

Sample Study Notes for Moroni 4

[Consult the original publication for formatting of examples given in this chapter.]

This example illustrates each of the study tools discussed, bringing them together in a complete set of notes on Moroni 4. As with the examples of glancing back, the following notes are to show the kind of work we can do with a passage of scripture. Rarely would someone produce notes such as these for personal scripture study, though presumably it would not be unusual for someone to do the work that these notes represent. In the following notes, I first discuss each of the words and phrases in Moroni 4 that I thought to be important. In doing so, I use both dictionaries and glancing back to help me think about the words and phrases I am interested in. After studying the words, I look at the rhetoric of the passage and then parse it. Finally, I address the question of context.

Because the notes that follow primarily represent the details I would look at as I studied Moroni 4, I have not written a conclusion, though obviously the point of looking at these details would be to understand the ordinance of the sacrament better. These notes are intended to show how one might use the tools of this book to study a passage of scripture. Often the observations that the notes reflect would raise questions that would result in further study.

Words and Phrases

Administer (4:1)

The word *administer* does not occur in the KJV Old Testament, but it is used frequently in the Book of Mormon and occurs in the books of Moses and Abraham. Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary gives the following meanings:¹

1. "To act as minister or chief agent, in managing public affairs"
2. "To dispense"

According to my research, these usages appear in the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price with the following particulars:

1. To administer justice or the law (2 Nephi 9:46; Alma 10:14; 3 Nephi 6:29; perhaps Ether 9:23)
2. To lead in the church (Alma 17:18; Ether 9:23)
3. To give aid to the poor or others in need (Jacob 2:19; Mosiah 4:16, 26; Alma 15:18; 35:9; 60:30)
4. To give priesthood blessings (Alma 19:33; Abraham 1:2)
5. To teach (Alma 22:3, 25)
6. To conduct, though in these examples it is always used negatively (3 Nephi 6:28; 4 Nephi 1:27; Ether 8:15–17; 10:33; Moses 5:49)
7. To provide food or drink (Alma 47:18; 55:30, 32)
8. To kill (Alma 57:19; Moses 6:15)

Definitions 7 and 8 are different from the previous six in that the word *administer* can only have those meanings when coupled with other words, such as *food* and *death*.

Why does the word *administer* appear so frequently in Alma? Why do the only other references have to do with administering rites that are negative, like initiation into the Gadianton robbers? Which of the Book of Mormon and

Pearl of Great Price references have the most in common with the meaning of the word as used in Moroni 4:1?

Webster's first meaning ("to act as a minister or chief agent") and the second meaning I found in my research ("to lead in the church") are the most obvious relevant meanings for Moroni 4. However, the third through fifth of the meanings I found in my research are also helpful in thinking about the sacrament: the administration of the sacrament gives aid to those who are poor in spirit, to receive it is to receive a priesthood blessing, and to take part in the sacrament is to be taught.

Flesh and Blood (4:1)

Webster's 1828 dictionary does not have a listing for the phrase *flesh and blood*; however, it does list relevant meanings for each component. In addition to the obvious reference to soft animal tissue, Webster gives these relevant meanings for *flesh*:²

1. "The body, as distinguished from the soul"
2. "Animal nature; animals of all kinds"
3. "Men in general; mankind"
4. "Human nature"
5. "Carnality; corporeal appetites"
6. "A carnal state"
7. "The corruptible body of man, or corrupt nature" [Webster's cites 1 Corinthians 15, which uses the phrase *flesh and blood* (verse 50)]
8. "The present life; the state of existence in this world"
9. "Legal righteousness" [as one might see in the ritualistic fulfillment of obligation]
10. "Kindred"

Meanings 5 through 9 seem to depend almost exclusively on Noah Webster's personal interpretation of the New Testament. Webster cites no other references. Although we must use these definitions with some caution, Webster—even though giving what are essentially Protestant, sectarian interpretations—probably reports reasonably accurately the kinds of meanings common in early-nineteenth-century America (Joseph Smith's time) among Protestants and those of other faiths.

Moroni 4 suggests strongly to me that the primary meaning of *flesh* as used in these verses is "soft animal tissue," in other words, the body of Jesus Christ. Meanings 3 and 9 also may be relevant.

Webster gives the following meanings for *blood*:³

1. "The fluid which circulates through the arteries and veins"
2. "Kindred"
3. "Royal lineage"
4. "Honorable birth"
5. "Life"
6. "Slaughter; murder, or bloodshedding"
7. "Guilt, and punishment"
8. "Fleshly nature; the carnal part of man; as opposed to spiritual nature"
9. "Man, or human wisdom, or reason"
10. "Sacramental symbol of the *blood* of Christ"
11. "The death and sufferings of Christ"

Meanings 10 and 11 may be most important to this scripture, and they are important because of meaning 1. The other meanings are also quite interesting as well, particularly 2 through 4. It is also interesting that one meaning of *blood* is "kindred," as is also true of *flesh*.

The phrase *flesh and blood* appears in the Old Testament only once, in Deuteronomy 12:27. In the Book of Mormon it has only two meanings: the body, specifically the body of Christ (see Mosiah 7:27; Ether 3:6, 8, 9), and the ordinance of the sacrament (see 3 Nephi 18:28–30; Moroni 4:1). As far as I can tell, in all scripture the phrase *flesh and blood* occurs only fourteen times total, with the following meanings:

Body	Hebrews 2:14 Mosiah 7:27 Ether 3:6, 8, 9
Humanity	Matthew 16:17 Galatians 1:16 Ephesians 6:12
Corruption	1 Corinthians 15:50
Sacrament	3 Nephi 18:25–30 Moroni 4:1 Doctrine and Covenants 20:40

Note that the use of *flesh and blood* to mean “corruption” may overlap with other uses, such as the uses in Hebrews 2:14 (“the body”) and Galatians 1:16 (“humanity”). Note also that each instance of the phrase in the New Testament, except perhaps Hebrews 2:14, carries a negative connotation. This observation is an example of what can raise the question “Why?” and lead me to further study.

Commandments of Christ (4:1)

The phrase *commandments of Christ* does not appear in the Old Testament, though synonymous phrases do. Even in the New Testament and the Doctrine and Covenants it is uncommon. The Book of Mormon uses phrases referring to the commandments of Christ frequently, though it does not use the exact wording regularly (see, for example, 2 Nephi 33:11; 3 Nephi 30:1; Mormon 7:10; Ether 4:2; 12:22).

Eternal Father (4:3)

Eternal Father is also a phrase not found in the Old Testament, though it does appear in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 11:21; 13:40; Mosiah 15:4; 16:15; Alma 11:38–39; Mormon 6:22). Notice that Doctrine and Covenants 19 suggests that we can possibly think of *Eternal* as a name of God rather than simply a descriptor of him. In Moroni 4:3, however, it seems also to be a descriptor: the eternal rather than temporal Father.

Name of Thy Son, Jesus Christ (4:3)

Though the exact phrase *name of thy Son, Jesus Christ* does not occur often, phrases referring to the name of the Lord are used frequently, especially in the Old Testament. Two uses of the Lord’s name in scripture seem to be especially common: (1) taking Jesus’ name as an indication of membership in a holy community (see Deuteronomy 28:10; Mosiah 25:23; Alma 1:19; 46:15, 18; 3 Nephi 27:5–6; Mormon 8:38); and (2) as a sign of conversion or promised salvation (see 2 Nephi 31:13; Mosiah 5:8, 10; 6:2; Alma 34:38). Obviously, the latter use overlaps with the former. For example, Exodus 3:13–15 makes it quite clear that the name of the Lord is holy and is directly connected to the identity of the children of Israel, but the Old Testament has few references that specifically affirm that the people of Israel are those who have taken the Lord’s name on themselves.

The name of the Lord is perhaps most commonly found in scriptures that prohibit taking that name in vain (see Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11; Psalm 139:20; Proverbs 30:9; 2 Nephi 26:32; Mosiah 13:15). References such as Leviticus 19:12 and Alma 46:21, as well as Jesus’ proscription in Matthew 5:33, suggest that the name of the

Lord may have been used to certify oaths between Israelites and that the command not to take the name of the Lord in vain may have had its beginnings in the context of such oaths. This commandment not to take the Lord's name in vain may also be associated with the two uses of the Lord's name mentioned above: an indication of membership in the holy community and the sign of conversion and promised salvation. The prohibition against taking the Lord's name in vain thus includes not joining the church for a vain or useless reason and not taking it as a sign of one's conversion if no such conversion has occurred.

Sanctify (4:3)

Webster's 1828 dictionary gives these meanings for *sanctify*:⁴

1. "In a general sense, to cleanse, purify or make holy"
2. "To separate, set apart or appoint to a holy, sacred or religious use"
3. "To purify; to prepare for divine service"
4. "To make the means of holiness"
5. "To make free from guilt"
6. "To secure from violation"
7. "To sanctify God, to praise and celebrate him"

We are fairly accustomed to using the word *sanctify* to mean "to make holy," and sanctification is a major theme in the Old Testament and Book of Mormon. Most contemporary readers probably focus on meanings 1 and 2. In meaning 1, sanctification is a cleansing, either ritually through ordinance (see Exodus 19:10) or through forgiveness of sin (see Alma 13:11). Obviously, these two means of cleansing are not mutually exclusive. Meaning 2, "to set apart" (see Genesis 2:3; Exodus 13:2; 19:23; Leviticus 27:16), also seems important to the word's use in Moroni 4. "To separate" may be the root meaning of the Hebrew word translated *sanctify* in the KJV Old Testament.⁵ Given what 3 Nephi 18:29 says about those who take the sacrament unworthily, meaning 6 may also be relevant.

Partake (4:3)

Webster notes that *partake* means "to take a part, portion or share in common with others; to have a share or part; to participate."⁶ That definition fits each of the scriptural uses of the word.

Prior to looking it up in Webster's 1828 dictionary, I had understood *partake* in the context of Moroni 4:3 simply to be a fancy word for *eat*, but *partake* is much more complex than that. To partake of the bread and water of the sacrament is not just to eat them, but to have a share in what that ordinance represents. The ordinance of the sacrament originated at the last supper and was immediately followed by Gethsemane and the crucifixion (see Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 3 Nephi 20:8; D&C 27:2). Given the temporal conjunction of the last supper and Christ's suffering, as well as the fact that the sacrament is an explicit memorial of Christ's sacrifice, to partake of the bread and water may be to recall such scriptures as Matthew 10:38: "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (see Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; 3 Nephi 12:30; D&C 23:6, 56:2; 112:14).

Witness (4:3)

Witness is an important Old Testament and Book of Mormon word. Webster's 1828 dictionary recognizes it as both transitive and intransitive. Used intransitively it means "to bear testimony" or "to give evidence." Used transitively, as it is in Moroni 4, *witness* means:⁷

1. "To see or know by personal presence"

2. “To attest, to give testimony to”

3. “To subscribe [an instrument] for the purpose of establishing its authenticity; as, to *witness* a bond or deed”

The third meaning seems most relevant to the sacrament prayers. By partaking of the bread and water, we act as witnesses of the authenticity of our covenant.

It seems to me that the Book of Mormon has the following meanings for *witness*:

1. To testify that something is true; to give evidence, often as part of pledging oneself (2 Nephi 27:12, 14, 22; 29:8; Jacob 4:6, 13; Mosiah 2:14; 7:21; 13:23; 18:10; 21:35; 26:9; Alma 10:12, 13; 14:11; 19:9; 30:45; 34:30, 33; 47:33; Helaman 7:21; 8:24; 9:23; 3 Nephi 7:25; 24:5; Mormon 3:16, 21; Ether 5:4; 12:6)
2. To testify that a person can be trusted (2 Nephi 31:18)
3. To see (Jacob 7:21; Words of Mormon 1:1–2; Alma 14:9, 10; 3 Nephi 7:20; 11:16)

The second meaning seems closest to what is meant in Moroni 4:3, and it is closely allied to the third meaning in the list from Webster’s dictionary.

Take upon Them (4:3)

The only clear previous reference that uses the phrase *take upon them* is Alma 46:21, where the Nephites covenant to be faithful to God at Moroni’s behest. The references cited under the heading “Name of Thy Son, Jesus Christ” are not direct uses of this phrase but are relevant.

Keep . . . Commandments (4:3)

The scriptures speak in numerous places of keeping the commandments. The *OED* suggests various meanings for *keep*,⁸ and perhaps we should remember that *keep* can mean “preserve” when we think about what it means to keep the commandments. It might be interesting to think about what it means to preserve or protect the commandments.

Rhetoric

Moroni 4:1–3 is anacoluthonic. An anacoluthon is the technical term for a passage that does not form a complete sentence. Though verse three is a complete sentence, it is part of the longer fragment that is composed of all three verses. That fragment is not a complete sentence. Polyptoton (the repetition of root words) is evidenced by *remembrance* and *remember* in verse 3. The phrase *thy Son* is an example of epistrophe: “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*.” Epistrophe is the same phrase or word repeated at the end of successive phrases or clauses. The anacoluthon seems unimportant to the meaning of these verses, but the polyptoton and the epistrophe focus verse three on the remembrance of the Son.

Parsing

Below is how I parsed Moroni 4 (see page 117). The diagram marks parenthetical phrases with brackets and places them under the noun with which they are associated. All other breaks show how a phrase or clause with a major verb relates to the other phrases and clauses.

The only structural ambiguity of these verses seems to be in the last clause. I diagrammed it as one of the blessings for which the priests pray: that those who eat will remember the body of the Son, that they will witness, and that they will be willing to have the Spirit. Alternatively, the last clause may indicate the consequence of keeping the commandments. In that case it would be indented below the line “and keep his commandments which he hath given them” because it would modify that phrase.

Context

Thinking he was done with his abridgment, Moroni appended what at this point in the Book of Mormon are more or less odds and ends, material he felt would be useful to those who would receive the book. The subject matter—the gift of the Holy Ghost, the sacrament, and baptism—leads Moroni to a discussion of baptism. This in turn reminds him of some of his father’s discourses on faith, charity, baptism, and the atonement. These relatively haphazard beginnings lead him into some of the most profound discourses of scripture.

Reflecting on the various kinds of information gleaned in this study would provide me with insights into the sacrament prayer for the bread as well as questions for further study. It would also provide me with materials for essays or talks. For example, using the word study for the phrase *flesh and blood*, I might write about the sacrament as a blessing to those who are poor in spirit. Alternatively, I might use my research and thinking about *partake* to consider how the covenant of baptism, renewed at the sacrament table, commits me to suffer with those who suffer, connecting the ordinance of the sacrament to Mosiah 18:8–10:

Now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; Yea and *are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort*, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life—Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?

After thinking about what it means to keep the commandments and how the word *keep* can also mean “preserve,” rather than writing about the sacrament, I might write about obedience. Reflecting on the phrase *name of Christ*, I might focus a baptismal talk on what it means to become a member of a holy community. Many of these ideas and topics overlap, so material appropriate for one talk or essay would be relevant to another.

Sometimes I study scripture to answer a particular question or to prepare to speak on or write about an assigned topic. More often, however, scripture study supplies me with the questions, topics, and ideas that I write about. It provides an abundance of material for me to think about and reflect on. Using the tools of this book will help our scripture study produce the kinds of information that will generate fruitful questions and insights.

Moroni 4

The manner of their elders and priests administering the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church; and they administered it according to the commandments of Christ; wherefore we know the manner to be true; and the elder or priest did minister it—

And they did kneel down with the church, and pray to the Father in the name of Christ, saying:

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.

Notes

1. *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), s.v. “administer.”
2. *Ibid.*, s.v. “flesh.”
3. *Ibid.*, s.v. “blood.”
4. *Ibid.*, s.v. “sanctify.”
5. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), s.v. “קדש” (word number 1990).
6. *American Dictionary*, s.v. “partake.”
7. *Ibid.*, s.v. “witness.”
8. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd. ed., s.v. “keep.”