Indeed, Eastern Christianity breaks down into many national churches. The plain-

ness of the Bible was lost after it passed through this worldly “church,” and afterward that book went to “all the nations of the Gentiles,” including those “across the many waters.” This sequence reaches the time period of Western Catholicism, Eastern Catholicism, and major Protestant groups, since New World nations and major Bible distribution are post-Reformation developments.

At first glance it seems that scribes mutilated the book, since “many plain and precious things” were “taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God” (1 Nephi 13:28). Yet a second process is at work. For decades I have included New Testament manuscripts in my studies. Though they contain thousands of minor changes in spelling, synonyms, transpositions, and accidental omissions, major additions or deletions are more rarely in evidence. Known lost letters of Apostles might well have been suppressed, but what survives is generally authenticated by a broad range of manuscripts, many of them relatively early. This picture exactly fits what Nephi saw, for the “records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” would stand side by side with other revealed records in latter days (1 Nephi 13:41). These “last records” – which include the Book of Mormon – would “establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” Clearly the latter-day Bible would have a great degree of historical accuracy, though doctrinal confusion would still reign.

We have much to learn about Nephi’s prophecy, if Book of Mormon commentaries are any indication. These generally focus on the two times that the Book of Mormon prophet indicated subtractions from the Bible (1 Nephi 13:28-29). But in many more verses in this chapter Nephi notes subtractions from the “gospel of the Lamb.” In recent centuries, rationalism has subtracted Christ’s divinity from the Bible by selective interpretation, not physical destruction of manuscripts. Various Christian theologies have regularly ignored major parts of the scriptures. Nephi’s proph-

ecy contains broader concepts of change than biblical text alone. Lost writings are overshadowed by lost principles – those overlooked or explained away, though still mentioned in the biblical records. Nephi's prophecy really emphasizes deletions of doctrine, and there is a special component: "They have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away" (1 Nephi 13:26). So there were changes in documents, in the gospel itself, and in ceremonies; for removing "many covenants" includes changing essential church ordinances. And this prophecy is impressive because history so clearly reveals constant modifications of Christian rites. Since ceremonies teach lessons by physical actions, their survival is virtually assured by repetition and imitation. But their meanings are far more fragile.

We have examined two changed covenants. One is the baptismal commitment to Christ for those old enough to have faith, repent, and make the promise to keep the commandments. This has been radically modified by the legal fiction of a stand-in for an unaware baby. Catholics and most major Protestant churches have perpetuated infant baptism by rationalizing it instead of correcting it. In addition, the sacrament covenant of remembrance and recommitment was expanded with elaborate practices that tended to produce awed onlookers, forcing individual repentance into nonscriptural channels like scheduled penance and the last rites. Here the biblical accounts were a standard for Protestant reemphasis on the personal promises of the sacrament stressed by Christ and by Paul.

But the Bible gives general principles and only incidental details about early Christian ordinances. Thus the full sacrament covenant could not be restored until the ancient American consecration prayer came to light through the Book of Mormon. The Latter-day Saint sacrament prayer is in the founding revelation on Church

government, Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Why is that full blessing (D&C 20:77) identical to the Nephite blessing (Moroni 4:3)? The apparent answer is suggested in a manuscript in the LDS Historical Department in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery, dated June 1829, which copies the basic Book of Mormon ceremonies for the benefit of the first members of the Restored Church. He labeled his inspired compilation "The Articles of the Church of Christ," a title then commonly used for a list of formal church beliefs.<sup>46</sup> In his old age David Whitmer remembered either this or a similar collection, reviewing the year 1829: "The Book of Mormon was still in the hands of the printer, but my brother, Christian Whitmer, had copied from the manuscript the teachings and doctrine of Christ, being the things which we were commanded to preach."<sup>47</sup>

Here is a parallel process to the early history of the Doctrine and Covenants. Important revelations through Joseph Smith circulated in manuscript form to instruct the Church before the tedious process of collection and printing was completed. Similarly, as soon as the Book of Mormon appeared in manuscript, key portions were hand copied to aid the first baptisms and meetings of late 1829 and early 1830. Oliver's copy might precede or even incorporate Book of Mormon passages that David Whitmer said his brother transcribed. But clearly the Cowdery document was seen as modern instruction, for its preface indicates a divine direction to "write the words which I shall command you concerning my Church, my gospel, my rock, and my salvation."<sup>48</sup> This first known priesthood "handbook" fulfills the promise to the Second Elder of using his "gift" to bring to light "those parts of my scriptures which have been hidden because of iniquity" (D&C 6:27). His document included Christ's instructions on baptism and the sacrament from 3 Nephi 11 and 18, the sacrament prayers from Moroni 4 and 5, and many quotation-paraphrases

about the Church from Christ's instructions to the Nephites and from the great doctrinal revelations of June 1829 (D&C 17 and 18).

The Cowdery version was apparently used during 1829 but was superseded by the fuller revelation on doctrine that Joseph Smith described writing in his *History* at a point just before the organization of the Church. Now known as Section 20, it followed the model of the inspired Cowdery summary of Nephite ordinances for the use of the Restored Church. Thus the Nephite sacrament prayer went from Moroni's compilation of ancient Church ordinances, to the Book of Mormon manuscript, to the Cowdery ceremony summary, to Joseph Smith's fuller statement of doctrine and practice in the Doctrine and Covenants. The conditions for baptism there have the same genealogy. Thus the Book of Mormon was instrumental in restoring the ancient covenant forms of gospel ordinances. It is "Another Testament of Christ," both in the intended sense of a second witness—and in the biblical sense of containing Christ's personal covenants in their original forms.<sup>49</sup>

The sacrament prayer was restored as given "according to the commandments of Christ" in ancient America (Moroni 4:1). Although derived independently of the Bible, every purpose stated in it corresponds to Christ's words in instituting the sacrament or to Christ's commentary immediately afterward. Two New Testament accounts stress Jesus' command of remembrance in establishing the sacrament, but the full record is broader than the summaries in the Synoptics. "Remembrance" and "communion" are common denominators of Christian rites, and traditional Christian ceremonies have well over nine parts appreciation to one part determination to live the gospel. Yet Christ evenly balanced these purposes. After the first sacrament he fully explained communion or fellowship with him. The Apostles' relationship of branch to stem of the vine would be maintained "if ye keep my commandments" (John

15:10). Their divine friendship had a firm condition: "if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). These words were spoken right after the invitation to leave the upper room, and they repeat the same challenges reiterated right after the sacrament (John 14:15, 21, 23). Thus the Book of Mormon prayer contains Christ's full purposes in that founding hour. He gave bread and cup while commanding remembrance, but while the taste lingered he explained that loyalty must be coupled with righteous living. This is the same ratio of Christ's fullest biblical statement of discipleship, the Sermon on the Mount. There he unfolded the meaning of righteousness, closing with the challenge that hearing must be followed by doing (Matthew 7:24, 26). The Savior also closed his ministry with this double thrust in the sacrament covenant. While still in the upper room (John 14:31), he explained mutual promises: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John 14:15-16).

The sacrament prayer of the Book of Mormon has religious validity because it repeats the above essentials given by Jesus: "always remember him, and keep his commandments . . . that they may always have his Spirit to be with them" (Moroni 4:3). Human eloquence and devotional creativity cannot add significantly to these basics. They are stated in balance. "Much speaking" (Matthew 6:7) will muddy these central promises. Christ's own principles establish historical validity, so the correlation of the Book of Mormon prayer with the full Last Supper teachings shows its divinity. The American prayer states the Lord's views simply; it contains no more. A current slogan insists that the person with more than three goals has no goals. The Son of God never overexplained, and the Book of Mormon sacrament prayers bear his stamp. The baptized believer, in partaking of the sacrament, retakes the Lord's name with the double purpose of remembrance and re-

solve—of loving the Lord and living his teachings. Thus Christ’s words on both hemispheres illuminate each other. With all my soul I know that both the Bible and Book of Mormon are true, that both contain the Savior’s ancient words. And I know that as I live in my heart and in my life the covenant of the sacrament—to remember Christ and be faithful—the sweet spirit of the Lord attends me, a companionship that is beyond all price and beyond all purchase. That is the ultimate religious validity.

### Notes

1. This paper is a revised presentation, originally given as the First Annual Book of Mormon Lecture, sponsored by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, March 2, 1988. Since Hugh Nibley was patient enough to listen to the spontaneous version, I am pleased to present more coherent arguments in honor of my first teacher of Classical Greek, who from that time (1949) has been an impressive source of information and a consistent example of academic and religious integrity.

2. Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), vii.

3. Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 4:461.

4. Emphasis added. The statistics are furnished by research assistant Deborah Browning Dixon, based on classifying chapters and half chapters in one of the listed categories. For a convenient transcription of the Woodruff quote, see Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal*, 9 vols. (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983), 2:139.

5. A survey of the complex covenant literature is accessible in bibliographies in the major Jewish, Catholic, and Bible encyclopedias.

6. Compare Paul’s knowledge of both the upper room and the resurrection events from others, who appear to be his associates in the apostleship (1 Corinthians 11:23; 15:3-7). For the dating of 1 Corinthians, see Richard L. Anderson, *Understanding Paul* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 95, 395.

7. For Matthew originally collecting Christ’s words, and Mark reporting Peter’s experiences, see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III, 39, 14-16.

8. For the apostolic basis of Matthew and Mark, see *ibid.* Mod-

ern translations eliminate “new,” making the Savior’s words correspond exactly to Moses’ phrase of the first covenant. This is done by following the favored manuscripts of the currently influential textual critics. These manuscripts are the oldest known, but date only from the fourth century. Critics assume that scribes added “new” from the accounts of Luke and 1 Corinthians. See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, corr. ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 64, 113. However, the above manuscripts tend to be the most literary and also of an Egyptian character, so they may perpetuate “corrections” of ancient scholars. “The new covenant” appears in the majority of manuscripts, and statistically some of these are likely copied from a period before the surviving manuscripts. It is just as probable that ancient revisers would seek to conform exactly to the words of Exodus as to borrow language from another Gospel. Moreover, in Greek the three words of “the new covenant” all have the same “-es” ending, making a possible accidental omission of “new.” Joseph Smith’s translation tends to re-create the whole event in each source; yet his readings may be inspired narration of meaning rather than a restoration of the original language of any one Gospel.

9. This reason for John’s writing was in Eusebius’s sources, *Ecclesiastical History* III, 24, 7-13. This approach of integrating John with the Synoptics is largely resisted by scholars, but the argument for blending has both literary and historical considerations, whereas skepticism about blending mainly rests on literary arguments. All four Gospels obviously describe the same event in narratives of the Last Supper—witness details of the place, announcement of betrayal, the sop given to Judas, etc. Many argue that John intended an earlier day for the occasion, though John’s correlation with the Synoptics on this point has strong evidence. See A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels, for Students of the Life of Christ* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), 279-84.

10. Benson, *A Witness and a Warning*, 9-10, 19-20.

11. George N. M. Collins, “Covenant Theology,” in Everett F. Harrison, ed., *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1960), 144. The Covenant of Grace in Reformed theology is generally the post-Fall covenant of God with the patriarchs, Israelites, and Christians. Salvation through God’s pre-Christian decree makes baptism all the more dispensable, in this theory. While Protestantism upholds baptism as a command, there is a good deal of ambiguity on its necessity. For instance, see Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville, TN: Convention Press, 1971),

which has the following positions. Baptism “should be observed” because it is a commandment of Christ: “Failure to do so is to be disobedient to the Lord’s will” (p. 91). Yet, “the New Testament abundantly teaches salvation apart from baptism” (p. 85). Thus the ordinance appears to have a function more practical than eternal: “Baptism is not necessary for being in the kingdom of God or the church in general. But it is necessary for fellowship in the local church.” Similar viewpoints are expressed in some other Protestant faiths.

12. *The Book of Common Prayer* (Church Pension Fund, 1940), 276-77. This earlier service states the theory of representation plainly and is typical of traditional Catholic and Protestant forms of infant baptism. A somewhat modernized Episcopal version is now in the *Book of Common Prayer* (Seabury Press, 1979), 301-3. A proxy baptismal covenant is superficially similar to the proxy baptism for the dead in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but there exist certain essential differences. Foremost, baptism for the dead is authorized by both the Bible (1 Corinthians 15:29) and modern revelation (D&C 127-128), whereas tradition, not revelation, is asserted as the basis for infant baptism, with the New Testament giving no positive authority on the subject. Moreover, the New Testament clearly makes personal repentance a condition of baptism. Whereas the physical act of immersion can be received by another, it violates divine free agency to delegate resolve to change to another. The New Testament parallels proxy baptism with preaching in the spirit world to prepare the dead for judgment (1 Peter 3:16-20; 4:5-6). And in restoring baptism for the dead, Joseph Smith insisted that vicarious ordinances are valid only when accepted personally. See Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 406-7, 410-11. Joseph F. Smith’s panoramic revelation on preaching to the spirits indicated that only “the dead who repent will be redeemed” (D&C 138:58). This brings up the final logical point that proxy promises are unnecessary for the infant, for he can wait until the age of discretion to be baptized and make them for himself. However, proxy baptism is necessary for those who failed to have the opportunity, for this is a physical, earthly ordinance. In summary, infant baptism is wrong because it cannot be a true covenant (Moroni 8:8-26), but baptism for the dead is valid when the covenant is personally accepted in the spirit world.

13. For a convenient line-by-line comparison of Christ’s sacrament sermon (3 Nephi 18) and the sacrament prayers (Moroni 4-5), see John W. Welch, *The Nephite Sacrament Prayers: From King Ben-*

*jamin's Speech to Moroni 4-5* (Provo, UT: F.A.R.M.S., 1986), 12. This "Preliminary Report" stresses the covenant language of King Benjamin as possibly handed down in the Nephite religious heritage. The concept should be extended, however, inasmuch as most of the Benjamin-prayer parallels are found in Nephi's covenant discussion of baptism in 2 Nephi 31 (cf. 1 Nephi 15:25: "give heed to the word of God and remember to keep his commandments always in all things"). The format of "remember—keep commandments" goes back to ancient Israel, witness the constant theme of remembering the hand of God in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. The commitment of obedience of Exodus 24 was repeated in language similar to King Benjamin's covenant renewal. See Deuteronomy 5:29: "that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always"; see also Deuteronomy 11:1: "Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep . . . his commandments, always." Thus the Nephite sacrament prayer continues the basic obligations of the Old Testament covenant, though its language almost totally reflects Christ's words in America. See the similar pattern with regard to the divine name in Welch, *The Nephite Sacrament Prayers*, 25.

14. C. Bernas, "Eucharist (Biblical Data)," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 5:595. Compare the judgment of William Barclay, *The Lord's Supper* (Naperville, IL: SCM Book Club, 1967), 104: "In our view we have in the New Testament records of the Last Supper, accounts, and reliable accounts, of an actual historical happening. . . . It seems to us that the very divergence in the accounts of the Last Supper are the best proof of that. If this had been a deliberately constructed cult legend, then we would have expected a stereotyped form—which is exactly what we do not get. The divergences are the proof that the roots of this are in history and not in liturgy."

15. A complete Bible concordance will show how taking "the name" of Christ was the result of conversions and baptisms throughout the book of Acts and Paul's letters. Since this doctrine fully appears right after Christ's resurrection, it is no doubt part of Christ's teachings to the young Church.

16. Ignatius, *To the Church at Smyrna VIII, 1*. And "it is not lawful . . . to baptize . . . without the bishop" (*ibid.*, VIII, 2). Translations of Ignatius here are from Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949).

17. Ignatius, *To the Church at Ephesus XX, 2*.

18. Clarence T. Craig, in *The Interpreter's Bible*, 12 vols. (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), 10:109.

19. Pliny, *Letters* X, 96-97, tr. by Betty Radice, *Pliny, Letters and Panegyricus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

20. See Welch, *The Nephite Sacrament Prayers*, 28-32. Though fragments of this early document were previously identified, a full text was not located until the late nineteenth century. See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology 1* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1962), 30: "Until the year 1883 it was quite unknown." This was the year of publication of the recently discovered Greek manuscript. Cf. *ibid.*, 38-39, for a listing of editions and translations, all of which postdate the above year.

21. An outline of sources on John's later life is in Richard L. Anderson, "What Do We Know of the Life of John the Apostle after the Day of Pentecost?" *Ensign* 14 (January 1984): 50-51. Irenaeus, second-century bishop of Lyons, details his early contact with Polycarp, earlier bishop of Smyrna, who had known John the apostle (cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* V, 20, 4-8, and Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III, 3, 4.). Irenaeus says that John wrote his Revelation "towards the end of Domitian's reign" (*Against Heresies* V, 30, 3). Then in several statements, Irenaeus says that John was known as an aged apostle up to Trajan's reign (beginning A.D. 98). Irenaeus also puts John's letters and John's Gospel in the context of opposing the early apostate Cerinthus, whom he dates in the period after John had been on Patmos. For instance, John wrote his Gospel "during his residence at Ephesus in Asia" (*Against Heresies* III, 1, 1) to refute Cerinthus, who perpetuated the errors of the previous Nicolaitans, mentioned in the Revelation of A.D. 96 (*Against Heresies* III, 11, 1). Many scholars recognize that John's letters assume that the readers are familiar with his Gospel, and Irenaeus speaks of the letters in this same period. Although these insights are only historical glimpses, they come through a known channel of information. Alternative theories are more speculatively based. The above considerations would give the sequence of Revelation, then Gospel, then John's letters, in the period of about a decade after A.D. 96. The letters of Ignatius of Antioch were written about A.D. 108 in this same area and give no hint that John was still known. The above translations are from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), vol. 1.

22. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15) is the theme that John returns to at the end of his first letter. He says that Christians know they are truly born again "when we love God, and keep his commandments" (1 John 5:1-2). This is, of course, the New

Testament baptismal rebirth metaphor (John 3:3-7, 22-23; Titus 3:5), followed by the Savior's comment immediately after the sacrament. John's physical imagery afterward is understood by knowing something of his opponents. Right after John's letters, Ignatius is sarcastic on how dissenters explain away Christ's physical reality on the cross and in the resurrection, saying that they "abstain from Eucharist . . . because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior" (*To the Church at Smyrna* VII, 1). John makes the similar criticism that they confess "not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" (1 John 4:3). From many sources it is known that these mystical dissenters sought to separate divinity from any contamination with the physical. Thus John bears his testimony that Christ did come in the flesh (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1), and "not by water only, but by water and blood" (1 John 5:6). Clearly he is saying that Christ himself entered the physical world so far as to be baptized and pour out his blood on the cross. Then when John follows by admonishing the believer to accept the witness of "the Spirit, and the water, and the blood" (1 John 5:8), the connection with the ordinance of baptism is plain, which suggests that the "blood" is the symbolic cup of accepting Christ's atonement in the sacrament, and through faithfulness to these double ordinances, gaining the spirit.

23. Rev. Paul A. Feider, *The Sacraments: Encountering the Risen Lord* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1986), 40-43. For outlines of these developments, see the major Roman Catholic encyclopedias under titles of "Eucharist," "Mass," "Liturgy," and "Worship." For the Latter-day Saint evaluation of such changes as evidence of apostasy, see James E. Talmage, *The Great Apostasy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 119-22, 127-28.

24. For a survey of twentieth-century developments, see F. R. McManus, "Liturgical Reform," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1:908-10.

25. Thomas Bokenkotter, *Essential Catholicism* (Garden City, NJ: Image Books, 1986), 168.

26. Feider, *The Sacraments*, 45.

27. For a convenient summary of the words and actions of the traditional Mass, see James Coniff, *The Story of the Mass* (New York: Dauntless Books, 1954). See the representative view of John A. Hardon, *The Catholic Catechism* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 470-71: "Although implicit in this concept of participation by the faithful, one feature that has been specially clarified since Vatican II is the community character of the people's involvement in the

liturgy. . . . In any case, when the liturgy is being enacted, the end in view is that all those who participate have a sense of sharing what is being done and not only feel they are watching what someone else is saying to them or doing in their stead. This represents a major development in the Church's contemporary understanding of sacramental (especially Eucharistic) worship."

28. Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 773.

29. Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1982), 303.

30. Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, *The Lutheran Hymnal* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), 29, 31. For Lutheran background, I acknowledge the help of Gary Gillum, former theological student and current Religion and History Librarian at Brigham Young University.

31. *Book of Common Prayer* (1940), 75, 83.

32. *The Methodist Hymnal* (Baltimore: Methodist Publishing House, 1939), 528, 531.

33. General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, *The Book of Common Worship* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, 1964), 156, 174. For Reformed background, I acknowledge the help of Roger Keller, former Presbyterian minister and now fellow-teacher of religion at Brigham Young University.

34. *Pilgrim Hymnal* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1972), 496.

35. "Pope Urges Deeper Grasp of Liturgy, End to Abuses," *Intermountain Catholic*, 19 May 1989, 5.

36. Jerald C. Brauer, *The Westminster Dictionary of Church History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 506.

37. James L. Christensen, *The Complete Handbook for Ministers* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1985), 13.

38. *Ibid.*, 61.

39. Joint Committee on Worship, *The Worship Book* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 9.

40. *Book of Common Worship*, 156.

41. *Worship Book*, 34.

42. *Book of Common Worship*, 156.

43. *Worship Book*, 26.

44. *Ibid.*, 36.

45. Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 172.

46. See Robert J. Woodford, *The Historical Development of the Doc-*

*trine and Covenants*, 3 vols., Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974, 1:288-89.

47. David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, MO: David Whitmer, 1887), 32.

48. Woodford, *The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 1:288 (spelling and punctuation modernized).

49. President Benson suggests that both meanings of “testament” apply to the Book of Mormon (see *A Witness and a Warning*, 17).