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FEMALE RITUAL HEALING IN MORMONISM

Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright

*Wash and anoint the sick, beneath your hands,
Those not to death appointed, shall revive;
Let no man say you nay, what God commands,
The pure and humble spirit understands,
And through it oft, the dead are made alive.¹*

ON MARCH 2, 1876, EIGHT WOMEN from the Salt Lake Eleventh Ward gathered at the Wickens family home. They were fasting for Sister Wickens who had developed a problem with her speech and for a

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[Louisa Lula Greene Richards?] "Woman's Thought and Woman's Work," poem written for and read at the first Semi-Annual Conference of the Relief Society, reprinted in Anonymous, "Relief Society Conference," *Woman's Exponent* 18 (October 15, 1889): 78. This stanza was included among several intended to summarize Joseph Smith's teachings to the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo.

Sister Young who had "been a cripple for 20 years." Mary Ann Burnham Freeze described what followed:

They had washed Sister Young preparatory to having her annointed which ordanance I attended to after we had prayers, Sister Lawson being mouth made an excellent and humble prayer. Then I called Sopha to seal the annointing, which she did in a praiseworthy manner, for one so young. Then I called upon Jane to annoint the head of Sister Wickens and Sister Newsom to administer to her. They both did exceedingly well, I will here mention that we all laid our hands on when each one was administered to. Then it was proposed to bless Sister Louie Felt, she being poorly. Sister Cushing annointed and Sister Lawson blessed her. After we were through with these, Sister Aggie Tuckett who is very sick sent a word for us to come and pray for her. We went in and Lizzie Felt annointed, and, I administered to her. Felt, that they would all soon be healed They were so grateful to us, seemed to look upon us as ministering angels.²

Freeze's diary reveals how healing rites conveyed both liturgical knowledge through ritual participation and created social networks among Mormon women. Religious historians have long regarded ritual as a lens through which they can examine how communities created and re-created their cultural world. In contrast to the priesthood anointing, sealing, and blessing ritual that comprises the entirety of current Mormon healing praxis,³ Mormon healing in the past was ritually diverse, incorporating many forms and enlisting a variety of participants. Several authors have discussed the participation of women in Mormon healing rituals.⁴ This study however, traces the history of female ritual healing within the broader context of LDS Church liturgy and strives to fill the explanatory lacunae between the past and present.

²Mary Ann Freeze, *Diaries, 1875–99*, March 2, 1876, photocopy of holograph, L. Tom Perry Special Collections and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter Perry Special Collections).

³For an outline of the ritual, see *Church Handbook of Instructions, Book 2: Priesthood and Auxiliary Leaders, Section 1: Melchizedek Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998), 172–73.

⁴Carol Lynn Pearson, *Daughters of Light* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 65–75; Claudia Lauper Bushman, "Mystics and Healers," in *Mormon Sisters: Women in Early Utah*, edited by Claudia L. Bushman (new edition; Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997), 1–24; Linda King Newell, "A Gift

We have previously described women's integral participation in the development of Mormonism's distinct healing liturgy by the time of the settlement of the Great Basin; that research is essential context for this study.⁵ In this paper, we briefly review this history, highlighting the interaction of healing ritual and power with the development of the temple. We then discuss the various healing rites employed by women in Utah and the contexts in which they administered. All Mormon ritual operates in two partially overlapping liturgical modalities: one folk and the other formal. Throughout the nineteenth century, Mormon liturgy generally existed as oral tradition. There were no manuals to dictate precise ritual formulations; instead Latter-day Saints learned ritual performance from the example and mentoring of both male and female Church leaders. Folk pedagogy served the Latter-day Saints well; however, due to pressures within and outside of the Church, the hierarchy first reformed liturgical authority and then

Given, A Gift Taken: Washing, Anointing, and Blessing the Sick among Mormon Women," *Sunstone* 6 (September/October 1981): 16–25; Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Mormon Women and the Struggle for Definition," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14 (Winter 1981): 40–47; Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 291–93; Linda King Newell, "Gifts of the Spirit: Women's Share," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 111–50; John Sillito and Constance L. Lieber, "In Blessing We Too Were Blessed," *Weber Studies* 5 (Spring 1988): 61–73; D. Michael Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood since 1843," in *Women and Authority: Re-emerging Mormon Feminism*, edited by Maxine Hanks (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 365–410; Jill Mulvey Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 43–44, 219–22; Lester E. Bush Jr., *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints: Science, Sense, and Scripture* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 84–89; Susanna Morrill, "Relief Society Birth and Death Rituals: Women at the Gates of Mortality," *Journal of Mormon History* 36 (Spring 2010): 128–59.

⁵Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, "The Forms and the Power: The Development of Mormon Ritual Healing to 1847," *Journal of Mormon History* 35 (Summer 2009): 42–87 traces this evolution in detail. A slightly revised version is available in Stephen C. Taysom, ed., *Dimensions of Faith: A Mormon Studies Reader* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011).

explicitly formalized the Church liturgy itself. In this paper, we show how female ritual healing evolved in context of this history and how it is a key feature in understanding the development of Latter-day Saint liturgy. Furthermore, we show how these dynamics led to the end of female administration of healing ritual in the Church.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMALE RITUAL HEALING TO 1847

The roots of female ritual healing are inextricably tied to the founding communities of Mormon history. Understanding the evolution of female participation in healing rituals from those early beginnings provides a window into developing liturgical modalities as well as the developing milieu of ritual and gender relations. Although there is some evidence that Lucy Mack Smith was known as a healer in the Palmyra community, female administration of Mormon healing rituals emerged during the Kirtland period. While women were often the recipients of healing rituals, the primary evidence of early female ritual administration occurs in the patriarchal blessings bestowed by Joseph Smith Sr. These blessings, which often identified the individual's spiritual gifts, legitimized the exercise of female healing during the early 1830s.⁶ Joseph Smith Sr.'s blessings often indicated that ritual healing was to be administered within the domestic circle.⁷ However, it is clear that, by the winter of 1835, women were beginning to conceive of themselves as fuller participants in the ritual community. Early Mormons believed in a literal biblical restorationism and often had paradigmatic experiences, typified by Joseph Smith's interaction with the divine. For example in early Kirtland, Sarah Leavitt clearly viewed herself as both able and qualified to receive and act upon a personal revelation to heal her daughter. An angelic visitation instructing Leavitt to lay hands on her daughter not only sanctioned her to act within the limits of her own conscience, but also within her developing Mormon community.⁸

By 1837, patriarchal blessings specifically instructed women to

⁶See, e.g., H. Michael Marquardt, comp., *Early Patriarchal Blessings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2007), 19, 56, 104, 147.

⁷*Ibid.*, 36, 47, 73, 163.

⁸Juanita L. Pulsipher, ed., "History of Sarah Studevant Leavitt (1875)," 9, Ms 62, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City (hereafter Marriott Library).

administer to the sick by the laying on hands, the common form of administration among Mormon men.⁹ Notably, early Mormons did not use consecrated oil or invoke priesthood authority to heal; the earliest healings in the Church frequently involved laying hands on specific areas of the body. Concomitant with the introduction of anointing as a ritual form in the Kirtland Temple, Mormons anointed ailing regions of the body or areas that were believed to be sources of sickness.¹⁰ Up until this point, women did not have access to institutionalized roles in the early Church, so their movement into ritual healing is significant.¹¹ In these early years, there is no question that Church leaders viewed the ritual administration by the elders with primacy, but female participation in ritual healing was also common. After the Smith family relocated to Far West, Missouri, in 1838, Mary Isabella Horne later remembered that Lucy Mack Smith participated in the healing of her daughter: "[she] was taken very ill, and her life despaired of, in fact it seemed impossible for her to get better. The mother of the Prophet, Mrs. Lucy Smith, came and blessed the child, and said she should live. This was something new in that age, for a woman to administer to the sick." That same year while on a mission in Maine, Phoebe Woodruff administered to her sick husband, Wilford. The apostolic missions appear to have spread the practice of female ritual healing as British women were also anointing the sick by 1838.¹²

While these instances of female healing illustrate that women's

⁹E.g., the Patriarch commanded one woman: "Thou shalt lay thy hands on them and they shall recover." Joseph Smith Sr., Patriarchal Blessing to Eda Rogers, 1837, transcript on website, <http://timeforitnow.knotsindeed.com/genealogy/NoahRogersEdaHollister.html> (accessed April 21, 2009). Edited excerpt also available in Pearson, *Daughters of Light*, 65. See also Marquardt, *Early Patriarchal Blessings*, 166.

¹⁰Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and Power."

¹¹Ibid. Besides priesthood offices, men filled virtually all roles in the nascent Church, from clerks to craftsmen.

¹²Anonymous, "A Representative Woman: Mary Isabella Horne," *Woman's Exponent* 11 (June 15, 1882): 9; Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833-1898*, typescript, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983-85), 1:235. Joseph Fielding, Diary, December 16, 1838, microfilm of holograph, LDS Church History Library. This theme appears common in the early missions. Addison Pratt also instructed native women to

participation in healing was becoming normative, the founding of the Relief Society coupled with the introduction of the Nauvoo Temple ceremonies ushered in an expansion of ritual healing, reinforcing the role of women within Mormon religious rituals. Distinct from the authority to administer healing rituals, Joseph Smith yearned for his people to acquire the charismatic power to heal and the ritual forms to channel that power. Through the promised endowment, Smith sought to fill his people with God's power, including the power to heal. Furthermore, throughout his life, he adapted the salvific rituals of his church and used them to focus this power. Church leaders adapted the Kirtland anointing ceremony, baptism, and the Nauvoo Temple rites to healing the sick, and women naturally participated in these ceremonies.¹³

After settling in Illinois, Mormon women formed the Nauvoo Female Relief Society in March 17, 1842, as an organization to help the needy and strengthen each other. Women sometimes administered to the sick in formal settings as a part of their regular Relief Society meetings. This practice apparently caused some controversy; however, Joseph rebuked the detractors on April 28, 1842, "according to revelation," which he newly preached that day. He stated that it was proper for women to administer to the sick by the laying on of hands and that "healing the sick . . . should follow all that believe, whether male or female."¹⁴ Joseph Smith's defense of female participation in healing rituals set a pattern that would continue for the rest of the century. From

anoint the sick during his first mission to the Society Islands in 1846. S. George Ellsworth, ed., *The Journals of Addison Pratt* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 292–93.

¹³Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Power"; Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, "'They Shall Be Made Whole': A History of Baptism for Health," *Journal of Mormon History* 34 (Fall 2008): 69–112.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, April 28, 1842; Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 114–19. See also Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–92), 2:378–79, and May 1, 1842, 2:379. This position is later reflected in many sources, e.g., Louisa Barnes Pratt's diary, "When the Savior said, 'these signs shall follow them that believe in my name they shall cast out devils,' &c, He made no distinction of sexes." S. George Ellsworth, ed., *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt: Mormon Missionary*

this point forward, Church leaders continued to encourage women to experience the power of the Restoration through healing.

As with the Kirtland Temple, the rituals of the Nauvoo temple liturgy were adapted to healing and other purposes from the earliest moments, yet this time women were included as full participants. Smith's temple ceremonies were a space where women received an expanded liturgical authority and administered rituals of salvation. Joseph Smith organized a "quorum" or "holy order," as a body to mediate the transmission of the temple ceremonies and both men and women were members. Both voted Joseph Smith as president and both voted on the admission of prospective members. Never before had men and women labored so proximately for the latter-day kingdom.¹⁵ The Nauvoo Temple liturgy introduced a greater complexity to healing as Church leaders adapted the salvific rituals of washing and anointing and baptism to healing before the temple was even completed.¹⁶ The prayer circle was used to consecrate oil and, in conjunction with the laying on of hands, to heal the sick.¹⁷ The sick were also washed and anointed for their health.

Although Utah-era Relief Society women claimed that Joseph Smith taught women to wash and anoint the sick during his lifetime,¹⁸ the first example of such a ritual that we have found occurred in De-

Widow and Pioneer (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1998), 345.

¹⁵Jonathan A. Stapley, "'No Uncommon Thing': Collaborative Male-Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," paper presented at the Mormon History Association annual meeting, May 2009, Springfield, Ill., in our possession.

¹⁶Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Powers."

¹⁷Stanley B. Kimball, ed., *On the Potter's Wheel: The Diaries of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 123, 125, 129; George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 218, 221; Samuel W. Richards, Diary, September 12, 1846, microfilm of holograph, Perry Special Collections. Note that many of these accounts involve collaborative male-female healing.

¹⁸See, e.g., Richards, "Woman's Thought and Woman's Work," 78; General Relief Society Office Minutes, August 7, 1923, Washing and Anointing Blessing Texts, ca. 1923, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 2; Relief Society General Board, Minutes, January 2, 1929, microfilm of typescript, CR 11 10. See also Elizabeth Whitney, "A Leaf from an Autobiography," *Woman's Exponent* 7 (November 15,

cember 1845. (See below.) Washing and anointing ritual texts, committed to writing during the twentieth century, show how administrators alternately washed and anointed various parts of the body, pronouncing a blessing upon each of them, and then sealed the ritual by the laying on of hands.¹⁹ Essentially a healing litany, the practice of washing and anointing for health shares a liturgical homology to the Mormon temple rituals. Though these written patterns do not include language from the temple initiatory ritual,²⁰ they share a similar overall pattern of administration, which is also reflected in other aspects of nineteenth-century temple worship. For example, temple dedicatory prayers during the same era consecrated exhaustive lists of temple constructions and fixtures.²¹

The first documented example of washing and anointing for health that we have found highlights how, as women participated in temple ordinances, they also participated in the new healing rituals, thus beginning an era of collaborative healing: "President Young and H. C. Kimball, assisted by their wives and Sister Whitney, washed and

1878): 91; Anonymous, "In Memoriam," *Woman's Exponent* 8 (June 1, 1879): 251. In Utah, Zina D. H. Young wrote: "Blessings [line break] I have practiced much with my Sister Presendia Kimball while in Nauvoo & ever since. before Joseph Smiths death He blest sisters to bless the Sick." Memorandum, unpaginated entry, Zina Card Brown Family Collection, MS 4780, Box 1, fd. 15.

¹⁹Washing and anointing blessing, circa 1906, Cannonville Relief Society Record, 126–30, microfilm of manuscript, LR 1371 22, cf., Panguitch Stake, mimeograph washing and anointing text, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 2; Washing and anointing blessings, circa 1909, Oakley, Idaho, 2nd Ward Relief Society, Minute Book, 1901–09, 195–98, LR 6360 14, microfilm of manuscript; Washing and anointing blessing texts, ca. 1923, typescripts, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 2.

²⁰In the late nineteenth century, Church leaders persistently warned women against incorporating temple ritual language into their healing rites. See, e.g., Relief Society General Board, Minutes, October 4, 1895.

²¹On the form of temple dedications see Samuel Brown, "A Sacred Code: Mormon Temple Dedications, 1836–2000," *Journal of Mormon History* 32 (Summer 2006): 180–81. For example, when Heber C. Kimball dedicated the Endowment House, he "named in his prayer evry room from top to bottom evry wall & material Adobies sand clay stone Lime from the foundation to the top." Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 4:316, May 5, 1855.

anointed for their health their three little children."²² Primarily facilitated by participation in the temple quorum, men and women labored together to administer healing rituals.²³ Underscoring the importance of such unity, Apostle George A. Smith preached to the initiated in the temple: "We are now different from what we were before we entered into this quorum. . . . When a man and his wife are united in feeling, and act in union, I believe they can hold their children by prayer and faith and will not be obliged to give them up to death until they are fourscore years old."²⁴ Church leaders modeled and encouraged collaborative healing.

Like his predecessor, Brigham Young advocated women's participation in healing rituals. Affirming the practice at an April 1844 Nauvoo general conference, he declared, "I want a Wife that can take care of my chil[dre]n when I am away—who can pray—lay on hands anoint with oil & baffle the enemy."²⁵ Young's early support of female ritual healing and his example in collaborative healing functioned to

²²Helen Mar Kimball, "Scenes in Nauvoo, and Incidents from H. C. Kimball's Journal," *Woman's Exponent* 12 (August 15, 1883): 42. Note that this serialized episode is an excerpt from the Heber C. Kimball Diary (December 28, 1845) kept by William Clayton and not included in Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*. See also William Clayton, Diary, kept for Heber C. Kimball, in Devery S. Anderson and Gary James Bergera, eds., *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies, 1845–1846: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005), 210. Two days later, one of these children, Brigham Willard C. Kimball, was included in the temple prayer because of continued illness. *Ibid.*, 233. There may be earlier extant accounts of washing and anointing for health that we did not find in our research.

²³See, e.g., Willard Richards, Diary, June 26 and July 9, 1845, holograph, in Richard E. Turley, ed., *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2 vols., DVD (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, [Dec. 2002], 1:31; Kimball, *On the Potter's Wheel*, 105.

²⁴Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 221, December 21, 1845.

²⁵Thomas Bullock account of Brigham Young sermon, Special Elders Meeting, April 9, 1844, in Church Historian's Office, General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, *Selected Collections*, 1:18. The edited speech is included in Joseph Smith et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 7 vols., 2d ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1948), 6:322.

subvert the prevalent notion of "separate spheres" within the realm of healing—a notable shift that moved with Church members as they relocated. Collaborative healing was common on the trail west. Patty Sessions administered to the sick in Winter Quarters with her husband.²⁶ Eliza R. Snow participated in healing rituals with men and women at blessing meetings, and Hosea Stout gathered endowed men and women to dress in their temple robes and administer to his dying son "according to the Holy order."²⁷ In conjunction with collaborative healing, a distinctive female healing culture grew up alongside these unified administrations. Growing out of female isolation from husbands in the vanguard company, Mormon Battalion, and other colonization efforts, and potentially from Victorian ideas of propriety, women frequently administered for each other's healing and comfort. As memorialized in the *Woman's Exponent*, women in Utah described the post-Nauvoo wives of Heber C. Kimball:

They used often to meet and pray together and others of the family and neighbors would gather in. They were much exercised in their feelings for the pioneers who had gone out into a new and undiscovered country, exposed to the perils of a savage wilderness. It was a time of great anxiety... the settlement almost deserted. The Sisters had greater need to draw near the Lord, and the manifestations of his goodness and power were indeed marvelous, especially in healing the sick.²⁸

Ritual exercise at times of critical life events such as miscarriages, births, and illness bound women together and further intensified the kinship bonds often forged from polygamous unions. As

²⁶Donna Toland Smart, ed., *Mormon Midwife: The 1846–1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997), 75, 78, 180, 208.

²⁷Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, ed., *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxey Snow* (1995; rpt., Logan: Utah State University Press, 2000), 180; Juanita Brooks, ed., *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diaries of Hosea Stout*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 1:170–71.

²⁸Anonymous, "A Venerable Woman: Presendia Lathrop Kimball," *Woman's Exponent* 12 (June 1, 1883): 2. For examples of later language regarding Victorian propriety, see Joseph E. Taylor, Sermon, Minutes of Home Missionary Meeting, January 30, 1884, Salt Lake Stake, General Minutes, microfilm of manuscript, LR 604; Lillie Fairbanks, Letter to John B. Fairbanks, May 29, 1891, Payson, Utah, microfilm of holograph, John Boylston Fairbanks, Papers, MS 11085.

Lucy Meserve Smith described washing and anointing her sister wife Sarah Ann Libby Smith along with two other plural wives and a friend, "Bathsheba said when she and Zina and Hannah [Maria Libby Smith] and I layed our hands on her she felt as though she was praying over an infant we prayed with our right hand uplifted to the most high and we all felt the blessing of the holy spirit. Zina said there was a union of faith."²⁹

The period of exodus along the Western trail functioned to train Mormons in their expanded healing liturgy. All of the various healing rituals were prevalent, and this activity provided both a meaningful expression of faith and deepened communal ties. Not only did women administer to women, but they also occasionally administered to men; and men and women administered together. By the time of their arrival in the Great Basin, Mormon women were established and potent healers, being recognized as such by lay member and General Authority alike.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN AND THE UTAH HEALING LITURGY

The body of rituals formulated before the Latter-day Saints' arrival in the Great Basin formed the core of healing activities among LDS women to the modern era; however, there was a distinct evolution in practice in Utah. Beyond the pre-Utah rites, Mormon women began administering a specific washing and anointing ritual for expectant mothers. Additionally, following the pattern set by Joseph Smith, Mormon temples were locations for special healing; and female as well as male temple workers regularly administered healing rituals to patrons. In all of these ritual modes, women frequently administered with men, uniting in faith for the physical restoration of their people.

In the immediate post-Nauvoo era, cases of blessings without the use of oil are extant.³⁰ However, women, across the world wherever the Church was located, more commonly anointed the sick with oil that had been consecrated for that purpose. In 1849, the *Millen-*

²⁹Lucy Meserve Smith, Letter to George A. Smith, April 19, 1851, George A. Smith Papers, in *Selected Collections*, 1:33. For more on U.S. antebellum distinctive female culture see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 1 (Autumn 1975): 1-29.

³⁰See, e.g., Sarah Beriah Fiske Allen Ricks, who wrote that she re-

nial Star printed a letter from Briton Eliza Jane Merrick, describing how she anointed and healed a young member of her family.³¹ Louisa Barnes Pratt, who left with her husband on a mission to the Society Islands (Tahiti) in 1850, described how the native inhabitants "would frequently bring their young children to me when they were sick to have me anoint them, give them oil inwardly, and lay my hands upon them in the name of the Lord."³² Drinking consecrated oil was also a common Mormon practice into the twentieth century. Individuals likewise continued the practice of anointing the sick on the area of affliction. For example, one woman anointed her son's throat and stomach and gave him oil inwardly when he had a "bad cold" and another anointed her child's teeth in the "name of Jesus."³³ Both men and women engaged in this practice, though anointing the head only was also common.

After the 1840s, washing the sick with water was commonly viewed as therapeutic in the United States,³⁴ and a few Mormon healing accounts are ambiguous about whether participants ritually washed and anointed or simply cleaned and then ritually anointed the

buked the cholera of a Mormon co-worker in St. Louis in 1849. Autobiography (1819–52), 13–14, microfilm of typescript. See also Smart, *Mormon Midwife*, 112, 119, 164, among many others.

³¹Eliza Jane Merrick, Letter to Brother Booth, Windsor, England, June 6, 1849, *Millennial Star* 11 (July 1, 1849): 205.

³²Ellsworth, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 128. See also *ibid.*, 74, 87, 144–45, 153–55, 212, 345–46; E.S.P.C., "In Memoriam," *Woman's Exponent* 9 (October 15, 1880): 77.

³³Edward Leo Lyman, Susan Ward Payne, and S. George Ellsworth, eds., *No Place to Call Home: The 1807–1857 Life Writings of Caroline Barnes Crosby, Chronicler of Outlying Mormon Communities* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005), 441–42. Melissa Lambert Milewski, ed., *Before the Manifesto: The Life Writings of Mary Lois Walker Morris* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2007), 313. For other ritual healings with oil in the same volume, see pp. 208, 226, 319–20, 329–30, 371, 376, 401, 431, 432, 442, 453, 471. Examples of washing and anointing the sick are on pp. 236, 247–48, 267, 269.

³⁴Cold water cure or "hydrotherapy" was introduced in the eastern United States in the 1840s as a popular treatment for the sick. Susan E. Cayleff, *Wash and Be Healed: The Water-Cure Movement and Women's Health* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Jane B. Donegan, *Hydrophobic Highway to Health: Women and Water-Cure in Antebellum America* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986). While some Mormons were aware of

sick.³⁵ There is no question, however, that a formal washing and anointing ritual was commonly employed after the Nauvoo Temple ceremonies became available to the body of the Church during the winter of 1845–46. During the exodus to the West, men performed most of the documented instances of washing and anointing for health.³⁶ Although several retrospective accounts of women washing and anointing the sick during this period are extant,³⁷ it is not until the Utah period that women regularly and contemporaneously describe washings and anointings. While men continued to wash and anoint the sick during the Utah period, these accounts are less common.³⁸ Women, by contrast, frequently employed the ritual into the twentieth century.

In 1849 Patty Sessions, began recording instances of washing

hydrotherapy, there is very little evidence of its practice. Eliza R. Snow, for example, took a daily cold-water bath. Jill Mulvey Derr and Matthew J. Grow, "Letters on Mormon Polygamy and Progeny: Eliza R. Snow and Martin Luther Holbrook, 1866–1869," *BYU Studies* 48, no. 2 (2009): 144 note 16.

³⁵William France, Surgeon, "Remarks on the Cholera, &c.," *Deseret News*, September 26, 1855, 228, wrote: "As to the treatment of this disease, nothing is more simple; first wash the body clean and then administer the ordinance of anointing and laying on of hands, keeping the patient perfectly still and abstaining from all kinds of food or even drink." For examples of ambiguous administrations, see Willard Snow, Foreign Correspondence, extracts of a letter to Erastus Snow, Copenhagen, July 9, 1852, *Deseret News*, November 6, 1852, 102; Jesse Bennett, Diary, November 5, 1891, digital copy of holograph, Perry Special Collections. The washing and anointing of feet, knees, and "joints" during the Mormon Battalion march is another example of ambiguous administration. See, e.g., Levi Ward Hancock, Journal, February 6, 12, and 19, 1847, microfilm of holograph; Azariah Smith, Diary, February 18, 1847, microfilm of holograph.

³⁶Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Power," 81.

³⁷Lyman, Payne, and Ellsworth, *No Place to Call Home*, 64–65; Edward W. Tullidge, *The Women of Mormondom* (New York: Tullidge & Crandall, 1877), 169; Ann Alice Kimball, Journal, in *Heber C. Kimball and Ann Alice Gheen* (N.p.: Heber C. Kimball Family Association, 1992), 23.

³⁸See, e.g., John Lyman Smith, Diary, June 10, 1855, digital copy of holograph, Perry Special Collections; Donald G. Godfrey and Rebecca S. Martineau-McCarty, eds., *An Uncommon Common Pioneer: The Journals of James Henry Martineau, 1828–1918* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2008), 44; Robert Glass Cleland and Juanita Brooks, eds., *A Mormon*

and anointing the sick in her diary, which quickly became saturated with similar, often succinct accounts. For example, on August 14, 1849, she wrote, "went and washed and an [sic] anointed Sister Gates & laid hands on her."³⁹ That same year, Louisa Barnes Pratt, in the Society Islands, washed and anointed a sick boy who was brought to her.⁴⁰ Writing decades later, Mary Ann Burnham Freeze recorded in her diary: "I have been with Sister E[llis]. Shipp, to wash and annoint, Mrs Linie felt, who is very low with lung fever, but she seemed much relieved when we got through, could breathe easier."⁴¹

Though accounts of women administering healing rituals to men are extant, the most frequently recorded recipients of female healing rituals were women themselves, with children also being regular beneficiaries. Moreover, as Joseph Smith had reportedly done in Nauvoo,⁴² Willard Richards called and set apart women "to act as midwives and also administering to the sick and afflicted and set them apart for this very office and calling, and blest them with power

Chronicle: The Diaries of John D. Lee, 1848–1876, 2 vols. (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 2003), 1:221; Thomas Searles Terry, *Diary*, July 14, 1857; Donald G. Godfrey and Kenneth W. Godfrey, eds., *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card: The Utah Years, 1871–1886* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2006), 135; Donald G. Godfrey and Brigham Y. Card, eds., *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card: The Canadian Years 1886–1903* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 194, 196; L. W. Macfarlane, *Yours Sincerely, John M. Macfarlane* (Salt Lake City: L. W. Macfarlane, M.D., 1980), 277; Kym Ney, ed., *Allen Russell Autobiography and Journal*, July 1, 1894, June 10, 15, 17 and 27, 1896, April 2, 1905, and March 22, 1907, typescript (N.p.: Russell Family, n.d.), holograph in possession of Brandon Gull; [Joseph F. Smith], *Sermon at the Funeral of Joseph H. Grant, "Editors' Table," Improvement Era* 21 (February 1918): 354.

³⁹Smart, *Mormon Midwife*, 134. See also, pp. 164, 176, 191, 194, 196, 198, 203, 215, 242. Sessions was a polygamous widow of Joseph Smith, member of the nascent Board of Health, and a renowned midwife.

⁴⁰Ellsworth, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 154.

⁴¹Mary Ann Freeze, *Diary*, June 14, 1875; see also, e.g., Zina D. H. Young, *Diary*, July 7, 1855, microfilm of holograph.

⁴²Mary H. Duncan and Relva Booth Ross, "Set Apart by the Prophet Joseph Smith," in *Our Pioneer Heritage*, compiled by Kate B. Carter, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958–77), 6:426–32. Smith also apparently set apart women to administer to the sick. Elizabeth Whitney, "A Leaf from an Autobiography," *Woman's Exponent* 7 (November 15,

to officiate in that capacity as handmaids of the Lord."⁴³ As maternity complicated female health and as women were frequently the health care providers during pregnancy and labor (among other times), it is no surprise that women blessed their pregnant sisters for safe deliveries and also blessed women who desired children with fertility. Over time, LDS women developed a specific washing and anointing ritual for these cases, which quickly became normative. In journals and other records, this ritual is commonly called "washing and anointing for confinement."

Though the specific evolutionary chronology is ambiguous, accounts suggest that the confinement ritual had been formalized by the 1880s—perhaps as early as the late 1870s. For example in 1878, Louisa Greene Richards wrote in her diary, "Sister E. R. Snow, Zina D. Young and E. B. Wells have been to see me today, and to wash, anoint and bless me, preparatory to my approaching confinement."⁴⁴ Five years later Zina D. H. Young spoke on washing and anointing to a Logan Relief Society conference: "I wish to speak of the great privilege given us to wash and anoint the sick and suffering of our sex. I would counsel every one who expects to become a Mother to have this ordinance administered by some good faithful sisters." She then gave instructions on the procedure for the rituals.⁴⁵ The language of these accounts suggest that, during this time, there was not a specific ritual for expect-

1878): 91; Anonymous, "In Memoriam [Diantha Morley Billings]," *Woman's Exponent* 8 (June 1, 1879): 251. See also [Eunice Snow], "A Sketch of the Life of Eunice Snow," *Woman's Exponent* 39 (September 1, 1910): 22; Kate B. Carter, comp., "Ann Green Carling: Herb Doctor," in *Heart Throbs of the West*, 12 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1939–51), 3:137. We thank Jill Mulvey Derr for bringing several of these examples to our attention. Claire Noall, "Medicine among Early Mormons," *Western Folklore* 18 (April, 1959): 161, claimed without documentation that Smith set apart several others. All of these accounts are retrospective.

⁴³Anonymous, "A Venerable Woman: Presendia Lathrop Kimball, Continued," *Woman's Exponent* 12 (October 15, 1883): 75. See also Carrel Hilton Sheldon, "Pioneer Midwives," in *Mormon Sisters*, 43–66.

⁴⁴Louisa Lula Greene Richards, Journal, June 9, 1878, microfilm of holograph, MS 6554, 2–7.

⁴⁵Relief Society Conference, Logan Tabernacle, Logan Utah Cache Stake, Relief Society Minutes and Records, September 11, 1886, microfilm of manuscript, LR 1280 14. Unfortunately, the secretary did not record the

tant mothers; soon thereafter, however, specific accounts became commonplace. As with other rituals, washings and anointings for confinement were performed wherever Mormons located.⁴⁶ Washings and anointing for confinement shared the same ritual form as washings and anointing for health, where different parts of the body were sequentially washed, anointed, and blessed. The confinement ritual differed by adding a relevant blessing for the parts of the body necessary for safe delivery and breast-feeding the infant.⁴⁷ These blessings for safe and successful pregnancies were deeply communal, with family and close friends often participating in the administrations.

In 1888, Church President Wilford Woodruff wrote to *Woman's Exponent* editor Emmeline B. Wells in response to several questions relating to healing ritual administration: "I imagine from your question that you refer to a practice that has grown up among the sisters of washing and anointing sisters who are approaching their confinement. . . . There is no impropriety in sisters washing and anointing their sisters in this way under the circumstances you describe."⁴⁸ Wells's uncertainty likely arose from the ritual homology between the confinement blessings and the temple blessings. That many Latter-day Saint women received these same healing rituals in the temples likely added to her uncertainty. Later that same year and in response to the support of Apostle Franklin D. Richards, Wells published an editorial reiterating the importance of Joseph Smith's April 28, 1842, sermon and pointing to

details of her instructions.

⁴⁶E.g., Libbie Noall traveled with her missionary husband to Hawaii and became the Relief Society president where she frequently ritually administered to "women in confinement." Matthew Noall, *To My Children: An Autobiographical Sketch* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing, 1947), 46–47.

⁴⁷For examples of confinement blessings, see note 19, containing references to texts of blessings in Cannonville, Utah, and Oakley, Idaho, Relief Society ward minutes as well as texts generated in the General Relief Society office. For examples of washing and anointing for health, see Washing and anointing blessing texts, ca. 1923, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 2; Anna Fullmer Griffiths (1905–41), Diary, March 20, 1926, microfilm of holograph. See also Abraham H. Cannon, Diary, 1879–95, October 2, 1895, photocopy of holograph, Perry Special Collections.

⁴⁸Wilford Woodruff, Letter to Emmeline B. Wells, April 27, 1888, First Presidency Letterpress, microfilm of holograph.

several published sources.⁴⁹

In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith built the Nauvoo Temple as a place of physical healing, among other functions; and in it after Joseph's death, Brigham Young administered to the sick daily.⁵⁰ Even though the complete Mormon healing liturgy was available outside of the temple, Latter-day Saints in Utah conserved Smith's vision. As a result, the Endowment House and, later, the temples (the first Utah temple, in St. George, was dedicated in 1877) served as loci for special healing, though the rituals performed there were not different from those outside of the temples.⁵¹ Both men and women administered healing rituals in the temples, and the temple acted as an anchor for female ritual healing over time.⁵² Testimonials printed in the *Young Woman's Journal* recounted several miraculous healings performed by women in the Endowment House and later temples, noting, "How many times the sick and suffering have come upon beds to that temple and at once Sister [Lucy Bigelow] Young would be called to take the afflicted one under her immediate charge as all knew the mighty power she had gained through long years of fastings and prayers in

⁴⁹[Emmeline B. Wells], "Editorial Note," *Woman's Exponent* 17 (September 1, 1888): 52.

⁵⁰Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Power"; Stapley and Wright, "They Shall Be Made Whole." See also Brigham Young, Office Journal, July 12, 1845, photocopy of holograph, Brigham Young Papers, MS 0566, Marriott Library. Our thanks to John Turner for sharing this reference.

⁵¹Stapley and Wright, "They Shall Be Made Whole," 69–112, esp. 88–95.

⁵²For some examples of healing rituals in the temple besides those cited herein, see also Franklin D. Richards, Sermon, February 12, 1893, in Brian H. Stuy, comp. and ed., *Collected Discourses Delivered by Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others, 1886–1889*, 5 vols. (Sandy, Utah: BHS Publishing, 1987–92), 3:234; Rachel Elizabeth Pyne Smart, Autobiography (1870–1930), 4–5, microfilm of typescript; Lucinda Haws Holdaway, *Biographical Sketch of Lucinda Haws Holdaway* (Provo, Utah: N.pub., n.d.), 18; Barbara Reed Clark, ed., "A History of John Burnside Farnes and Ann Isacke," 13–14, in Margie Ean Farnes Stevens, June Farnes Stewart and Wanda Farnes Virden, comps., *Farnes Family History—Book Three* (N.p.: N.pub., December 1999), 145–46; "Temple Manifestations," *Millennial Star* 57 (January 24, 1895): 59–60.

the exercise of her special gift."⁵³

Often individuals participated in several different healing rituals during a single trip to the temple. Helen Mar Whitney Kimball described one of her daughter's temple experiences; she was "baptized in the Manti Temple 7 times for her health once for remission of sins—then ^washed &^ anointed that she might obtain the desire of her heart—was promised that she should. Was also administered to by the brethren."⁵⁴ When another daughter was pregnant, Helen Kimball recorded that Christiana Pyper and Alvus Patterson, both renowned healers,⁵⁵ administered to her outside of the temple: "[Lillie] was washed and anointed by Sister Pyper preparatory to her confinement. Bro P. called & she asked him to be mouth in blessing Gen [another daughter]. I asked them to administer to L. which they did & also to me—~~proposed~~ by Sister Pyper."⁵⁶ Though they were not kin relations, Pyper and Patterson frequently healed together; often Pyper anointed and Patterson confirmed the ritual.⁵⁷ Continuing on from cooperative practices from the Nauvoo era, collaborative male-fe-

⁵³Anonymous, "Sketch of the Labors of Sister Lucy B. Young in the Temples," *Young Woman's Journal* 4 (April 1893): 298–300; Anonymous, "Sketch of Sister Bathsheba Smith: Worker in the Endowment House," *Young Woman's Journal* 4 (April 1893): 295–96.

⁵⁴Charles M. Hatch and Todd M. Compton, eds., *A Widow's Tale: The 1884–1896 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2003), 489. For a similar battery of temple healing rituals, see *ibid.*, 204–5. Whitney's diary contains scores of female ritual healing accounts. For baptism for health, see Stapley and Wright, "They Shall Be Made Whole."

⁵⁵Both prominent healers in their own right, Pyper and Patterson shared a family friendship and even received patriarchal blessings on the same day. He was promised to "have power equal to Elijah of old" being able go from settlement to settlement healing the sick. She was blessed to "administer to the sick and they shall be healed instantly under thy hands." Charles W. Hyde, Patriarchal blessing to Alvicious H. Patterson, February 18, 1888, and Charles W. Hyde, Patriarchal blessing to Christiana Dollinger Pyper, February 18, 1888, in George D. Pyper Papers, MS 1, Box 9, fd. 17, Marriot Library.

⁵⁶Hatch and Compton, *A Widow's Tale*, 402.

⁵⁷See, e.g., Christiana D. Pyper, "Accounts of Administration to the Sick, 1888 and 1891," manuscript, George D. Pyper Papers, MS 1, Box 2, fd.

male ritual healing remained common,⁵⁸ with family members frequently joining to administer healing rituals.⁵⁹ For example, Wilford Woodruff described the healing of Margaret Smoot, who had experienced paralysis: "Mrs Phebe W Woodruff Anointed her & A O. Smoot Wm. Smoot & my self laid hands upon her And I Wilford Woodruff Blessed her and rebuked her Disease and her speech began to Come to her and she was some better."⁶⁰

UTAH HEALING CULTURE

For Mormon women, the second half of the nineteenth century was a period where the transmission of ritual knowledge as well as the consolidation of its performance within the public and private spheres bolstered both the folk and formal liturgical modalities. Throughout the development of the Relief Society from the 1850s, female healing served as a bridge of continuity that would connect women to their Nauvoo origins, to the temple, and to each other. The women at the core of the healing culture of nineteenth-

19, Marriot Library; Christiana D. Pyper, Diary, November 9 and 10, 1888, George D. Pyper Papers, MS 1, Box 6, fd. 1, Marriot Library; Joseph Argyle, Journal, 92, microfilm of holograph, internally paginated; Margaret R. Salmon, "My Story—Margaret Robertson Salmon" in *Our Pioneer Heritage* 11:268. There are also many extant accounts of them healing separately.

⁵⁸While collaborative male-female ritual healings were common, it is also evident that some men preferred to administer with other men. Oliver Huntington wrote in his journal after administering to his daughter-in-law, "I called for my wife as I generally do to lay on hands with me in the absence of other elders." Oliver B. Huntington, Diary, November 28, 1886, 124–25, holograph, Perry Special Collections. Huntington had a preferred mode of administering to the sick, patterned after the prayer circle. Ibid., January 27, 1887, 159–61.

⁵⁹See, e.g., Smart, *Mormon Midwife*, 179, 169; Scott H. Partridge, ed., *Eliza Maria Partridge Journal* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book, 2003), 128; Hatch and Compton, *A Widow's Tale*, 71, 202, 301, 344; Godfrey and Godfrey, *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card*, 167–68; Jennifer Moulton Hansen, ed., *Letters of Catharine Cottam Romney, Plural Wife* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 238.

⁶⁰Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 8:172. For an example of Phoebe administering to Wilford with others, see 7:156. See also George A. Smith, Diary, January 9, 1873, MS 1322, Box 3, fd. 1, *Selected Collections*, 1:32.