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From Presence to Practice: Jesus, the Sacrament Prayers, the Priesthood, and Church Discipline in 3 Nephi 18 and Moroni 2-6

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Abstract: This paper explores several relationships between the texts in Moroni 2–6 and the words and deeds of Jesus in 3 Nephi 18. The opening chapters of Moroni contain the words which Jesus Christ spoke to the twelve when he ordained them to the high priesthood, the words used by the Nephites in administering the sacrament, and also a few words by Moroni about baptism, church membership, congregational worship, and ecclesiastical discipline. This study demonstrates that these instructions and procedures were rooted in the words and deeds of the resurrected Jesus in 3 Nephi 18, as he administered the sacrament, gave instructions to his disciples, and conferred upon the twelve the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost. Thus, one can appreciate the extent to which Nephite ecclesiastical procedures were based directly on the Savior's instructions and ministry. Those practices, essential to the Restored Gospel, came from that divine source.

When Jesus appeared to the Nephites at the temple in Bountiful, he taught them many important things: he proclaimed the doctrines of his eternal gospel; he manifested his true identity as the resurrected Son of the Father; he ordained elders to lead the church; he taught and administered essential ordinances of the kingdom of God, including baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the sacrament; he gave instructions about who should be allowed to partake of the sacrament and how the church should

continue to function after his departure from their midst. Many of Jesus' instructions about these church practices and procedures are found in 3 Nephi 18, the last chapter in the account of Jesus' first day among the Nephites. The purpose of this paper is to point out extensive similarities between those guidelines established by Jesus in 3 Nephi 18 and the priesthood policies and practices preserved by Moroni in Moroni 2–6. In effect, those five chapters of the book of Moroni constitute a sort of Nephite General Handbook of Instructions, describing the proper procedures that were followed by the Nephites in ordaining men to the priesthood, bestowing the gift of the Holy Ghost, administering the sacrament, performing the ordinance of baptism, regulating church membership, conducting church meetings, and barring unrepentant members from bringing iniquity into the church. The topics in Moroni 2–6 are essentially the same important subjects covered by Jesus, especially in 3 Nephi 18.

Recognizing the close relationship between the words in Moroni 2–6 and the instructions of Jesus in 3 Nephi 18 leads to at least two conclusions: the first observation is historical, namely, to point out that the Nephites expressly and meticulously implemented the instructions of the Lord in the conduct of their religious observances and priesthood performances; the second is a lesson for our day, namely, to heighten our appreciation of the fact that the wording and the requirements for ordinances which we teach and practice in the Church of Jesus Christ today came from the voice and presence of the Savior himself. By examining the intertextuality of these passages in 3 Nephi and Moroni, we can trace the language of those ordinances from divine presence to church practice. This relationship can be firmly established by examining three cases in some detail, namely, the sacrament prayers, ordinations to the priesthood, and guidelines regarding church participation and disciplinary procedures.

The Sacrament Prayers

Latter-day Saints most commonly turn to Doctrine and Covenants 20:76–79 to find the texts of the sacrament prayers that they regularly use on Sundays. In fact, however, the words for these prayers, which B. H. Roberts admiringly referred to as the

“prayer perfect,”¹ came not solely by revelation in this dispensation, but were known centuries ago to the Nephites. These prayers were first revealed in this dispensation when Moroni chapters 4 and 5 were translated by Joseph Smith.² The linguistic history of these prayers, accordingly, can be viewed in light of Nephite civilization and inspiration.³ Especially relevant to the prayers recorded in Moroni 4-5 are the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi 18:5-12.

¹ Minutes from Stake Conference, San Francisco Stake, 23-24 April 1932, quoted in its chronological order in “B. H. Roberts’s Final Decade: Statements about the Book of Mormon (1921-33),” collected by Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1986).

² The dependence of Doctrine and Covenants 20:75-79 on Moroni 4-6 is apparent. In the first printing of Doctrine and Covenants 20 in the 1831 *Painesville Telegraph*, the section states: “And the manner of baptism and the manner of administering the Sacrament are to be done as is written in the Book of Mormon.” See Richard L. Anderson, “The Organization Revelations,” in *Studies in Scripture: The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Robert Millet and Kent Jackson (Sandy, UT: Randall, 1984), 121 n. 26. Other early sources for Doctrine and Covenants 20 refer the reader to “Book of Mormon, 575” in the 1830 edition in lieu of quoting the Book of Mormon prayers, or they place the material from Moroni 4-5 and 3 Nephi 11 in quotation marks. See Robert Woodford, “The Historical Development of the Doctrine & Covenants” (Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1974), 343. What appears to be an early “copy” of the Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ initialed by O.(?)C. and discussed by Woodford, 287-91, quotes the sacrament prayers and 3 Nephi 18:29-32 from the Book of Mormon, as well as Doctrine and Covenants 17:8; 18:9, 22-25, 34, and thus originated after mid-June 1829. Doctrine and Covenants 20:75-79 was therefore composed intentionally as a restatement of Moroni 4-5. The words of the prayers and the accompanying instructions are virtually identical in both places. As Joseph and Oliver drew together the governing principles of the newly organized Church, they were inspired to turn to the Book of Mormon for several details regarding baptism, the sacrament, and other ordinances (compare D&C 20:73 with 3 Nephi 11:23-25).

³ The origins of many words and phrases in the sacrament prayers can profitably be traced back into the early centuries of Nephite history, notably in the words of Nephi in 2 Nephi 31-33 and in the covenant renewal speech of Benjamin in Mosiah 5, but it exceeds the present scope of this paper to pursue that useful and interesting line of research and exegesis. For information along that line, see John W. Welch, “The Nephite Sacrament Prayers: From King Benjamin’s Speech to Moroni 4-5” (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1986) and “Our Nephite Sacrament Prayers,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 286-89.

The setting for the administration of the sacrament in 3 Nephi 18 was deeply spiritual. Jesus ministered the sacrament to those assembled in Bountiful following a rich outpouring of the spirit. During that day, the people in Bountiful had beheld the resurrected Christ, had been taught the main commandments of his gospel (3 Nephi 12–14), and were told great prophecies of things to come (3 Nephi 16:1–20); their sick had been healed (3 Nephi 17:5–10), and their souls were filled (3 Nephi 17:17); “so great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome” (3 Nephi 17:18). They bathed Jesus’ feet with their tears and they knelt down upon the earth before him (3 Nephi 17:13); Jesus instructed them to arise as he blessed them and their children because of their faith (3 Nephi 17:19–20). After a spiritual manifestation of fire and angels (3 Nephi 17:24), the people bore record of the truth of what they had seen and heard (3 Nephi 17:25).⁴ Little wonder that the Nephites desired to commemorate this extraordinary day by ceremoniously remembering and religiously repeating the words they heard Jesus speak on that occasion.

The words which Jesus spoke as he administered the sacrament in 3 Nephi 18 are as follows (the italicized words look ahead to the wording of the sacrament prayers in Moroni 4–5):

He said unto the disciples: Behold there shall one be ordained among you, and to him will I give power that he shall break *bread* and *bless* it and give it unto the people of my church, unto *all those who* shall believe and be baptized in my name.

And this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you.

And this shall ye *do in remembrance of my body*, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a *testi-*

⁴ For purposes of comparison, one may note that each of these aspects spoken at the temple in Bountiful has a counterpart in Benjamin’s speech. See the great prophecies of Mosiah 3 and the phrase “we could prophesy of all things” (Mosiah 5:3), along with their rejoicing with “exceedingly great joy” (Mosiah 5:4), falling down to the earth (Mosiah 4:1; cf. also 3 Nephi 11:12), being blessed with a great spiritual change (Mosiah 5:2), and testifying of the surety and truth of the words which had been spoken (Mosiah 5:2).

mony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

And it came to pass that when he said these words, he commanded his disciples that they should take of the *wine* of the cup and *drink of it*, and that they should also give unto the multitude that they might drink of it. . . .

And when the disciples had done this, Jesus said unto them: Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth *witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you.*

And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in *my name*; and ye shall do it *in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you*, that ye may *witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me.* And if ye do always remember me *ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.* (3 Nephi 18:5-8, 10-11)

The similarities between these words of Jesus and the Nephite sacrament prayers in Moroni 4-5 are abundant and apparent, as the following comparison looking back to 3 Nephi 18 demonstrates:

Moroni 4-5	3 Nephi 18
O God, <i>the Eternal Father</i> , we <i>ask thee</i> in the name of thy Son	<i>ask the Father in my name</i> (3 Nephi 18:20)
Jesus Christ, to <i>bless</i> and sanctify	he took of the <i>bread</i> and break and <i>blessed</i> it (3 Nephi 18:3)
<i>this bread</i> to the souls of <i>all those who</i> partake of it; that they may eat <i>in remembrance of the body</i> of,	unto <i>all those who</i> (3 Nephi 18:5)
thy Son and <i>witness unto thee</i> , O God, <i>the Eternal Father</i>	<i>this shall ye do in remembrance of my body</i> which I have shown unto you (3 Nephi 18:7)
<i>that they are willing to take upon them</i>	it shall be a <i>testimony unto the Father</i> (3 Nephi 18:7)
	<i>that ye are willing to do</i> (3 Nephi 18:10)

the name of thy Son, and <i>always remember him, and keep his</i>	that ye do <i>always remember me</i> (3 Nephi 18:7)
<i>commandments which he hath given them,</i>	that <i>which I have commanded you</i> (3 Nephi 18:10)
that they may always <i>have his Spirit to be with them, Amen.</i>	ye shall <i>have my Spirit to be with you</i> (3 Nephi 18:7)
O God, <i>the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son,</i> Jesus Christ, to bless and sanc- tify this <i>wine</i> to the souls of <i>all those who</i> <i>drink of it, that they</i> <i>may do it in remembrance of the blood</i> of thy Son, <i>which was shed for them;</i> that they <i>may witness unto thee,</i> O God, <i>the Eternal Father,</i> <i>that they do always remember him,</i> that they may <i>have his Spirit to be with them. Amen</i>	<i>ask the Father in my name</i> (3 Nephi 18:20) take of the <i>wine</i> (3 Nephi 18:8) <i>all those who</i> (3 Nephi 18:5) they did <i>drink</i> (3 Nephi 18:9) <i>do it in remembrance of my blood</i> (3 Nephi 18:11) <i>which I have shed for you</i> (3 Nephi 18:11) that ye <i>may witness unto the Father</i> (3 Nephi 18:11) <i>that ye do always remember me</i> (3 Nephi 18:11) ye shall <i>have my Spirit to be with you</i> (3 Nephi 18:11).

The close relationship between the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi 18 and the basic terms of the sacrament prayers found in Moroni 4–5 is readily apparent. Virtually every component in the two sacrament prayers has a precise counterpart in the express words of Jesus himself.

The prayer on the bread draws heavily on phrases from 3 Nephi 18:3, 5, 7 and 10, such as “all those who,” “in remembrance of my body,”⁵ “a testimony unto the Father,” “that ye

⁵ Note especially that the bread was eaten “in remembrance of” the body which Jesus “*showed unto*” them (3 Nephi 18:7), thus adding a profound dimension to the sacrament symbolism over that which is found in the New Testament. There the bread represents the body “given for you” (Luke 22:19; cf. 3 Nephi

are willing to," "always remember me," "which I have commanded you," and "have my spirit to be with you." In the prayer, these phrases become "the souls of all those who," "in remembrance of the body of thy Son," "witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father," "that they are willing to," "always remember him," "commandments which he hath given them," and "have his Spirit to be with them."

In an even more concentrated fashion, the language of the prayer on the water is almost entirely found in the words of 3 Nephi 18:11. For instance, the line "do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you" appears in the prayer as "do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them." The phrase "witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me" becomes "witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father that they do always remember him," while the words "have my Spirit to be with you" stand as the promise "that they may have his Spirit to be with them."

Moreover, the words of the salutation, "O God, the Eternal Father,"⁶ and the language of the petition, "we ask thee, in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ"⁷ are also present in 3 Nephi 18,

18:6) and "broken for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24; cf. 3 Nephi 18:6), but the idea of commemorating the body "shown unto" you is never mentioned in the King James Version of the Bible. The Book of Mormon and the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible both make it clear that the tokens are simply representations of Jesus' flesh and blood (see JST Matthew 26:25; Mark 14:22, 24).

⁶ After Jesus' appearance to them, the Nephites as a whole would have become more explicitly sensitive to the relationship between the Father and the Son, especially in light of the fact that Jesus taught them that he would ascend to his Father (e.g., 3 Nephi 15:1; 28:1) and saliently spoke of the "Father" apart from himself at least 169 times. In the earlier portions of the Book of Mormon, the distinctions between God the Father and his son Jesus Christ, though basically understood by the prophets in those eras, are not always so clearly stated. But in the sacrament prayers, this distinction is more explicitly stated, which would have helped standardize post-Easter Nephite terminology.

⁷ From early times, the prophets of the Book of Mormon had taught that things should be done in the name of Christ. The Nephites worshipped God in the name of Christ (Jacob 4:5), baptized in his name (Mosiah 18:10), and prayed in the name of Christ (2 Nephi 32:9). An explicit reference to "asking" in the name of Christ is found in Enos 1:15. The precise concept of "asking the Father in the name of Christ," however, may have taken on added significance in Nephite usage after it was emphasized four times by Jesus in 3 Nephi 16:4; 17:3; 18:20; 27:28. It also seems to have become a common expression of the

where Jesus instructed the people that they should put up their petitions to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, . . . it shall be given" (3 Nephi 18:20).

It is not known for sure when the Nephite sacrament prayers took the form that they now have in Moroni 4–5, but one can confidently assume that this occurred at least very soon after the appearance of Jesus in 3 Nephi, and quite possibly at the time of Jesus' appearance itself, for the record states that Nephites observed the sacrament again with Jesus and that they continued to do so from that time onward (3 Nephi 20:3; 26:13). The fact that they so dutifully recorded, preserved, and used the words of Jesus in general, together with the fact that they were commanded to use specific words in performing the ordinance of baptism (3 Nephi 11:27), gives considerable assurance that the Nephites began using the sacrament prayers as we know them at a very early time and that they did not change them during the four hundred years between the times of Jesus and Moroni.

Several possibilities must be considered in wondering how the final language of these prayers may have taken shape: (1) it is possible that, before he departed, Jesus himself may have given the Nephites the very words found in Moroni 4–5; (2) one of the disciples may have prepared those texts, receiving personal approval from Jesus either during his open ministry among the Nephites or in a subsequent private visitation; or (3) one of the disciples soon after the departure of Jesus may have been inspired to crystalize the language of those prayers, drawing heavily on the words spoken by Jesus in 3 Nephi 18.

Evidence that Jesus did not use the very prayers now found in Moroni 4–5 when he personally blessed and administered the bread and wine to the Nephites in 3 Nephi 18, however, can be adduced from several facts. The text in 3 Nephi 18:5–11 appears to report the precise words Jesus spoke on that particular occasion.

Nephites after the time of Jesus (Mormon 9:21, 27; Moroni 7:26; 10:4). Parenthetically, it can also be noted that the sacrament prayers use the first person plural "we" in this petition. The Nephite twelve were commissioned as a group to administer the sacrament (3 Nephi 18:5, 28), with one "among you" ordained to break and bless the bread. That disciple would have been speaking on behalf of the group as he made this petition to the Father.

The text reports what “he said” (3 Nephi 18:5) and affirms that “he said these words” (3 Nephi 18:8). Moreover, when Moroni records the words used in priesthood ordinations, he designates those words as “the words of Christ which he spake unto his disciples” (Moroni 2:1, 3), but when he reports how the Nephites administered “the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church,” he records what “they said” (Moroni 4:2; 5:2).

Nevertheless, the resulting prayers in Moroni 4-5 are clearly derived from and closely connected with the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi 18. Certainly, it is easier to see Moroni 4-5 emerging out of what Jesus said in 3 Nephi 18 than to assume that the connection flowed in the other direction, in which case 3 Nephi 18 would offer only an abridgment or paraphrase of what Jesus actually said as he administered the sacrament at that time.

In particular, grammatical reasons make it is easier to understand Moroni 4-5 as a drawing upon 3 Nephi 18 than vice versa. The prayers of Jesus in 3 Nephi 18 are personal, composed in the first and second person (“my” and “ye”), whereas the ecclesiastical prayers in Moroni 4-5 are written in the third person (“his” and “they”). For example, the prayers in Moroni use the third person plural (“they”) when referring to the congregation where Jesus had used the second person plural (“you”) in 3 Nephi 18; and the prayers refer to Jesus as “thy Son” and speak of “his Spirit,” where Jesus had naturally referred to himself as “me” or had spoken of “my Spirit” in 3 Nephi 18. It is more likely that a Nephite would have revised the personal words of Jesus into general prayers than for an abridger to have created out of the third person prayers a first and second person narrative in the words of Jesus. Thus, it would certainly appear that 3 Nephi 18 was the primary text which was followed closely and faithfully by Moroni 4-5.

One difference between the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi 18 and the sacrament prayers in Moroni 4-5 is in the order of the commitments mentioned in the two sacrament prayers. The prayer on the bread lists three requirements: that the people (1) be willing to take upon themselves the name of Christ, (2) always remember him, and (3) keep his commandments. In this regard, the prayer in Moroni 4 is somewhat closer to language found in King Benjamin’s speech than to the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi 18. After

his people had promised (1) to obey the will of God (Mosiah 5:5), King Benjamin imposed on them the further requirements that (2) they should "take upon [them] the name of Christ" (Mosiah 5:8) and (3) "should remember to retain the name written always in [their] hearts" (Mosiah 5:12). The phrase "take upon them the name" does not appear in 3 Nephi 18 in connection with the sacrament itself; rather, baptism "in my name" is mentioned as a prerequisite to partaking of the sacrament (3 Nephi 18:5, 11). These phrases in Moroni 4, therefore, seem to recall the covenantal language of Benjamin's speech in specific, as well as the language of 3 Nephi 18 in general.

Moreover, all three requirements of Benjamin's covenant are consolidated in Moroni 4 into a concise single text, whereas the bread and wine were administered by Jesus in 3 Nephi 18 with separate requirements. In that instance, the bread was actually given by Jesus and received by the multitude only in connection with the third stipulation, namely, as a "testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me" (3 Nephi 18:7), but the prayer on the bread in Moroni 4 mentions all three. The wine was ministered by Jesus only in conjunction with the stipulation that it stand as a "witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you" (3 Nephi 18:10), but the sacrament prayer on the wine in Moroni 5 only requires the people to witness that "they do always remember him." These differences converge, however, upon the ultimate purpose of the sacrament: Moroni 4 and 5 both end with the requirement that "they do always remember him," which was mentioned by Jesus in connection with both the bread and the wine (3 Nephi 18:7, 11). Perhaps this phrase was placed as the sole aspect in the prayer on the wine, just as it was the final condition imposed by Benjamin upon his people, because it was the main and last point that Jesus made regarding the sacrament in 3 Nephi 18:11.

On the other hand, in a broader sense, the order of the three stipulations found in the prayer on the bread in Moroni 4 can be found in 3 Nephi 18. The concept of being baptized in the "name" of Christ appears in verse 5 (it is also mentioned in 18:11, 16 and 30); "always remember" him appears in verse 7 (and again in 18:11); doing "that which I have commanded you" is enjoined in verse 10 (likewise in 18:14). Thus, it is evident that

these three conditions are each mentioned frequently in 3 Nephi 18:5–14, and attention is focused on them there in the same order in which they appear in Moroni 4.

Whatever the precise nature of the connection between the words of Jesus and the Nephite sacrament prayers, it is clear that many phrases in 3 Nephi 18 are identical to those appearing in Moroni 4–5, coming from the personal and intimate words of Jesus himself. It is apparent that the words of Jesus have coalesced beautifully into the sacrament prayers and that the Nephites observed the ordinance of the sacrament, as they were commanded, to do “that which ye have seen me do” (3 Nephi 18:24; see also JST Matthew 26:25; JST Mark 14:24).

Ordinations to the Priesthood

A second instance of close textual relationship between 3 Nephi 18 and the priesthood procedural chapters at the beginning of the book of Moroni is found in the passages that deal with the giving of priesthood powers to the disciples. Here also significant connections can be seen between the words of Jesus and the texts of Moroni, as well as between the example set by the Lord and the subsequent religious practices followed by the Nephites.

As Jesus was preparing to ascend back into heaven at the end of his first day among the Nephites, he conferred upon the twelve the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost (they had received the power to baptize earlier in the day; see 3 Nephi 11:21–22). While the people in the multitude saw Jesus perform both these ordinances, they did not hear the words that he spoke in the second instance:

And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of these sayings, he touched with *his hand* the *disciples whom he had chosen*, one by one, even until he had touched them all, and spake unto them as he touched them.

And *the multitude heard not* the words which he spake, therefore they did not bear record; but the disciples bare record that he gave them *power to give the Holy Ghost*. And I will show unto you hereafter that this record is true. (3 Nephi 18:36–37; the italicized

words look ahead to similar words in Moroni 2; see below)

Although the words spoken by Jesus on this occasion do not appear in 3 Nephi 18, they were inscribed by Moroni on the plates as he completed the record of his people. Evidently these words of Jesus were kept very sacred for almost four hundred years: if the Lord himself had not wanted the righteous multitude to hear these words as he spoke them, it would have been hard for the disciples to justify speaking these words freely in the less sacred settings in which they routinely worked. Nevertheless, despite the intervening years and historical changes that eventually occurred among the Nephites, close relationships between the report of this ordinance in 3 Nephi 18 and the final account given by Moroni can readily be seen:

The words of Christ, which he spake unto his *disciples*, the twelve *whom he had chosen*, as he laid his *hands* upon them—

And he called them by name, saying: Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer; and after ye have done this ye shall have *power* that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, ye shall *give the Holy Ghost*; and in my name shall ye give it, for thus do mine apostles.

Now Christ spake these words unto them at the time of his first appearing; and *the multitude heard it not*, but *the disciples heard it*; and on as many as they laid their hands, fell the Holy Ghost. (Moroni 2:1-3; the italicized words relate back to specific wordings in 3 Nephi 18; see above)

Once again, the text recorded by Moroni is faithfully dependent upon the earlier account. In both instances, the twelve are called the “disciples . . . whom he had chosen”; the manner of ordination by the laying on of hands is specified; the operative words bestowing “power” to “give the Holy Ghost” are the same; and the certification that the “multitude heard it not” is consciously repeated. These words add further evidence of the high degree to which the Nephites venerated the words that Jesus

spoke while he was with them. Presumably these leaders used these words of Jesus as they, in turn, conveyed to their successors the same priesthood power and authority that Jesus had given them.

Moroni goes on, in Moroni 3, to record the manner in which the disciples, who came to be “called the elders of the church,” ordained priests and teachers:

After they had prayed unto the Father in the name of Christ, they laid their hands upon them, and said:

In the name of Jesus Christ I ordain you to be a priest, (or, if he be a teacher) I ordain you to be a teacher, to preach repentance and remission of sins through Jesus Christ, by the endurance of faith on his name to the end. Amen.

And after this manner did they ordain priests and teachers, according to the gifts and callings of God unto men; and they ordained them by the power of the Holy Ghost, which was in them. (Moroni 3:2-4)

Notably, the procedures utilized here again follow the instructions given by the resurrected Lord. First, the elders “prayed unto the Father in the name of Christ,” just as Jesus had originally told the disciples to do: “Ye shall call on the Father in my name, in mighty prayer” (Moroni 2:2). Second, they began the ordination by stating that it was performed “in the name of Jesus Christ,” just as he had instructed: “in my name shall ye give it” (Moroni 2:2). Third, they laid their hands upon those whom they ordained, just as the Savior had done as he had ordained the twelve disciples. And fourth, the Nephite elders ordained priests and teachers “by the power of the Holy Ghost, which was in them,” the power that was bestowed upon them by Jesus himself. Thus, again, we can see the extent to which the Nephites followed the instructions and example of the Lord and did as he had instructed them.

Guidelines for Church Participation and Discipline

Finally, Moroni’s guidelines for the conduct of church meetings and discipline illustrate ways in which Nephite church practices diligently followed the instructions of Jesus. Here again,

we encounter many significant points of contact, this time between 3 Nephi 18 and Moroni 6.

Moroni reports that "*the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning the welfare of their souls. And they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of the Lord Jesus*" (Moroni 6:5–6). In doing this, the church was obedient to the Lord who had commanded the people to meet together often, to pray for each other, and to partake of the sacrament:

And behold, *ye shall meet together oft*; and ye shall not forbid any man from coming unto you when ye shall meet together, but suffer them that they may come unto you and forbid them not;

But ye shall *pray* for them, and shall not cast them out; and if it so be that they come unto you oft ye shall *pray* for them unto the Father, in my name. (3 Nephi 18:22–23)

And this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you.

And this shall ye do *in remembrance of my body*, which I have shown unto you. (3 Nephi 18:6–7)

Concerning baptism and church membership, Moroni records that in order to be baptized, people were required to come forth with a broken heart and contrite spirit, to take upon them the name of Christ, determined to serve him until the end. None were received unto baptism except

they came forth with *a broken heart and a contrite spirit*, and witnessed unto the church that they truly *repented of all their sins*.

And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the *name* of Christ, having a determination to serve him *to the end*. (Moroni 6:2–3)

This report again parallels the words of the Lord in 3 Nephi, when he commanded, "that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall *repent of your sins*, and come unto me with *a broken heart and a*

contrite spirit” (3 Nephi 12:19; see also Psalms 34:18; 2 Nephi 2:7; 3 Nephi 9:20; Ether 4:15; D&C 20:37), be “baptized in my name” (3 Nephi 11:23; 18:5, 30), and “look unto me, and endure *to the end*” (3 Nephi 15:9; see also D&C 20:37). Although these words and phrases are not unique to the commandments of Jesus in 3 Nephi, it seems evident, as is the case throughout Moroni 2–6, that the baptismal practices of the Nephites were consciously grounded in the instructions given to them by the resurrected Lord.

After baptism, people were then “*numbered among the people of the church of Christ*” (Moroni 6:4). As Jesus had said, “I know my sheep, and they are *numbered*” (3 Nephi 18:31). Being so numbered allowed them to partake of the sacrament, for Jesus had directed his disciples to give the sacrament only to “*the people of my church*, unto all those who shall believe and be baptized in my name” (3 Nephi 18:5).

Interestingly, although the requirement that the sacrament not be given to those who have not been baptized in the name of Christ is not to be found in the New Testament, another very early (late first or early second century A.D.) Christian text known as the *Didache*, or the *Teachings of the Apostles*, contains a similar instruction: “And let none eat or drink of your eucharist, but those baptized into [the] name of [the] Lord.”⁸ Although this text was discovered well after the Book of Mormon was translated by Joseph Smith, this early Christian document compares with the explicit instruction found in 3 Nephi 18:5.⁹

Several other interesting parallels exist between the early Christian instructions and the Book of Mormon. For example, *Didache* 10:6 further dictates: “If anyone is holy let him come: if any is not, let him repent.” Similarly, the Lord in 3 Nephi 18:29–31 requires: “If ye know that a man is unworthy, . . . ye shall forbid him . . . and if it so be that he repenteth and is baptized in my

⁸ *Didache* 9:5; Hans Lietzmann, *Mass and Lord's Supper: A Study in the History of the Liturgy*, trans. Dorothea H. G. Reeve (Leiden: Brill, 1953), 743. Found also in Kirsopp Lake, tr., *The Apostolic Fathers* (New York: Loeb Classical Library, 1930), 1:303–33, and in the *Apostolic Constitutions* VII.

⁹ This requirement may have been implicitly understood in Paul's comments to baptized members in 1 Corinthians 11:27, but it is nowhere expressly stated in the New Testament.

name, then shall ye receive him, . . . but if he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people."¹⁰

Moreover, the broken bread in *Didache* 9:4 and 10:1 is said to represent the people of the world "scattered upon the mountains" to be "gathered from the ends of the earth into my Kingdom . . . and from the four winds." Although not connected explicitly with the sacrament, 3 Nephi 16:4–5 (shortly before 3 Nephi 18) deals with this very theme, namely, those "who shall be scattered forth upon the face of the earth . . . will I gather in from the four quarters of the earth."¹¹

Furthermore, *Didache* 10:1–2, 5 declares that "after being filled" the people should give thanks for particular things, specifically, for God's "holy name which thou hast made to dwell in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy servant, . . . but above all that thou art mighty . . . to deliver thy Church *from all evil* and to perfect her in thy love and to *gather together*" those who have been sanctified. Similarly, after the Nephites "had eaten and were filled" they were instructed particularly to "watch and pray" (3 Nephi 18:15, 18) to overcome evil, to be delivered *from Satan*, and to gather "*together oft*" in pure convocations.

In addition, *Didache* 9:2–3 instructs the communicants to give thanks after the sacrament by saying, "We thank thee, our Father, for [that] which thou didst make known to us through Jesus thy servant. To thee be the glory for ever." After partaking of the sacrament in 3 Nephi 20:9, the Nephites likewise "did cry out with one voice and give glory to Jesus whom they both saw and heard." Perhaps the hymn that was sung in Jerusalem at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:30) was a hymn of praise.

Finally, one of the specific evils to be avoided, according to *Didache* 14:1, is avoiding disputations: "Let anyone who has a dispute with his fellow not come together with you, until they are reconciled, that your sacrifice be not defiled." Thus, Jesus concludes his comments about the sacrament in 3 Nephi by saying: "Blessed are ye if ye have no disputations among you"

¹⁰ Paul states a similar requirement in considerably different terms: "But let a man examine [*dokimazeto*] himself" (1 Corinthians 11:28).

¹¹ There is no parallel to this in eucharistic texts of the New Testament.

(3 Nephi 18:34). These, and possibly other aspects of the early Christian sacramental liturgy, may help place many of the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi 18 in their ancient historical contexts.

Other aspects of the early Christian sacrament may also prove to be of interest to students of the Book of Mormon. There is considerable evidence that the feeding of the multitudes with twelve baskets (Matthew 14:20; Mark 6:43; 8:19; Luke 9:17; John 6:13; cf. the twelve loaves of the shewbread) originally had sacramental undertones.¹² In the Coptic Gospel of the Twelve Apostles, for example, the feeding of the multitude was clearly eucharistic: Jesus there took five loaves, gave thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to the crowd saying, "It is a mystery of my Father who has a part of my flesh." The multitude there was spiritually filled.¹³ Similarly, the sacrament in 3 Nephi 18 and 20 is not administered as an evening meal to a small group of disciples, but in a covenantal setting to the multitude as a whole (first to the disciples, and then to the multitude), who ate and drank "to [the] soul and . . . were filled with the Spirit" (3 Nephi 20:8-9). In 3 Nephi 20:3-8, as in John 6 and in the Gospel of the Twelve Apostles, the sacramental emblems were miraculously provided for the multitude.¹⁴ The post-resurrection sacramental account in 3 Nephi and the post-resurrection meals also merit close comparison.¹⁵

The truthfulness of the Book of Mormon, of course, does not hinge on the existence of early Christian parallels such as these, but the fact that we find such requirements in both the Book of Mormon and in very early Christian writings corroborates the claim that Jesus taught the same gospel originally in the Old and

¹² See, e.g., Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 274; Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 175-77. Cf. also the multiplication of loaves by Elisha in 2 Kings 4:42-44.

¹³ Eugène Revillout, "Les Evangiles des Douze Apôtres et de S. Barthelemy," *Patrologia Orientalis* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1904), 133-34 (fragment 2).

¹⁴ Consider also John 4:10-14, "living water," and the practice of the Ebionites, an early Christian sect, who "celebrated the mysteries with unleavened bread and mere water," according to Epiphanius, cited in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Chapman, 1971), 442, in connection with the later.

¹⁵ Consider material in Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 1093-1100.

New Worlds and that the Book of Mormon reveals and restores to the modern world those plain and precious teachings of Jesus, many of which did not survive beyond the earliest generations of Christians in the Old World.¹⁶

Jesus anticipated that disputations and disobedience would arise among his followers. "And I give you these commandments because of the disputations which have been among you. And blessed are ye if ye have no disputations among you" (3 Nephi 18:34).¹⁷ Hence, the need for frequent and sincere chastening, admonition, exhortation, repentance, and forgiveness. Accordingly, in his last words to his disciples at the temple in Bountiful, Jesus gave them the following responsibility by way of commandment:

that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily, when ye shall minister it;

For whoso eateth and drinketh my flesh and blood unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul; therefore if ye know that a man is unworthy to eat and drink of my flesh and blood ye shall forbid him.

Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out from among you, but ye shall minister unto him and shall pray for him unto the Father, in my name; and if it so be that he repenteth and is baptized in my name, then shall ye receive him, and shall minister unto him of my flesh and blood.

¹⁶ Some useful sources dealing with the sacrament in the early church include Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 274; Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968); Maurice Goguel, *The Primitive Church* (New York: Macmillan, 1964); Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1966); J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960 and revised editions); Lietzman, *Mass and Lord's Supper*.

¹⁷ Similarly, one of the specific evils that the earliest Christians were also taught to avoid, according to *Didache* 14:1, was disputations: "Let anyone who has a dispute with his fellow not come together with you, until they are reconciled, that your sacrifice be not defiled." Compare Matthew 5:23-26.

But *if he repent not he shall not be numbered among my people*, that he may not destroy my people, for behold I know my sheep, and they are numbered.

Nevertheless, ye shall not cast him out of your synagogues, or your places of worship, for unto such shall ye continue to minister; for ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto *me with full purpose of heart*, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them. (3 Nephi 18:28-32)

Here Jesus charged those serving as apostles to prevent people, for their own good, from partaking of the sacrament unworthily. As much as one might want to partake of the sacrament, to do so unworthily would not be a blessing but a condemnation, and “wo unto him whom the Father condemneth” (3 Nephi 18:33). Nevertheless, the sinner is not to be excommunicated immediately, but is to be ministered to and given the opportunity to repent. Then, if repentance does not occur, the sinner is to be numbered no longer among the people of the church, in order to prevent such parties from destroying the people of the church. But even at that, Jesus instructed that excommunicants should not be isolated, ostracized, or banished (as was the practice under the law of Moses; see Numbers 12:14; Ezra 10:8), but that they should be allowed to enter the church’s places of worship and should be ministered unto in hopes that they still might return and repent and come unto Christ with full purpose of heart, so that he might heal them.

True to the practice we have seen before, the Nephites again modeled their church procedures on these words of Jesus. The elders of the church “were strict to observe that there should be no iniquity among them” (Moroni 6:7). They fulfilled their obligation to protect the people of the church. The guilty were not convicted by the elders lightly: “three witnesses of the church” were required in order to “condemn them before the elders” (Moroni 6:7), implementing the rule of witnesses in Deuteronomy 19:15 most generously toward the accused: “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, . . . at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.” Observing the precise words of Jesus, the Nephites would then remove from the records of the church the names of

those who brought iniquity into the church and would not repent: "And if they repented not, and confessed not, their names were blotted out, and they were not numbered among the people of Christ" (Moroni 6:7; compare 3 Nephi 18:31). Still, the hand of fellowship and the healing embrace of forgiveness, as Jesus commanded, was extended repeatedly to the sincerely repentant, forever: "But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven" (Moroni 6:8; compare 3 Nephi 18:32).

Conclusion

The point of this paper is rather simple, namely, that the words used by the Nephites in administering the sacrament and in conducting the affairs of the Church of Christ are virtually all, solidly and directly, rooted in the words spoken by the resurrected Jesus in 3 Nephi. In one sense, this observation is not surprising. One would expect this result, namely, that the sacred narratives in the accounts of the presence of Jesus in 3 Nephi would become the basis of subsequent religious practices for all the Nephites who should believe in Christ and in his appearance at Bountiful. In another sense, however, the degree to which this phenomenon operates might not have been expected. The precision in usage and the persistence of the basic terms throughout these texts, which are separated from each other by many years and pages of Nephite history, speak highly of the ancient authorship, of the faithful and logical orderliness, of the linguistic sensitivity, and of the historical validity of this religious textual history. The Nephite usage bespeaks that of actual experience, enshrining in the institutional practices of a people the memory of a divine presence among them.

Numerous phrases in Moroni 2–6 that are exactly the same as terms in the words of Jesus show that the relationships between these two texts could not have been random; these interconnections are too extensive, complex, and meaningful for them to have happened accidentally. And yet one may doubt that Joseph Smith, during the translation and dictation process, was conscious of many of these specific details, except perhaps as an overall impression.

Moreover, detecting the close relationship between the words of Jesus and the words of these priesthood ordinances and procedures, many of which are still in regular use in the Church today, enhances our appreciation of these sacred texts. In particular, the sacrament prayers in Moroni 4-5 have a rich and meaningful background. When these prayers are read or heard, they should bring to mind the words and ministrations of Jesus himself at the meridian of time at the temple in Bountiful. When Latter-day Saints partake of the sacrament, they observe not only the "sacrament of the Lord's Supper," but also what one might call the "sacrament of the Lord's appearance," eaten in remembrance of his body which was shown unto them (3 Nephi 18:7), in remembrance of his blood that he alone shed to atone for all sin, in remembrance of the eternal gospel that he personally preached, and in remembrance of the blessings that he then bestowed upon and still extends to all the righteous who will come unto him.