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Benjamin's Covenant as a Precursor of the Sacrament Prayers

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CHAPTER 10

BENJAMIN'S COVENANT AS A PRECURSOR OF THE SACRAMENT PRAYERS

John W. Welch

King Benjamin's covenant language in Mosiah 5 figures seminally as an early text to which Jesus was apparently alluding when he articulated in 3 Nephi 18 words that provided the basis for the final form of the Nephite sacrament prayers in Moroni 4–5. A historical, textual relationship exists between the words of the Nephite covenant text of King Benjamin, the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi 18, and the phrases used in the Nephite sacrament prayers; the precision and persistence of basic terms throughout all three of these texts, separated from each other by many years and pages of Nephite history, speak highly of the faithful and logical orderliness, the linguistic sensitivity, and the progressing revelation and inspiration present in this history.

Benjamin's Words and Moroni 4–5

At the conclusion of Benjamin's speech (Mosiah 5), his people entered into a covenant. The event began with a declaration by the people of their faith in the king's words, an affirmation of their disposition to do good continually, and

an acknowledgment that the goodness of God had filled them with the spirit of prophecy and with joy. In effect, the people declared how they had been blessed and sanctified: “Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; . . . we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2–4). The people then, in the following words, expressed their willingness to enter into a covenant. (The emphasized phrases contain words similar to those appearing in Moroni 4–5.) “And we *are willing* to enter into a covenant with our God to do his will, and *to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he shall command us*, all the remainder of our days, that we may not bring upon ourselves a never-ending torment, as has been spoken by the angel, that we may not drink out of the cup of the wrath of God” (Mosiah 5:5).

Benjamin responded by accepting the words of the people as a “righteous covenant” (Mosiah 5:6). He explained the resultant relationship the people would enjoy with their God as a consequence of their covenant and then affirmed the next requirement: “And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters. . . . Therefore, I would *that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant*” (Mosiah 5:7–8).

Benjamin explained how all those who know the sacred name by which they are called shall be found on the right hand of God, but those who do not shall be found on the left. Accordingly, he instructed his people further that they should “remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out . . . [and that you] should *remember to retain the name written always in your hearts*” (Mosiah 5:11–12). Provided that they knew and remembered the name, the people were promised that they would not be driven away or cast out; if

they remained steadfast in good works, they would have everlasting salvation (Mosiah 5:13–15).

The sacrament prayers in Moroni 4–5 contain several phrases that are similar to these words of King Benjamin:

Moroni 4–5

Mosiah 5

O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it; 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

And we *are willing* (5:5)

take upon them the name of thy Son,

take upon you the name of Christ (5:8)

and *always remember him,*

remember to retain the name written *always* (5:11)

and *keep his commandments* which he

to be obedient to his commandments (5:5)

hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them, Amen.

O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do

it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do *always remember* him,

remember to retain the name written *always* (5:11)

that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

The text of Mosiah 5 indicates that by making this covenant, Benjamin's people witnessed that they were willing to keep God's commandments, after which they took upon themselves the name of Christ and the obligation to remember to keep that name always written in their hearts. These promises similarly comprise the essential elements of the Nephite sacramental prayers as they eventually appeared in Moroni's day and as they are used among Latter-day Saints today.¹

Jesus' Words in 3 Nephi 18 as the Bridge between Benjamin and Moroni 4–5

With the coming of the risen Jesus to the Nephites gathered at their temple in Bountiful, the law of Moses was fulfilled, and Nephite laws and ordinances were changed. The voice of Christ had announced at the time of his crucifixion that the old law had been done away (3 Nephi 9:19–20). Thus as the Nephites gathered at their temple following Christ's crucifixion (3 Nephi 10:18; 11:1), they could well have wondered which parts of their old law and temple ritual they should continue to observe and which they should not.² As the people conversed, "wondering . . . about this Jesus Christ" (3 Nephi 11:1–2), the answer came.

Through the teachings and ministry of Jesus, they learned how “all things [had] become new” (3 Nephi 12:47; 15:2). One of the former elements that took on a new character at this time would have been the Nephite personal covenant language. The main instructions regarding the administration of the sacrament appear in 3 Nephi 18:5–12, a text that bears a close relationship to the wording of the sacrament prayers in Moroni 4–5.³

Jesus taught and ministered the sacrament to those assembled in Bountiful following a rich outpouring of the spirit. As was the experience of the people of Benjamin, those gathered in Bountiful were given, immediately before their covenant experience, great prophecies of things to come (see 3 Nephi 16:1–20), and they too had had their souls “filled” (3 Nephi 17:17). “So great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome” (3 Nephi 17:18). They knelt down upon the earth (see 3 Nephi 17:13), and Jesus instructed them to “arise” (see 3 Nephi 17:19). Jesus blessed them because of their faith (see 3 Nephi 17:20), and after a profound spiritual manifestation (see 3 Nephi 17:24), the people bore record that what they had seen and heard was true (3 Nephi 17:25). Each of these aspects in the experience at the temple in Bountiful has a counterpart in Mosiah 5:1–4.⁴

The words which Jesus then spoke in 3 Nephi 18 are as follows:

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 *testimony 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 18:5–11)

The textual similarities between these words of Jesus and the Nephite sacrament prayers in Moroni 4–5 are abundant and apparent. (For purposes of this study, I assume that one of the twelve disciples, most likely Nephi, prepared the texts of the sacrament prayers based on the words of Jesus, perhaps under his direct supervision; I have explored this assumption and other such possibilities previously.)⁵

Less obvious but equally significant, it is evident that a clear continuity between the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi and the traditional Nephite covenant language known from the time of Benjamin is also visible, especially in the events preparing the people to participate in the rite, and also in the phrases “take upon you the name of Christ,” “remember to retain the name always,” and “be obedient to his commandments,” which appear in Mosiah and are echoed in 3 Nephi. These connections demonstrate one way in which Jesus took the old Nephite covenant text and made it new. The promises and allegiance to Christ remained basically the same, but the tokens of his resurrected body and atoning blood were presented as Jesus himself stood in their midst

and provided the pattern that his repentant followers should observe from that time forth. The result would have appeared to the Nephites both marvelously familiar and revealingly innovative.

Thus significant similarities exist between the words of the Nephite sacrament prayers and the covenant language of Mosiah 5. People in both instances witness their willingness, take upon themselves the name of Christ, and promise to remember him always and keep his commandments. Several subtle differences between Christ's words and King Benjamin's, however, can also be observed:

Clear reference to God as the Eternal Father. It is important and interesting that the sacrament prayers address God as "the Eternal Father" and clearly distinguish him from Jesus Christ, his Son.

In their covenant language, however, Benjamin's people initially referred to their God only as "our God" (Mosiah 5:5), not as their "father." In a covenantal sense, God (Christ) became their Father as a result of their conversion, as they were thereby spiritually begotten of him that day and were thus called "the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters" (Mosiah 5:7). For the people to have spoken of God as their Father before uttering the words that created or renewed that relationship would have been premature.⁶

In Moroni 4–5, of course, God is addressed at the outset as "God the Eternal Father." Here, God's fatherhood is not dependent on the people becoming his sons and daughters through the covenant process. The language of the sacrament prayers focuses on the everlasting relationship between God the Father and Jesus Christ his Son. Here, God's fatherhood is called "eternal," which may reflect the point that God's fatherhood is not conditioned in any ultimate sense on the existence of covenant relationships with mortals (compare Hebrews 7:1–24).

Also, the distinction between God's fatherhood and

Christ's sonship is clearly stated in the prayers in Moroni 4–5. 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 (for example, 3 Nephi 15:1; 28:1). He expounded on the distinct roles of the Father many times as he taught at the temple in Bountiful. 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, do not always appear so clearly stated.⁷ But in the sacrament prayers, this distinction is more clearly defined, which may have helped standardize the post-Easter Nephite usage.⁸

Asking the Father in the name of the Son, Jesus Christ. When the prayers in Moroni 4–5 request a blessing and sanctification, they petition, "We ask thee in the name of thy son, Jesus Christ." In so doing, they follow a specific instruction given by Jesus in 3 Nephi 18:20, immediately following his administration of the sacrament. The use of this phrase in 3 Nephi 18 may represent a change from the time of Benjamin, making this form of asking God explicitly part of the covenant text for the first time. On the other hand, in the early portions of the Book of Mormon, many things were done in the name of Christ.⁹ Nevertheless, the precise concept of "asking the Father in the name of Christ" appears to have taken on broader significance in Nephite usage only after it appears in full and is emphasized four times by the resurrected Jesus in 3 Nephi (see 3 Nephi 16:4; 17:3; 18:20; 27:28). Since Jesus had specifically instructed the Nephite disciples to ask in his name (see 3 Nephi 18:20), it is no wonder that this phrase was expressly incorporated into the sacrament prayers.

Blessing and sanctifying. Benjamin's text mentions no sacramental emblems being blessed or sanctified as his people made their covenant. The people themselves, nevertheless, first recited the ways in which *they* personally had been blessed and sanctified by the spirit of God, making their desires pure. Likewise, Jesus pronounced the people in Bountiful "blessed" because of their faith (3 Nephi 17:20) before he administered the sacrament to them. In the prayers in Moroni 4–5, the bread and wine were sanctified. While the holiness of the people is not thereby diminished, the focus on Christ's sanctity is a meaningful addition.

Bread and wine. From the words of Jesus, above all, came the eucharistic aspects of the prayers in Moroni 4–5. The bread was eaten "in remembrance of" the body which Jesus "*show[ed] unto*" them (3 Nephi 18:7), thus adding a new and profound dimension to the sacrament symbolism over and above that found in the New Testament. There the bread represents the body "given for you" (Luke 22:19; compare 3 Nephi 18:6) and "broken for you" (1 Corinthians 11:24; compare 3 Nephi 18:6), but the idea of the body "shown unto" you is never mentioned. The wine here, as in the New Testament, was "in remembrance of" the blood which was shed (3 Nephi 18:11; Luke 22:20). A substitute for blood was appropriate, since the old law pertaining to the "shedding of blood" (3 Nephi 9:19) had been superseded.

Although probably remote, a connection between the texts of Mosiah 5 and 3 Nephi 18 may be found in the fact that another cup was mentioned in the covenant text of Benjamin. Previously, the cup was the cup of God's wrath (see 2 Nephi 8:17; Mosiah 3:26; 5:5; Alma 40:26; 3 Nephi 11:11). In 3 Nephi 18:8, the cup became the cup of Jesus' blood. All God's wrath had been poured, as it were, into that cup of the new covenant. One may drink of it, a bitter

cup of blood turned through Christ's atonement into something as sweet as wine; otherwise, one will suffer the dregs of the wrath of God on one's own.

The covenantors. Both Benjamin and Jesus allowed only certain people to complete the covenant. Benjamin permitted only those who had entered into the covenant, "all you that have entered into the covenant with God" (Mosiah 5:8), to take upon them the name of Christ. Using Benjamin's words, as revealed to him by an angel, we know that those who then transgressed knowingly "drink damnation to their own souls" (Mosiah 3:18) and are "no more blameless" (Mosiah 3:22). In similar words, Christ allowed only those "who shall believe and be baptized in my name" to receive the sacrament. Anyone unworthy was not to be allowed to "eat and drink damnation to his soul" (3 Nephi 18:29). Moreover, the phrase *all you that* is found in the words of Benjamin (Mosiah 5:8) and the phrase *all those who* appears in the words of Jesus (3 Nephi 18:5), with the word *souls* appearing in this context in Mosiah 6:2, perhaps together contributing to the formulation of Moroni 4–5, "to the souls of all those who . . ."

The witness of willingness. In all three of these texts, the word *willing* appears. People entering or renewing their covenant with God must do so willingly, voluntarily, eagerly, and resolutely. The people of Benjamin expressed their willingness to enter into a covenant. They covenanted to do whatever God might command them all the rest of their lives. In terms that were rigorous and broad, the people entered into a covenant promising "to do his will" (Mosiah 5:5). Moreover, they promised to keep whatever commandments he might ever give them, now or in the future, all the days of their lives. Their promise was one of loyalty to God in general, and they expected that their king would yet deliver to them further commandments from

God (see Mosiah 2:31), which they would be equally bound to follow.

Moroni 4 also requires one's loyalty, but the orientation is more on the present than the future, for with the appearance of Jesus the law was already fulfilled. Thus the covenant obligation became to keep the commandments "which he *has* given them." "Therefore blessed are ye if ye shall keep my commandments, which the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you" (3 Nephi 18:14), namely the commandments found primarily in 3 Nephi 11–14. Furthermore, by this new covenant, people expressly affirm their desire to keep the commandments, beyond their willingness to enter into a covenant. Benjamin's people said: "We are willing *to enter* into a covenant with our God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things that he *shall* command us" (Mosiah 5:5). In slightly more direct terms than Benjamin had used, Jesus explains in 3 Nephi 18 that with the partaking of the sacrament comes a "witness unto the Father that ye are willing *to do* that which I *have* commanded you" (3 Nephi 18:10).

Requirements of the covenant. The prayer in Moroni 4 lists three requirements: that the people (1) be willing to take upon them the name of Christ, (2) always remember him, and (3) keep his commandments. In these regards, the prayers in Moroni 4–5 are particularly close to Benjamin's speech. After Benjamin's people had promised that they were *willing* to do whatever might be the will or *command* of their God, King Benjamin imposed on them two requirements: (1) they should "take upon [them] the *name* of Christ" (Mosiah 5:8), and (2) they "should *remember* to retain the name written always in [their] hearts" (Mosiah 5:12). These aspects of the covenant appear in this same order in Moroni 4. The phrase *take upon them the name* does not appear in 3 Nephi 18; rather, baptism "in my name" is mentioned as a

prerequisite to partaking of the sacrament (3 Nephi 18:5, 11). The presence of these phrases in Moroni 4, therefore, seems to look back even more literally to the covenant language of Benjamin than to the words in 3 Nephi 18.

Moreover, the three requirements of Benjamin's covenant have been consolidated in Moroni 4 into a shorter single text, whereas the bread and wine were administered by Jesus with separate requirements. The bread was given and received expressly as a "testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me" (3 Nephi 18:7). The wine was ministered as a "witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you" (3 Nephi 18:10). With the wine, however, Moroni 5 only has the people witness that "they do always remember him"; keeping the commandments is mentioned explicitly only with respect to the bread in Moroni 4—by ellipsis it is assumed with respect to the wine. Having all these requirements in the first of the sacrament prayers in Moroni 4–5 may be another way in which Benjamin's pattern contributed to the shape and consolidation preserved in Moroni 4–5 of the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi 18. Moreover, Moroni 4 and 5 both end with the requirement that "they do always remember him." This was also the final condition imposed by Benjamin upon his people. Similarly, in conjunction with the fact that the last words Jesus spoke regarding the wine were "if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you," this phrase was placed as the sole final aspect of the sacrament prayer on the wine.

On the other hand, it is possible that the order of the three requirements in Moroni 4 is related only to 3 Nephi 18. Baptism in the "name" of Christ appears in 3 Nephi 18:5 and is also mentioned in 18:11, 16, and 30; "always remembering" him appears in 18:7 and again in 18:11; and "keeping the commandments" is enjoined in 18:10 and likewise in

18:14. These three conditions are each mentioned at least twice in 3 Nephi 18:5–14, and they appear for the most part in the same order as they appear in Moroni 4. Although it is uncertain what specific influence either Benjamin’s text or the words of Jesus may have had on the sequence of phrases in the text of Moroni 4, it is apparent that all three texts coalesce beautifully.

The promise. Finally, in the different promises extended to the people by Benjamin and Jesus, a shift in emphasis may be discerned. The promises of Benjamin were that God would seal the people his, that they would have “everlasting salvation and eternal life,” and that they would be the beneficiaries of God’s wisdom, power, justice, and mercy (see Mosiah 5:15). Benjamin’s object was to bring well-being to his people “in heaven and in earth” (Mosiah 5:15). Benjamin’s promise, therefore, was not just one of the companionship of the spirit. He promised life and munificence in God—a spiritual counterpart to the secular blessing of victory and prosperity which he had earlier promised to the people if they would be obedient to their new king, his son (see Mosiah 2:31).

By contrast, the promise extended by both prayers in Moroni 4–5 is that the people will have the spirit of Jesus “to be with them.” This promise comes directly from the words of Jesus, spoken twice earlier in the Book of Mormon: “And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you” (3 Nephi 18:7, 11). These words of Jesus shift the blessing from a longer-term blessing of future salvation to a more immediate personal appreciation of the continual presence of Jesus among his righteous followers. Earlier the Nephites had hoped and prayed, in several sublime moments, to have “the love of God always” in their hearts (Alma 13:29), and they had experienced a number of outpourings of his Spirit on particular occasions (see Mosiah 4:20; Alma 16:16; 17:10;

19:36; Helaman 6:36). But the culminating blessing of always having the companionship of this Spirit came more intensely with the fulfillment of all things in Jesus.

Israelite Antecedents

The foregoing discussion suggests that the sacrament instituted by Jesus would not have seemed wholly unfamiliar to the believers at the temple in Bountiful. Their traditional covenant texts dating from the time of Benjamin set the stage well for their experience with Jesus and his sacrament. In addition to that Nephite background, even more ancient Israelite antecedents may have supplied further contextual prologues for 3 Nephi 18.

One fertile source of studying all Israelite rituals and symbols is the ancient temple. Since Nephite temples were modeled—at least at the outset—after the Temple of Solomon (2 Nephi 5:16) and were places where the Nephites strictly observed the ordinances of God according to the law of Moses (Alma 30:3),¹⁰ one may well surmise that the Nephites had shewbread in their temples. It is possible that the table with twelve loaves of shewbread set before the Lord in the Israelite temple was a conscious antecedent of the Christian sacrament.¹¹ The shewbread of the temple was known as the *lehem ha-pānîm* in Hebrew, literally the “bread of the face [or presence] of [God],” or as the *ma‘āreket*, the bread “arrayed,” and in Greek, *prothesis tōn artōn* or *hoi artoi tēs protheseos*, the bread “set forth.”¹² Derived from this ancient typology, the text in Romans 3:25 describes Christ as one whom God “displayed publicly” (*proetheto*) as a propitiation. Similarly, the Nephites may also have seen a substantial relationship between the shewbread of their temple and the bread symbolizing Jesus’ body which Jesus said he had “shewn unto” them (1st ed. 3 Nephi 18:7), or which he

set forth before them. The ancient Israelite shewbread and the manna kept in a gold bowl in the temple have been widely recognized as early Jewish antecedents to the Christian sacrament.¹³ Additionally, the shewbread of the ancient temple, like the bread of the sacrament of Jesus' presence among the Nephites, "provided both a sacrifice and a communion," since it was presented before God but also consumed by the priests.¹⁴ For this reason the Nephites may have seen yet another connection between the bread that Jesus asked the Nephite twelve to bring and the ancient Israelite traditions of the twelve loaves of the shewbread, which custom may still have been observed at the Nephite temple in Bountiful.

Another ancient Israelite precedent may be found in Numbers 6:27. Here Moses, Aaron, and the sons of Aaron were told to bless the people of Israel (see Numbers 6:24–26) and were instructed to have the children of Israel take upon themselves the name of God: "And they shall *put my name upon the children of Israel*; and I will bless them."¹⁵ This preexilic source may well have given literal scriptural support for what Benjamin did when he had his people take upon them the name of God. Indeed, the Israelites may have overtly taken upon themselves the name of God. Proverbs 6:20–21 admonishes, "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck." The recent discovery of small silver scrolls that were worn around the neck inscribed with the benediction from Numbers 6:24–26 and dating to the seventh century B.C. in Jerusalem may give us some idea of how literally the expressions of Numbers 6 and Proverbs 6 may have been carried out anciently (compare Deuteronomy 6:8; Proverbs 3:3; 7:2–3).

Additional antecedents for the Christian sacrament

have been sought by various scholars in other Jewish sources, including (1) the “pure offering”¹⁶ or the “offering in righteousness” prophesied by Malachi (1:11; 3:3, quoted by Jesus in 3 Nephi 24:3 shortly after he introduced the sacrament for the second time to the Nephites), (2) the offering of Melchizedek (see Genesis 14:18–20),¹⁷ (3) the messianic feast or ritual meal eaten by Moses and seventy elders on Mount Sinai (see Exodus 24:11) and expected by Isaiah (see Isaiah 55:1–3),¹⁸ (4) the manna,¹⁹ (5) the sacrificial blood of the Old Testament,²⁰ and (6) the *barākhāh* or regular blessing on the food spoken in thanksgiving (*eucharistein*) by Jews before eating.²¹ Another possibility is in Isaiah 49:26 (see 1 Nephi 21:26; 22:13; 2 Nephi 6:18), which prophesies that those who oppress the righteous shall be fed in defeat “with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine.” By this shall all flesh know “that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob” (1 Nephi 21:26). Although Isaiah says that the wicked will be humiliated by having to eat their *own* flesh and blood, this scripture associates eating flesh and blood (which in the prophecy has the intoxicating effect of wine) with the people’s recognition and confession that the Lord is their Savior and Redeemer. It is possible that the Nephites, therefore, would have connected their eating of the bread and wine—symbolizing *Christ’s* flesh and blood—with this scripture, as they were spared the eating of their own flesh and saw and bore record that Jesus was their Redeemer (see 3 Nephi 16:4; 17:25).

The texts of the sacrament prayers in Moroni 4–5 have a rich and meaningful background. Whenever these prayers are read or heard, they should bring to mind the spiritual power of the words and ministrations of Jesus himself at the meridian of time in Palestine and in Bountiful and, before that, the enduring influence of the words of King Benjamin

in Zarahemla. The continuity and consistency from Mosiah 5 to 3 Nephi 18 and to Moroni 4–5 reflects an inspired and detailed textual history, one that remarkably evinces precise usage of particular phrases over several centuries of religious experience, as well as several subtle transformations from earlier points of spiritual emphasis by incorporating the words and symbols of Israelite and Nephite religious experience into the Nephite covenant-making texts.

Notes

1. See “Our Nephite Sacrament Prayers,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 286–89.

2. For a discussion of the timing of this gathering, as well as the dilemma of the Nephites who would not have known what to do next at their temple, see John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 27–32.

3. The relationship between 3 Nephi and Moroni 4–5 is discussed in detail in John W. Welch, “From Presence to Practice: Jesus, the Sacrament Prayers, the Priesthood, and Church Discipline in 3 Nephi and Moroni 2–6,” *JBMS* 5/1 (1996): 119–39.

4. See the stirring prophecies of Mosiah 3 and the phrase “we could prophesy of all things” (Mosiah 5:3), along with the rejoicing of the people with “exceedingly great joy” (Mosiah 5:4), falling down to the earth (see Mosiah 4:1; compare 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).

5. Welch, “From Presence to Practice,” 126.

6. This is not to imply that Benjamin or his people did not refer to God as “Father” before the covenant making reported in Mosiah 5. The early Nephites referred to God (sometimes with reference to Heavenly Father, other times with respect to Christ) as “Father,” for example, in 1 Nephi 14:17; Jacob 7:22; Mosiah

2:34. From the point of view of the ceremonial text itself, however, Benjamin may have preferred to have the people refer to Christ as their Father only after the covenant with him was in place.

7. This appears to be reflected in the terminology they used. An exhaustive treatment of Nephite terminology regarding God has yet to be made. Consider, however, the following scriptures in which the language used is not quite as clear as it is in Moroni 4–5: Isaiah taught that Christ would be called the “everlasting father” (2 Nephi 19:6). Nephi referred to Jesus as “the eternal Father” (1 Nephi 11:21, original manuscript, printer’s manuscript, and 1830 edition; 1 Nephi 13:40, printer’s manuscript and 1830 edition). Later, when Nephi spoke of Jesus as the “only begotten of the Father,” he followed this by calling Jesus “even the Father of heaven and of earth” (2 Nephi 25:12). Likewise, Abinadi knew Jesus Christ as “the very eternal Father” (Mosiah 15:4; 16:15)—and he articulated senses in which Jesus could be both Father and Son (Mosiah 15:2–3). The phrase “Father of heaven and earth” may be a euphemism for Creator of the physical universe. For King Benjamin, “the Lord Omnipotent” who reigneth, who would come down, namely Jesus Christ, was known as “the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning” (Mosiah 3:5, 8). See also Alma 11:39, where Amulek affirms, “Yea, he [the Son of God] is the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth,” and Helaman 14:12, in which Samuel the Lamanite uses Benjamin’s formulaic title for Jesus Christ, “the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning.” Helaman’s words in Helaman 5:11–12 especially show that the basic distinction between the “Father” and the “Son of God” was understood among the Nephites before the appearance of Jesus among the Nephites, despite any possible ambiguity in their terminology elsewhere.

8. The late Nephite texts of Mormon and Moroni most often use the appellation the *Eternal Father* for God the Father. Mormon, for example, speaks of the “Father” and of “the Son of the living God, . . . his most Beloved” (Mormon 5:14). Mormon and Moroni refer to God the Father several times as “the *Eternal Father*” (see

Mormon 6:22; Moroni 4:3; 5:2; 10:4; 10:31), distinguishing him from Jesus Christ, who, however, is also referred to as “Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son” (Mormon 9:12).

9. For instance, the Nephites worshiped God (see Jacob 4:5), baptized (see Mosiah 18:10), and prayed (see 2 Nephi 32:9) in the name of Christ. The only explicit reference before 3 Nephi to “asking” and receiving in the name of Christ is in Enos 1:15.

10. See John W. Welch, “The Temple in the Book of Mormon: The Temples at the Cities of Nephi, Zarahemla, and Bountiful,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 301–19.

11. Alfred Adam, “Ein vergessener Aspekt des frühchristlichen Herrenmahles,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 88 (1963): 9–20, cited in Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 454 n. 114.

12. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 2:422; see Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1954), 718–33, on the Epistle to the Hebrews and Jewish descriptions of the shewbread.

13. See generally John 6; Revelation 2:17; Hebrews 9:4; see also Luke 15:17; Frank S. Gavin, *The Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments* (New York: Ktav, 1969).

14. LDS Bible Dictionary, s.v. “shewbread.”

15. See also Deuteronomy 28:10: “And all the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord.”

16. Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the Primitive Church* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 2–4.

17. *Ibid.*, 4–6; see also John W. Welch, “The Melchizedek Material in Alma 13:13–19,” in *By Study and Also by Faith*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:253.

18. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the Primitive Church*, 6–12. Consider also the motif of the messianic banquet of salvation on the world mountain found in ancient Near Eastern literature, for example, UT 67, 137, Krt, cited in John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in*

Antiquity (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 43; Joachim Jeremias, *Jesu Mission für die Völker* (Stuttgart: Franz-Delitzsch-Vorlesung, 1956), cited in Frank M. Cross, *Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies*, rev. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1961), 90–92, as Robert F. Smith has suggested to me.

19. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the Primitive Church*, 12–16.

20. *Ibid.*, 16–19. On the symbolic meaning of blood and life in ancient Israel and in the ancient Near East generally, see Dennis McCarthy, “The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice,” *JBL* 88/2 (1969): 166–76, and Dennis McCarthy, “Further Notes on the Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice,” *JBL* 92/2 (1973): 205–10, as Stephen Ricks has pointed out to me. Although the idea of ceremonially drinking wine as a symbol of blood may have been new to the Nephites, and while the eating or drinking of blood was almost certainly taboo among righteous Nephites (see Jarom 1:6), as it was among the Israelites generally (see Genesis 9), the Nephites may have known something of the idea of drinking blood in connection with making vows. The drinking of blood or the symbolic use of blood in covenant making and in uniting with the gods has a widespread history among many cultures, notably in ancient Mesoamerica; see generally H. Clay Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant: A Primitive Rite and Its Bearings on Scripture* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1885). Perhaps blood was involved in the making of certain oaths in the Book of Mormon: Amalickiah swore an oath that he would drink Moroni’s blood (Alma 49:27; 51:9); Giddianhi swore an oath that he would annihilate the Nephites (3 Nephi 3:8) and then led his armies “dyed in blood” (3 Nephi 4:7). The role of blood symbolism here deserves further investigation.

21. Gavin, *Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments*, 59–114.