

*Joseph Smith's inspired expansion on the narratives of the Last Supper radically shifts LDS sacramental memorial from Christ's death to his life and identifies the present-day partakers of the ritual meal with those disciples who actually associated with Christ before and after his death and resurrection. In doing so, it gives particular meaning to the LDS sacrament as a covenant of discipleship and as a promise of intimate association with the Lord. When appreciated independent of other LDS ordinances, the sacrament can instruct us in and give us access to a life of discipleship to Jesus Christ. Understood within the whole that constitutes the fullness of the ordinances of the restored gospel, the LDS sacrament integrates LDS doctrines of salvation and exaltation in the weekly liturgy of the Church and in the daily lives of the Saints.*

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## SUPPING WITH THE LORD: A LITURGICAL THEOLOGY OF THE LDS SACRAMENT

*By Kathleen Flake*

**F**OR TWO MILLENNIA CHRISTIANS HAVE GATHERED each week, even every day in some eras, and always every spring, to remember Jesus Christ by reenacting his last meal with his disciples. Why did they, and why do we still, do this? Because, of course, he asked us to:

And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. . . . And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. (Luke 22:14–15,19.)

As one scholar has observed: "Was ever another command so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done. . . ." <sup>1</sup> It is, indeed, extraordinary how

many generations have reenacted the Last Supper as the definitive expression of their Christianity and their hope of salvation in Jesus Christ. Both the enormity of this tradition and our radical departure from it invites us as Latter-day Saints to consider the role of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in our own theology of salvation.

Is the sacrament merely what we do to redo what we have already done at baptism? Though not inaccurate, I suggest that this is a too narrow understanding of the role of the sacrament in our theology.

The LDS sacrament liturgy is a profound example of the restorative work of the prophet Joseph Smith. It evidences revelation of both form and content that had been obscured by layers of sacrificial theology and passive memorial. In Joseph's work on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, no less than with the other ordinances of the Church, we can see—if we will look—restoration of truths that are "plain and most precious" (1 Nephi 13:26). These truths deserve our attention. I ask you to look again at our sacrament by considering three questions. First, what are Latter-day Saints *remembering* when we "do this in remembrance"? (Luke 22:19). Second, what is it we do

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when we “do this”? And, finally, why do we “do this”? What promise do we obtain by remembering him this way?

WHAT ARE WE REMEMBERING  
WHEN WE TAKE THE SACRAMENT?

*Added insights from the Restoration forcefully redirect one's attention from Christ's suffering and death on the cross to “this hour” when he was with them.*

ALTHOUGH one can say that all Christians are remembering Jesus Christ when they reenact the Last Supper, their ways of remembering him vary greatly as does their understanding of him and the way in which he redeems them. Such great differences in eucharistic theology and practice notwithstanding, Catholic and Protestant liturgies have an identical focus. They do not so much recall the events of the Last Supper as the events that followed it, namely, Christ's suffering and death on the cross. The same cannot be said of the Latter-day Saints.

To appreciate the extent to which LDS sacramental memorial diverges in content and, therefore, meaning from that of other Christian traditions, one must first realize that Latter-day Saints do not rely exclusively upon the New Testament to understand Christ's command to remember him by breaking bread and sharing the cup. Rather, the LDS obligation to remember Christ derives from two accounts of this ritualized meal: the one in the East on the eve of his death and the other in the West after his resurrection. In adding this second narrative as a basis for the LDS sacrament, Joseph Smith forever separated us from traditional Christian understandings of the Lord's Supper. Moreover, the theology expressed in what we must now call the “second” meal results in a subtle, but radical, shift of focus from the circumstances of Christ's death to the events of the meal itself.<sup>2</sup> In Third Nephi, we read:

And when the multitude had eaten and were filled, he said unto the disciples: . . . 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. . . . [A]nd they [the twelve disciples] gave unto the multitude, and they did drink, and they were filled. (3 Nephi 18: 5, 6–7, 9, emphasis added.)

Thus, while LDS theology retains the context of the Christian sacrament as a meal (“and they were filled”), the meal no longer memorializes one event that occurred immediately prior to Christ's passion. Rather, the LDS sacrament includes in its tradition a second meal occurring in the West *after* his resurrection. Christian tradition is further altered by the second meal's definition of “this body” as “my body, which I have shown unto you.” What the Nephites were being shown and commanded to remember was, of course, the resurrected body of Christ, not the body about to be sacrificed on the cross. Hence, when Latter-day Saints gather at the table each Sunday,

we have this second meal's post-passion context as a part of our understanding of what is to be remembered when we “do this in remembrance” of Jesus Christ.

How, then, is this second meal to be reconciled with what we must now call the “earlier” meal in Jerusalem? Joseph Smith's extensive elaboration upon the New Testament text is instructive. The Joseph Smith Translation of Mark's Supper narrative reads:

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake . . . , and gave to them, and said, *Take it and eat. Behold, this is for you to do in remembrance of my body; for as oft as ye do this ye will remember this hour that I was with you.* And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them; and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, *This is in remembrance of my blood which is shed for many, and the new testament which I give unto you; for of me ye shall bear record unto all the world. And as oft as ye do this ordinance, ye will remember me in this hour that I was with you and drank with you of this cup, even the last time in my ministry.* (JST Mark 14:22–24, italics are Joseph's additions or changes.)

In this expanded text, Jesus refers to his body as emblematic of “this hour that I was with you” and, by implication, not emblematic of his imminent suffering and death. With respect to partaking of the cup as well, it is understood as memorializing “this hour that I was with you and drank with you . . . even this last time in my ministry.” In this way, JST Mark places the entire ordinance in the context of remembering “this hour.” Hence, both Third Nephi and JST Mark emphasize the immediacy of the disciples' experience with Christ in time. This constitutes a theologizing on the sacrament that forcefully redirects one's attention from Christ's suffering and death on the cross to “this hour” when he was with them. This is a unique theology of the Last Supper and deserves our attention if we would participate meaningfully in the sacrament.

What is it about “this hour” that makes it worthy of being the singular memorial of Jesus' ministry in the East and the West and his continuing power as our Redeemer? The nature of the audience provides the first clue to the significance of “this hour.” In the East, the intimacy of the gathering is unmistakable. Even in Third Nephi, though the numbers are greater, those invited to partake are a select group (3 Nephi 9:13) and are prepared (3 Nephi 11–17) before the twelve disciples are sent for the bread and wine for the meal. Possibly because the numbers are larger, the text is explicit about the exclusivity of those who may share in this meal:

And now behold, this is the commandment which I give unto you, that ye shall not suffer any one knowingly to partake of my flesh and blood unworthily, when ye shall minister it; . . . 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. 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.* (3 Nephi 18:28–31, emphasis added)

From this passage we understand that only disciples, or true followers of Christ, were present at the first meals, and that only disciples may partake in future meals as well. While the unrepentant are welcome to commune with Christ's disciples ("ye shall minister unto him and pray for him"), only true disciples may partake of the ritual meal emblematic of Christ's communion with them. This creates an intimate and separate group. They are known and numbered. Hence, one of the things we learn from this second meal is that those who come to the table must come as disciples.

This, then, is the beginning of the answer to our first question. Latter-day Saints come to the sacrament table to remember Christ as he was in "this hour" when he was with his disciples. They do not "do this in remembrance of" him only on the cross or even at Gethsemane, but in the context of these two accounts of meal fellowship with his most devoted followers. Though this should alert us to the fact that the table differs from the baptismal "gate by which ye should enter" (2 Nephi 31:17), the significance of "this hour" is not in who is invited, but rather in what he did. In the East, immediately after the institution of the sacrament, he washes the disciples' feet and admonishes:

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. (John 13:13–16.)

In "this hour" in the West, he heals and sanctifies the multitudes (3 Nephi 17, 19) and, immediately after the institution of the sacrament, he admonishes: "Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do . . . even so shall ye do unto the world" (3 Nephi 18:24–25). These actions inform our sacramental memorial. We remember him in "this hour" as he explicitly models the life to which each disciple is called. In this way, the sacrament ritualizes the identity of the LDS community, defining its internal cohesiveness and its external boundaries primarily in terms of discipleship to Christ, not communion with each other.

Finally, and possibly most importantly, in "this hour" the Lord makes the promises by which we are enabled to live the life he modeled. John's record is the most complete expression of them:

- Let not your heart be troubled: . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (John 14:1, 3.)
- And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, . . . If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. (John 14:13, 14.)

- Keep my commandments. And I will pray to the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; . . . I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. (John 14:15, 16, 18.)
- He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him . . . and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. . . . Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:21, 23, 27.)
- As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (John 15:9–11.)

In these promises of future intimacy spoken on the eve of separation, we find the meaning of our LDS sacrament memorial: "And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you" (3 Nephi 18: 7, 11).

To share a meal is to share a life, it is sometimes said. When we gather to the table to share this meal we call "the sacrament," we come as disciples who would share in Christ's life and, hence, seek fulfillment of the promise of association symbolized by the table. Though he had to die to obtain this promise for us, we do not believe that it is in his death on the cross that it is fulfilled. As Paul reminds the earlier Saints: "For if, when we were enemies [or, in our sins without benefit of Christ's atoning sacrifice], we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10). In other words, the LDS sacrament illustrates the promise of a shared life with Jesus Christ—"this hour that I was with you"—as opposed to baptism's promise of a shared death and rising from the dead with Christ.

In baptism, particularly LDS theology of baptism for the dead, we have the expression of our belief in the universality of the salvation offered by the death of Christ on the cross. This is a doctrine of salvation through the grace of Christ: "For all the rest [excepting those who chose a second death] shall be brought forth by the resurrection of the dead, through the triumph and the glory of the Lamb, who was slain. . . . That through him all might be saved. . ." (D&C 76:39, 42). We also believe, however, that "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3; see also D&C 20:30–31). The promises Christ made to his disciples, when he taught them the sacrament before and after his death, pertain to exaltation not merely salvation. They hold out the possibility of intimate association with him—an association imaged for us in a ritualized meal patterned after his Last Supper with those whom he loved and who loved him. Those who would be his disciples today are likewise invited to the table to obtain these promises. But, we must now ask, how can these ancient promises be realized by us? How does our partaking in the ritualized meal offer the promise made to others so long ago at the actual meal?

## WHAT WE DO WHEN WE "DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE"

*The sacrament prayers direct our action over the bread and cup to explicate a theologically whole—works and grace—response to the memory of Christ.*

AGAIN, because our soteriologies differ, Christians do not have the same answer to this question. Not only do we differ in what we remember, we differ in what we do when we remember. For Catholics, the Eucharist has traditionally been a dual action of sacrifice. First, the communicants bring to an altar a sacrifice of the fruits of the earth: bread and wine. Second, in the transubstantiation of these elements by priestly mediation, Christ's sacrifice is reenacted. The promise of the Eucharist as understood in Catholicism, namely, becoming the body of Christ, is obtained by *receiving* the bread and wine which have become the body and blood of Christ.

This great emphasis on sacrifice and real presence in the Eucharist led to a number of devotional practices and theological positions that figured prominently in the causes of the Reformation. The Reformers, however, protested themselves into an opposite extreme: the sacrament is not necessary for salvation. Because of their theology of salvation by grace, the Protestant liturgy constitutes a *memorial* to Christ's having already done his saving work, a work that was fully accomplished on the cross. Therefore, Protestants come to the sacramental table to praise, not petition with priestly sacrifice. Latter-day Saints do neither. We believe that there are promises yet to be obtained through the sacrament, and we believe we obtain them by ourselves making promises at the table and then keeping them in our daily lives. For us, then, the sacrament is most essentially a covenant-making activity. The thing that we do when we "do this in remembrance" is to covenant, not sacrifice or even praise.

The role of covenanting in Christian liturgy is an old debate of increasing interest to modern scholarship. As begrudgingly stated by one scholar, "No one can deny that 'covenant' is a prominent theme in connection with the Lord's Supper, or at least the Greek term usually translated as 'covenant.'"<sup>3</sup> While "no one would deny" prominence of covenant in the sacrament, most have questioned its meaning and relevance. The central issue in this debate is the question of mutuality in the covenant relationship. For some it challenges the core belief in salvation by grace alone or unconditional election. For others, it unacceptably implies limits on God's omnipotence or presumes a reciprocity *per se* incompatible with divinity. LDS theology finds neither concern an impediment:

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). . . . Here [in Exodus 19's account of the Sinai covenant] 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.<sup>4</sup>

Notwithstanding our emphasis on covenant theology, it is important to note that the LDS sacrament prayers allow for the traditional distinction between covenant, with its implication of reciprocal promises, and testament, as in "last will and testament" and, therefore, a one-sided action.<sup>5</sup> The prayers make this distinction in the different covenants associated with the bread and water, respectively. The prayer over the bread balances the three-fold requirements—remembering, taking the name of, and obeying Christ—against the promised blessing of the Spirit and is in the model of Sinai covenanting. The blessing over the water, however, requires only that the partaker "always remember him [the Son]" in return for the Spirit. This is more akin to the one-sided action of "testament" or gift. To consider this difference a rhetorical device to avoid redundancy in composition is to ignore the decision to employ two prayers. If convenience were the only goal, then one prayer would have achieved it. Stronger evidence than structure exists for concluding that these differences are intentional and have theological significance, however.

The LDS gloss on the old grace-versus-works debate is summed up in the Book of Mormon's dictum: "for we know it is by grace that we are saved after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:24). The "all we can do" is explicated in the prayer of the bread with its imposed obligations to remember, take the name of, and to obey Christ. "After" that, the principle "by grace that we are saved" is presented in the prayer over the water by its "witness that they do always remember." Significantly, the lack of obligation to do other than remember is associated with the prayer more explicitly referential to Christ's sacrifice of "shed blood for them [the partakers]." Hence, the principle of grace is attached in the prayer, as it is in theology, with Christ's gift of himself in propitiation for sin. As discussed, the prayer over the bread has been theologized to explicitly disassociate it from commemoration of his death. In this way, the prayers direct our action over the bread and cup to explicate what is, for Latter-day Saints, a theologically whole—works and grace—response to the memory of Christ. Moreover, there is no justification for viewing these prayers as capable of performance independent of one another; they together constitute the covenant that enables the disciple to follow, even to associate with, the Master. But note, in this theology, sacramental remembrance is required, even to benefit from grace. The role of memory in sacramental covenant-making is key to understanding how the sacrament operates to obtain for us the promise of the covenant.

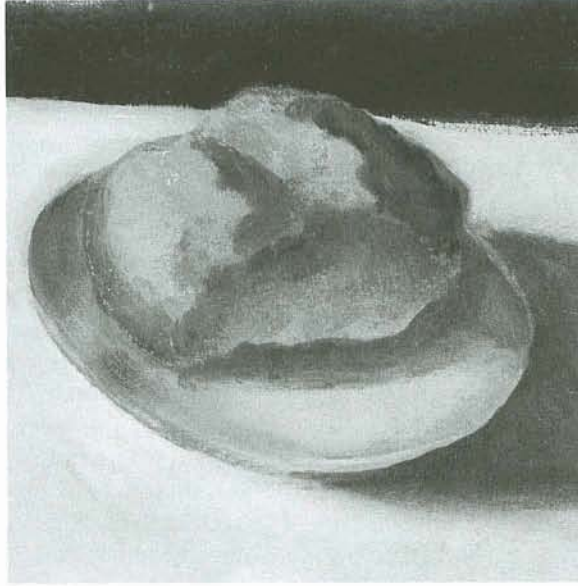
## COVENANT AND MEMORY

*We remember that we may be remembered, we promise that we may obtain promises, we keep our promises so that God will keep his.*

ON one level, sacramental remembering employs memory's power to turn our feelings and intentions toward the

object of our memory—Christ. This is, however, the most superficial aspect of memory's role. The sacrament is not merely an expression of our gratitude for or even of our dependence upon Christ. Neither is it simply a ritualized reenactment of an historical event. The sacrament is an ordinance and, as such, is an instrument designed to mediate salvation. It exists to make the saving power symbolized by a past event present with us now. Otherwise, like a gravestone or other monument, the ritual reenactment of the Last Supper would simply mark what was, not invite and enable it to be again for us who need it, too. For example, the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C., memorializes the United States' indebtedness to Thomas Jefferson for crafting the Declaration of Independence. We do not, however, expect this monument to actualize Jefferson's historical deed. It has happened already; it need not happen again. Moreover, while the monument may inspire us to want to be better citizens, it certainly does not bestow upon us Jefferson's political brilliance. In contrast, however, the memorial action we call the sacrament is designed to make the past present. Partaking of the sacrament in imitation of the Last Supper is meant to actualize for us the promise of "this hour that I was with you." It is meant to give us access to the blessings promised at the earlier meals when the Lord commanded all future disciples to remember him by coming to the table.

Understanding what the Lord was asking for when he asked us to remember him this way requires us to look to Old Testament understandings of memory and memorial. Jesus was, after all, a Jew speaking to Jews when he established these rituals, and his teachings had meaning to them and continue to have meaning for us in that context. In his definitive work on the meaning of memory in the Old Testament, one scholar concludes that "Israel celebrated in her seasonal festivals the great redemptive acts of the past both to renew the tradition and to participate in its power."<sup>6</sup> In other words, when each successive generation of Israel rehearsed its history at Passover and its other



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 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.  
Amen.

(Moroni 4:3; D&C 20:77.)

great feast days, it was remembering that Jehovah brought their forebearers out of Egypt and chose them as a people by giving them the law. Each new generation participated in this reenactment in order to invoke the blessings associated with those historic events on themselves, namely, to be delivered and to be chosen. In sum, Israel remembered God in order to invoke God's remembrance of his promises to Israel. In the first century of the Christian era, after a millennia of feasts, the Jews still prayed at Passover: "Remember us on this day, Lord our God, for prosperity, and visit us on it for blessing, and save us on it for life."<sup>7</sup> In the Old Testament, "the essence of God's remembering lies in his acting toward someone because of a previous commitment."<sup>8</sup>

For centuries, Israel gathered in homes and in temples to remind God of his promises in Egypt and Sinai as means of asking him to "act toward" them because of his previous commitments. "I will redeem you with a stretched out arm," he had promised in Egypt, "And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God. . . ." (Exodus 6:6-7). By the seventh century B.C.E., however, Israel was about to be overcome by its enemies and prophets arose to explain why: "Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him . . . sin. . . . For Israel hath forgotten his Maker. . ." (Hosea 8:11, 14, emphasis added). Israel had made the fatal mistake of seeing its status with God as part of the immutable, cosmic ordering of the world. They had come to believe that God's having chosen their forebears was an

accomplished fact that only needed memorializing, not renewing.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, their remembering God had become only a psychological recollection of him, not an acting toward him. This was not memory at all: "Israel hath forgotten his Maker," said Hosea. To cure this lapse of memory, the prophets demanded that Israel *act* toward God, not just assume his acting toward them based on their status: "turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and

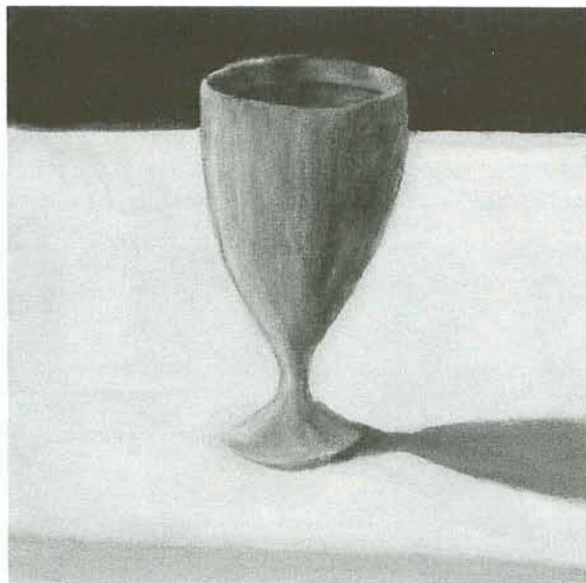
turn unto the Lord your God . . . ” (Joel 2:12–13). This demand by the later prophets to include personal devotion and obedience in Israel’s remembering of God is understood by some scholars as the introduction of covenanting into Israel’s cultic forms (or ordinances):

The covenant represents the refusal of prophets and their disciples to encapsulate Yahweh’s relationship with his people in institutions, and to insist that it depends on a moral commitment on both sides which needs to be continually reaffirmed in faithful conduct, not taken for granted . . . as if it were part of the order of nature.<sup>10</sup>

Latter-day Saints would disagree and say that covenants were in existence long before the seventh century B.C.E., but they would emphatically agree that realizing God’s promise of a saving relationship to his people “depends upon a moral commitment on both sides which needs to be continually reaffirmed in faithful conduct.” The essence of what we do when we, as latter-day disciples, remember the Lord’s saving actions and promises at the table, is to covenant—to remember that we may be remembered, to promise that we may obtain promises, to keep our promises so that God will keep his.

Therefore, it is significant to us that the most recent New Testament scholarship has concluded that the prototype for the Eucharist is the *todah*, a “celebration of covenant” that “spiritualized” Israel’s annual cultic sacrifices.<sup>11</sup> Emphasizing the *todah*’s function as a thank offering for deliverance, one Christian scholar goes so far as to say that it “shows that the essential thing is the surrender of self to God the Savior in a proclamation of the covenant of God.”<sup>12</sup> It is difficult for Latter-day Saints to appreciate the challenge this conclusion presents to traditional Christian theology and praxis. For nearly 1,600 years the Eucharist was primarily, if not exclusively, understood by Christians as a sacrificial offering in expiation of sin and, after the Reformation, a memorial to God’s having expiated our sins. Now, however, the most recent scholarly research has concluded that early

Christian communal meals were related to “covenant



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

(Moroni 5:2; D&C 20:79.)

sacrifices” rather than to other types of cultic meals that were characterized to a greater extent by expiation for sin. The Supper was basically a meal celebrating the definitive covenant of God with his new people: the gift and reception of a “food” rendered symbolically present to the believers the covenant that had been sealed by the fidelity of Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

If it is to be fully understood, the LDS sacrament must also *not* be seen as exclusively related to the “expiation of sin,” or as merely a renewal of the baptismal covenant.

#### THE CONTENT OF THE COVENANT: OUR PROMISE

*The sacrament takes these elemental commitments of obedience and testimony and demands that they be performed in remembrance of Jesus Christ.*

FROM its earliest beginnings, the LDS church has understood God’s saving work as always occurring in the context of covenant. Indeed, the Church understands its very origination in the necessity of mending broken covenants (D&C 1:15–17). We have also always articulated our spiritual experience and expectations almost exclusively in terms of covenant. For example, consider the instruction on how the Church was to make its “exodus” to the Rocky Mountain West:

The Word and Will of the Lord concerning the Camp of Israel in their journeyings to the West: Let all the people of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and those who journey with them, be organized into companies, with a covenant and promise to keep all the commandments and statutes of the Lord our God. . . . And this shall be our covenant—that we will walk in all the ordinances of the Lord. (D&C 136:1–2, 4.)

Of course, this evokes almost verbatim the scene described in Deuteronomy 29:10, 12: “Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel. . . . That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD. . . .” No less than for Old Testament Israel, covenant theology for the LDS church “is a

central theme that serve[s] to focus an entirely idiosyncratic way of looking at the relationship between God and his chosen people, and, indeed, between God and the world.”<sup>14</sup> Hence, those LDS ordinances that enable the relationship between God and his chosen people—baptism, ordination, sacrament, endowment, sealings—are each characterized by an exchange of covenant promises. While these promises are related, each is also unique to the ordinance it accompanies. To ignore these differences is to miss, even misunderstand, the obligations we assume with each ordinance. To not understand an obligation puts one at risk of not fulfilling it.

When we partake of the sacrament, we covenant that we “are willing to take upon [us] the name of [the] Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given. . . .” (D&C 20:77). This mirrors the covenant made at baptism, which Nephi calls a “witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ . . . and are willing to keep [the Son’s] commandments . . .” (2 Nephi 31:13, 14). In the temple, too, we promise to obey and to witness of the Son. This oath of naming/witnessing and obeying is required of all who would benefit from the covenant Christ made to the Father that he would redeem us. Indeed, it is so fundamental that eventually every knee must bow (or obey) and every tongue confess (or witness) that Jesus is the Christ (Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Mosiah 27:31; D&C 76:110). These commitments are first undertaken by us at baptism and we are expressly required to recommit to them at every formal, developmental step in our relationship with God. Their importance cannot be overestimated. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper, what must be stressed is that the presence of these commitments in every covenant we make does not mean that they constitute the only covenant we make. Neither does it mean that the kind of obedience and witness required of us remains constant as we develop in our relationship with God. Or, more specifically, when we take the sacrament we are not simply renewing our baptismal covenant to witness and obey Jesus Christ. Rather, the sacrament takes these commitments and demands that they be performed in remembrance of Jesus Christ.

Consider the emphasis in the sacrament prayers where we are told that we “eat *in remembrance* of the body of th[e] Son, and witness . . . that [we] are willing to take upon [us] the

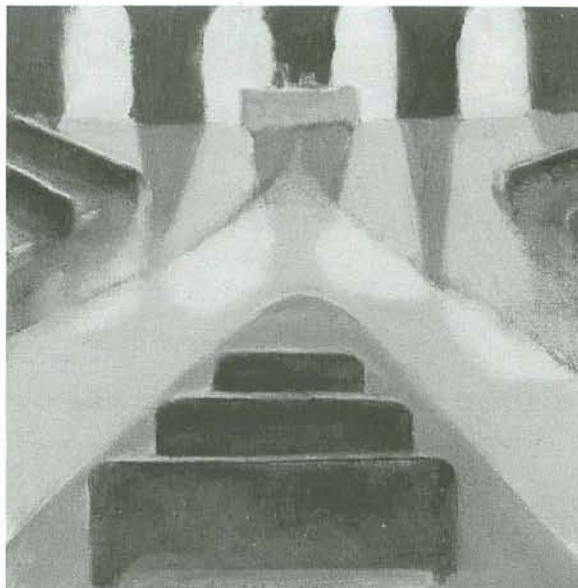
name of th[e] Son, and [to] *always remember* him, and keep his commandments which he hath given [us]. . . .” (Moroni 4:3). And over the water we covenant: “that [we drink] *in remembrance* of the blood of th[e] Son, [and] . . . witness . . . that [we] . . . do *always remember* him . . . .” (Moroni 5:2). Note the emphasis on memory. Not only do we remember in obedience to his original command to “do this in remembrance,” but the

sacrament itself contains the covenant committing us to remember. Moreover, in these prayers the vows of obedience and testimony are explicitly made a part of the vow to remember Jesus Christ. Thus, the promise to remember is not only the context of the covenant, but it is the central vow of the covenant.

At first, this may seem a tautology: How else can we obey and testify if we do not do it as a function of remembering Jesus Christ? Yet we see it all around us and in ourselves. Many Saints obey the Word of Wisdom, motivated by its benefits as a health code. It is a matter of logic to them: “If I do this, I won’t get cancer.” Others pay tithing, motivated by its promise of temporal security. It becomes an investment of sort: 10 percent for a stake in the open “windows of heaven.” Sometimes obedience is a matter of convenience: “If I stay home this morning, everyone will ask why I wasn’t in church.” Obedience here becomes the path of least resistance; sometimes it’s simply easier to obey than not to obey. There is, of course, an enormous amount of obedience offered in

fear: “If I don’t do this, God will get me.” Guilt and need are also common motivators: “If I don’t do this, God will abandon me.” Finally, some obey without thought: “Just do it,” their t-shirts exhort. This obedience has virtually nothing to do with thinking of him, much less remembering “this hour.”

What about testimony in the absence of memory? This seems the most impossible, yet it is just as pervasive. The same Saints who obey out of logic, perceived benefit, and fear will often rise on the first Sunday of the month to witness the rationality, the benefit, or the protection offered in various commandments. They will do so without ever relating their experience to an understanding of Jesus Christ as Redeemer and Lord. Don’t misunderstand my point here. This is obedience. This is witnessing. It is the action required by baptism. These are good people bearing one another’s burdens, giving of their substance to the poor, and, with their lives more often than their words, testifying of God’s goodness as they receive rewards



Joseph Smith literally rewrote the traditions of both Christians and Jews and in doing so created a system of belief and a religious institution that merges Old Testament notions of tribe and covenant with New Testament notions of discipleship and grace.

of obedience to the law. They "are in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, . . . have entered in by the gate" (2 Nephi 31:18). But I suggest that these are also "they who receive of his glory but not of his fullness. These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus. . ." (D&C 76:77, 79). They are believers in, not disciples of, Jesus Christ.

Entering into and living the sacramental covenant distinguishes the disciple from the baptized believer. The disciple can never dissociate an act of obedience from memory, or "from an acting toward God." Obedience always occurs in the context of remembering him, not out of guilt or obligation or perceived benefit, but out of desire and love for the Master personally. In the New Testament this principle is often taught in Christ's inviting his believers to disobey the commandments as they understand them and to follow him: to harvest and eat on the Sabbath, to take up a bed and walk on the Sabbath, even to admit everyone—"bond and free, male and female"—into the covenant. Hence, to obey becomes an act of personal and immediate responsiveness to Christ. It is ultimately, at its finest, an expression of love. Christ's last recorded words to his chief disciple are instructive. "Simon, lovest thou me?" he asks and is answered three times. And, of course, during the Last Supper he taught us: "If [you] love me, [you] will keep my words . . ." (John 14:23). This is the oneness Christ has with the Father and which defines him as he who "suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11). This is the oneness Christ demands of disciples in the last hours he spent with them (John 15: 9–15; see also John 17 and 3 Nephi 19). We, too, are asked to assume this obligation by covenant. When we come to the table each Sunday, we express our intention to be disciples, not merely believers. When we remember him this way, we are asking him to do for us what he did for the disciples who joined him in those first meals.

#### THE CONTENT OF THE COVENANT: HIS PROMISE

*We come to the table hoping for communion  
with Christ, not just in that fleeting moment,  
but in time and throughout eternity.*

**T**HE role of the sacrament in the life of the Church is not only to impose upon the faithful a covenant obligation of

discipleship, but also to offer them the benefits of discipleship. Here it is easiest to see the difference between the baptismal and sacramental covenants. Consider that in each of these ordinances we have "pictures" of the promises offered to those who receive them. In baptism we are presented with a "picture" of sharing in Christ's death so that we may share in his new life. We ritually die Christ's death by being completely immersed in the watery grave:

[W]e are buried with him by baptism into death. . . . For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (Romans 6:4, 5–6.)

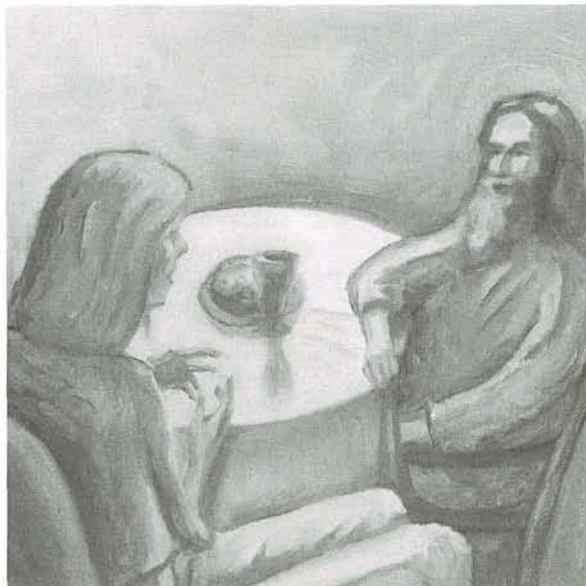
In contrast, the sacrament presents us with a ritual "picture" of a shared life with Christ and of his abiding with us, as promised. In this way, the symbol of table fellowship illustrates the promise of true discipleship. Far from placing our attention on Christ's suffering and grief, Latter-day Saint theology of the sacrament points us to Christ's intimacy with his disciples before and after his death. In this way, the present-day disciple is invited to remember the historical event of communion with Christ in hope of obtaining the promises made by Christ in that hour.

While this promise of association with Christ is a commonly held eschatological theme, LDS theologizing on it separates it from the

future return of or reunion with Christ and literally interprets the promises contained in John's account of the Last Supper, namely, that Jesus will make his "abode" with his disciples:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, . . . we will . . . make our abode with him. (John 14:16, 21–23.)

This "another Comforter" is understood in LDS doctrine to be the promise of communion with Christ himself, in contradistinction to the Comforter referred to as the Holy Ghost in



In baptism we are presented with a "picture" of sharing in Christ's death so that we may share in his new life.

The sacrament presents us with a ritual "picture" of a shared life with Christ; the symbol of table fellowship illustrates this promise of true discipleship.



John 14:26. In sermon, Joseph Smith elaborated as follows:

After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then . . . it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter. . . . It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even He will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; and this is the state and place the ancient Saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions—Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens, and all the Saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn.<sup>15</sup>

This is the direct expression of the hope of communion implicit in the theology and practice of LDS sacrament. Discipleship holds the promise of actual association with the Master, not merely in the resurrection but now, on earth. This is how transcendence is conceptualized in LDS theology: Christ makes his abode, as illustrated in the holy meal, with his disciples by means of increasing endowments of spiritual presence in time that we might be prepared for eternity (D&C 76:116–18). Thus, the hope expressed in LDS sacrament memorial is not hope of transcendence out of the world, it is the hope of Christ's presence with his disciples in the world, abiding with them.

This is how we believe he asks to be remembered by all who would be his disciples: sharing a meal and sharing a life. Of course, for the Jerusalem disciples it would be immediately necessary for them to hear and remember that hour's tender promises. They would soon be required to witness his death and to feel the death of their own hopes in him "for as yet they knew not . . . that he must rise from the dead" (John 20:9). No doubt in the West, too, they felt a great loss at his less violent, but no less absolute, separation from them (3 Nephi 17:17). And even today, we who love him seek his presence to comfort us, heal us, and empower us to endure conditions that cause us great pain and try our faith. In the same manner as his disciples of old, we desire to have the promises of "this hour" fulfilled on us. Hence, as Latter-day Saints, we come to the table primarily in discipleship, hoping for communion with Christ not just in that fleeting moment, but in time and throughout all eternity. For it is in communion with him—his making his abode with us—that we understand the fulfillment

of the everlasting covenant (JST Genesis 9:21–23) and the gift of Eternal Life (John 17:3; D&C 93:1, 19–20). This is why, for Latter-day Saints, it is not enough to come to the table to remember him on the cross. As mysterious and as humbling as the recollection of Golgotha is, it does not adequately signify to us the Lord's power to save. Neither does it represent the fulfilling of God's covenant to his children.

#### REMEMBERING HIM

*We remember the full range of his redemptive acts—past, present, and future, and ask to be a part of that history.*

**I**N the sacrament, Latter-day Saints gather to eat and drink in remembrance of Christ and we "do this" to witness that we remember him and to covenant that we do always remember him. The addition of a "second" meal to our understanding of the Last Supper makes clear that our remembering him is not limited to events in Palestine. Moreover, Joseph Smith's amendments to Mark's account of the Supper in Palestine make it clear that in the sacrament we are not simply memorializing the Lord's power over physical death. This means that, as opposed to traditional Christianity, we do not remember Jesus Christ exclusively as sacrificial lamb on the world's altar, but rather in the broader context of all his saving deeds. We remember that he is the minister of the covenant made before the foundation of the world, namely, that he would do all that was necessary for our salvation and exaltation. Hence, we come to the table not only to remember the past, but to anticipate the future.

In Latter-day Saint theology, no less than in Old Testament cosmology, history unfolds "from the actions of a Person or of a Will guiding the whole [such] that every single event in history was [and is] always seen to have come from this whole, this 'plan' of God."<sup>16</sup> We teach of a plan of redemption made before the world was created and animated by an everlasting covenant that God through Jesus Christ would enable us to be saved and exalted. We revere Christ as "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20) to effectuate the "plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world" (Alma 22:13). We also remember that he "shall proceed to do a marvelous work . . . that I may remember my covenants . . . that I may set my hand again the second time to recover my people. . ." (2 Nephi 29:1). For us to remember him is, then, to remember him as the executor of this plan upon which our entire fate depends and which culminates in his pasch, but is by no means limited to it or even completed by it. Latter-day Saints remember Christ not only in propitiation for our sins, but also in the full range of his redemptive acts past, present, and future: creator, redeemer, and, of course, "messenger of the covenant" (Malachi 3:1; 3 Nephi 24:1). Consequently, unlike other liturgies, the concluding words of our sacramental prayer oblige us simply to "remember him" without further elucidation of particular historical events. Thus, we come to the table to pledge our faithfulness and anticipate the unfolding of history through the everlasting

covenant. We ask to be a part of that history as it has been and will yet be.

In the ritualized, holy meal we call "the sacrament," not the cross, not in all our talking about him—no, not even in the baptismal tomb—we remember him and the hour when he made the commitment that he would fulfill his covenant and make his abode with us. While all who have faith in Christ and repent may be baptized, only those who, after baptism, "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men" (2 Nephi 31:20) are invited to the table to sup with him. If we keep the sacramental covenant of discipleship, or in Joseph Smith's words, demonstrate that we are "determined to serve Him at all hazards," then he will abide with us. Such remembrance is, indeed:

an occupation for the saint—  
No occupation either, but something given  
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,  
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender. . . .  
Here the impossible union.  
Of spheres of existence is actual. . . .<sup>17</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (New York: Seabury Press, 1945), 744.

2. Nothing in this paper should be construed to suggest that the Lord's suffering and death for our sakes is not a central part of LDS doctrine. Indeed, there is much in our doctrine that makes this point; for example, see D&C 19:15, 18. In making a separate point about the sacrament, I do not intend to distract from or in any way diminish what is a proper devotional regard for the Lord's passion.

3. John Reumann, *The Supper of the Lord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 34.

4. Richard L. Anderson, "Religious Validity: The Sacrament Covenant in Third Nephi," *By Study and Also by Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1991), 5.

5. Reumann, 36.

6. Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1962), 75.

7. R. C. D. Jasper and G. J. Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed* (New York; Pueblo, 1987), 11.

8. Childs, 34.

9. "Israel believed its social order and institutions to have been established by God and thus to be legitimated by him as permanent. . . . When offenses were committed or when there was any other sign that Yahweh's favor had been lost, the organs of the cult (lament, sacrifice, etc.) were there to restore it. Thus Israel's well being (*salom*) was believed to be permanently guaranteed by Yahweh." E. W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 204.

10. Nicholson, 216, emphasis added.

11. Jerome Kodell, *The Eucharist in the New Testament* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1988), 48-49.

12. Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread. The Witness of the New Testament* (New York: Paulist, 1986), 44.

13. Leon-Dufour, 41.

14. Nicholson, v.

15. Joseph F. Smith, ed., *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1969), 150-51.

16. Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 218.

17. T. S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages" from *Four Quartets* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1943), 44-45.



## THE DESERT TEMPLE

The temple curtains billow.  
An eastern wind  
lifts grace  
on its wings:  
*ha chaim ruoch*.<sup>1</sup>

The desert night,  
cooling balm, instills  
sweet-water winds

of oasis  
sifting through dry air,  
brightening stars  
on this night  
that is as clear  
as prayer ascending.

The living goes on  
beyond the curtains.  
The cattle and the cocks  
lie in the sapphire  
lowering of dusk.  
The tents close,  
their flames extinguished.  
Some sleep.

But not all.  
In the temple,  
the curtains rise:  
Dust falls from their hems  
and they fill  
with the breath of it—

*Ruoch sh'Elohim*.<sup>2</sup>  
*Eloi Eloi Eloi*<sup>3</sup>

—VIRGINIA ELLEN BAKER

1 *ha chaim ruoch*: Hebrew for "the living breeze" or "the living spirit."

2 *ruoch sh'Elohim*: Hebrew for "the breath, or spirit, of God."

3 *Eloi*: the Hebrew name for God the Father, or the God of the Old Testament.