

# 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.*<sup>1</sup>

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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1[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.<sup>2</sup>

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,<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.

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<sup>2</sup>Mary 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).

<sup>3</sup>For 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.

<sup>4</sup>Carol 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.<sup>5</sup> 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

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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 Mulvay 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.

<sup>5</sup>Jonathan 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.<sup>6</sup> Joseph Smith Sr.'s blessings often indicated that ritual healing was to be administered within the domestic circle.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup>

By 1837, patriarchal blessings specifically instructed women to

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<sup>6</sup>See, 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.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 36, 47, 73, 163.

<sup>8</sup>Juanita 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup> Up until this point, women did not have access to institutionalized roles in the early Church, so their movement into ritual healing is significant.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup>

While these instances of female healing illustrate that women’s

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<sup>9</sup>E.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.

<sup>10</sup>Stapley and Wright, “The Forms and Power.”

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

<sup>12</sup>Anonymous, “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.<sup>13</sup>

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."<sup>14</sup> Joseph Smith's defense of female participation in healing rituals set a pattern that would continue for the rest of the century. From

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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.

<sup>13</sup>Stapley 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.

<sup>14</sup>*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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> The prayer circle was used to consecrate oil and, in conjunction with the laying on of hands, to heal the sick.<sup>17</sup> 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,<sup>18</sup> the first example of such a ritual that we have found occurred in De-

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

<sup>15</sup>Jonathan 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.

<sup>16</sup>Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Powers."

<sup>17</sup>Stanley 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.

<sup>18</sup>See, 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,



ember 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.<sup>19</sup> 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,<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup>

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

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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.

<sup>19</sup>Washing 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.

<sup>20</sup>In 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.

<sup>21</sup>On 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.”<sup>22</sup> Primarily facilitated by participation in the temple quorum, men and women labored together to administer healing rituals.<sup>23</sup> 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.”<sup>24</sup> 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 chi[l]dre[n when I am away—who can pray—lay on hands anoint with oil & baffle the enemy.”<sup>25</sup> Young’s early support of female ritual healing and his example in collaborative healing functioned to

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<sup>22</sup>Helen 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.

<sup>23</sup>See, 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.

<sup>24</sup>Smith, *An Intimate Chronicle*, 221, December 21, 1845.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.”<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

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

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

<sup>27</sup>Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, ed., *The Personal Writings of Eliza Roxcy 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.

<sup>28</sup>Anonymous, “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."<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup> 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-*

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<sup>29</sup>Lucy 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.

<sup>30</sup>See, 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.<sup>31</sup> 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.”<sup>32</sup> 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.”<sup>33</sup> 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,<sup>34</sup> and a few Mormon healing accounts are ambiguous about whether participants ritually washed and anointed or simply cleaned and then ritually anointed the

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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.

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

<sup>32</sup>Ellsworth, *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.

<sup>33</sup>Edward 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.

<sup>34</sup>Cold 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, *“Hydropathic Highway to Health”: Women and Water-Cure in Antebellum America* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986). While some Mormons were aware of

sick.<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> Although several retrospective accounts of women washing and anointing the sick during this period are extant,<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> Women, by contrast, frequently employed the ritual into the twentieth century.

In 1849 Patty Sessions, began recording instances of washing

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hydrotherapy, there is very little evidence of its practice. Eliza R. Snow, for example, took a daily cold-water bath. Jill Mulvay 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.

<sup>35</sup>William 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.

<sup>36</sup>Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Power," 81.

<sup>37</sup>Lyman, 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.

<sup>38</sup>See, 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."<sup>39</sup> That same year, Louisa Barnes Pratt, in the Society Islands, washed and anointed a sick boy who was brought to her.<sup>40</sup> 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."<sup>41</sup>

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,<sup>42</sup> 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

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*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.

<sup>39</sup>Smart, *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.

<sup>40</sup>Ellsworth, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 154.

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

<sup>42</sup>Mary 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.”<sup>43</sup> 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.”<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> The language of these accounts suggest that, during this time, there was not a specific ritual for expect-

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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 Mulvay 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.

<sup>43</sup>Anonymous, “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.

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

<sup>45</sup>Relief 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.<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup> 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."<sup>48</sup> 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

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details of her instructions.

<sup>46</sup>E.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.

<sup>47</sup>For 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.

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

several published sources.<sup>49</sup>

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.<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup> Both men and women administered healing rituals in the temples, and the temple acted as an anchor for female ritual healing over time.<sup>52</sup> 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

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

<sup>50</sup>Stapley 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.

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

<sup>52</sup>For 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.”<sup>53</sup>

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.”<sup>54</sup> When another daughter was pregnant, Helen Kimball recorded that Christiana Pyper and Alvus Patterson, both renowned healers,<sup>55</sup> 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.”<sup>56</sup> Though they were not kin relations, Pyper and Patterson frequently healed together; often Pyper anointed and Patterson confirmed the ritual.<sup>57</sup> Continuing on from cooperative practices from the Nauvoo era, collaborative male-fe-

<sup>53</sup>Anonymous, “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.

<sup>54</sup>Charles 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.”

<sup>55</sup>Both 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.

<sup>56</sup>Hatch and Compton, *A Widow’s Tale*, 402.

<sup>57</sup>See, 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,<sup>58</sup> with family members frequently joining to administer healing rituals.<sup>59</sup> 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."<sup>60</sup>

### 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-

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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.

<sup>58</sup>While 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.

<sup>59</sup>See, 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.

<sup>60</sup>Kenney, *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.

century Utah invoked the power and authority to heal that Joseph Smith had recognized and validated at the early Relief Society meetings. These women, whose formative organizational and spiritual experiences occurred in Nauvoo and Winter Quarters, sought to strengthen female ritual participation within the community, and the Church hierarchy approved of their efforts. Through the individual and organizational instruction of Relief Society leaders, as well as the mentoring of Mormon women which occurred through active ritual participation, sermons, letters and other publications, female healing entered a period of growth and intensification, culminating in the Relief Society Jubilee in 1892.

Church leadership in the early Utah period continued to uphold and even expand the healing authority of women.<sup>61</sup> When apostles edited the "Manuscript History of the Church" during the 1850s, they made some editorial changes to Joseph Smith's Relief Society sermons. However, Smith's April 28, 1842, revelation to the Relief Society outlining women's qualification to heal and bless the sick remained intact.<sup>62</sup> Apostles and other Church leaders also set women apart to wash, anoint, and, in one example, to "wait upon her sex in sickness."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>See, e.g., Ezra T. Benson, General Conference Address, Salt Lake City, October 6, 1852, *Millennial Star* 15 (February 26, 1853): 130. For other examples of General Authority support of female ritual healing not elsewhere cited in this paper, see Logan Utah Cache Stake, Relief Society, Minutes and Records, Vol. 1, June 18, 1868, and August 2, 1869, microfilm of manuscript, LR 1280 14; Orson Pratt, November 2, 1873, *Journal of Discourses*, 16:291; Brigham Young, August 31, 1875, *Journal of Discourses*, 18:71; John Taylor, Remarks, in "Report of the Dedication of the Kaysville Relief Society House, Nov. 12, 1876," *Woman's Exponent* 5 (March 1, 1877): 148-49; [George Q. Cannon], "Editorial Thoughts," *Juvenile Instructor* 17 (August 1, 1879): 174.

<sup>62</sup>Historians in Nauvoo used the highly abbreviated "Book of the Law of the Lord" for the entry, although they added the minutes of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo to the addendum. "Manuscript History of the Church," April 28, 1842, 3:1326; Addendum 3:26-27, 38-43, in *Selected Collections*, 1:1. When historians in Utah prepared and published "Joseph Smith's History," they included the edited minutes. "Manuscript History of the Church," April 28, 1842, 10:468-71, *Selected Collections*, 1:2; "History of Joseph Smith," *Deseret News*, September 19, 1855, 217-18. Joseph Smith's addresses to the Relief Society as edited during this period were later edited

As the few, small Relief Society groups sprang up during the 1850s to meet local needs and perform acts of charity, they endorsed female authority and power to heal and care for the sick and pregnant. The minutes from the formation meeting of one such group under priesthood direction in Cedar City, Utah, illustrates how healing rituals had evolved as well as the central role they played in women leaders' roles:

President Isaac C. Haight and John M Higbee then blessed Lydia Hopkins as President of the Institution and as a midwife to the sisters, with the power to wash and anoint the sick, and of laying on of hands. Blessed Anabella Haight as her first Counsellor, and Rachel Whittaker as her second Counsellor, to wash, anoint, and lay hands on the sick. Also blessed Francess Willis, as a midwife, to have power to wash, anoint, and lay on hands, for the recovery of the sick.<sup>64</sup>

Church leaders in the Utah Territory continued to endorse women's authority to heal and the gifts of the Spirit remained primarily ungendered in Mormon discourse.

As they had in Kirtland, in Nauvoo, and on the trail west, patriarchs continued to encourage female participation in the healing liturgy. The Martineau family is an example of the recognition of such blessings. On January 23, 1857, Patriarch William Cazier of Nephi,

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a second time and published in *History of the Church*, vols. 4 and 6 (consult index under "Relief Society, Female"). See also Jill Mulvay Derr and Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Preserving the Record and Memory of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, 1842–1892," *Journal of Mormon History* 35 (Summer 2009): 92–94.

<sup>63</sup>See, e.g., L. W., "Death of a Heroine," *Woman's Exponent* 20 (March 1, 1892): 127; Bathsheba W. Bigler Smith, *Record Book of Bathsheba W. Smith* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Library, 1970), 71–72; Ellsworth, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt*, 212; Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 6:342, 7:153; Various, "Obituaries," *Woman's Exponent* 9 (June 1, 1880): 4; Lillie Fairbanks, Letter to John B. Fairbanks, May 29, 1891, Payson, Utah, microfilm of holograph in John Boylston Fairbanks Papers, MS 11085.

<sup>64</sup>Minutes of the Female Benevolent Society of Cedar City, November 20, 1856, microfilm of manuscript, LR 1514 22. For a meeting in 1855 where women were organized and set apart to nurse and administer to the sick, see Godfrey and Martineau-McCarty, *An Uncommon Common Pioneer*, 40–41.

Utah, blessed Susan Julia Sherman Martineau: "Thou shalt have the gift of healing, and administer to the afflicted of thy family, in the absence of thy husband, and they shall be healed." A different patriarch gave another Martineau wife, Susan Elvira, a similar blessing two years later: "We seal upon thee the blessings of life—the gift to rebuke disease . . ." <sup>65</sup> Later, Patriarch Benjamin Johnson of Tempe, Arizona, blessed Susan Elvira that "health and peace shall drop from the ends of thy fingers, and consolation and Comfort from thy lips. We ordain thee and set thee apart as a Nurse and as a Midwife, and thou shalt administer peace and comfort to the afflicted. The sick shall rise up at thy touch, and sickness and death shall flee away from thy presence." <sup>66</sup>

Patty Sessions's experience highlights the influence that patriarchs wielded in the healing sphere. Having been tutored in healing ritual in Nauvoo and being one of the most active documented healers for decades, she wrote in her diary that Patriarch Charles Hyde "laid his hands upon my head blessed me and to my surprise ordained me to lay hands on the sick." <sup>67</sup> Over the next years, Sessions regularly administered as she had before; but upon being called to minister to a woman who had a necrotic breast tumor, she wrote: "I felt very curious I feel as though I must lay hands on her. I never felt so before without being called on to do it. She said [']well do it[.'] I knew I had been ordained to to [sic] lay hands on the sick & set apart to do that. She had been washed clean & I anointed her gave her some oil to take & then laid hands on her. I told her she would get well if she would believe & not daught it. We put on a cloth wet in oil. She got up & went out door said there was no pain in it at all." <sup>68</sup> The bestowal of blessings by patriarchs giving women healing power and directing them to

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<sup>65</sup>William Cazier, Patriarchal blessing for Susan Julia Sherman Martineau, January 23, 1857, in Godfrey and Martineau-McCarty, *An Uncommon Common Pioneer*, 66; Isaac Morley, patriarchal blessing for Susan Elvira Martineau, October 17, 1859, *ibid.*, 104.

<sup>66</sup>Benjamin F. Johnson, Blessing and ordination of Susan E. J. Martineau, February 25, 1890, *ibid.*, 363–65.

<sup>67</sup>Smart, *Mormon Midwife*, 349. For a similar example of a patriarch setting apart a woman who was already a well-established healer, see Hatch and Compton, *A Widow's Tale*, 471.

<sup>68</sup>Smart, *A Mormon Midwife*, 362–63.



administer to the sick endured into the twentieth century.<sup>69</sup>

After Brigham Young counseled women to reestablish Relief Society under the direction of local bishops between 1867 and 1868, the mandate to heal and bless the sick maintained a position of noteworthy importance. When Brigham Young asked Eliza R. Snow to head up the work of reorganizing the Relief Society at this time, she began traveling throughout the Utah Territory teaching women about its structure, purpose, and history. This education also included imparting specific instructions regarding the healing rituals.<sup>70</sup> Snow became the foremost interpreter of Joseph Smith's discourses to the Relief Society, and the manuscript minutes of the Nauvoo Female Relief Society remained primarily in her possession until her death in 1887.<sup>71</sup> As Brigham Young encouraged the spread of the women's organization, he continued to encourage female healing, at one point asking, in 1869: "Why do you not live so as to rebuke disease? It is your privilege to do so without sending for the Elders. . . . It is the privilege of a mother to have faith and to administer to her child; this she can do herself, as well as sending for the Elders to have the benefit of their faith."<sup>72</sup> During this time period, both Brigham Young and Eliza R. Snow encouraged women to seek training in obstetrics, to exercise

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<sup>69</sup>Irene M. Bates and E. Gary Smith, *Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 144; James Henry Martineau, Patriarchal blessing for Josephine Thurston Martineau, in Godfrey and Martineau-McCarty, *An Uncommon Common Pioneer*, 509.

<sup>70</sup>In Snow's meeting with Relief Societies, she frequently instructed the women on healing and encouraged individual Relief Society members to administer to the sick. See, e.g.: Thirteenth Ward, Relief Society Minutes, April 30, 1868, microfilm of manuscript, LR 6133 14; Eleventh Ward, University West Stake, Relief Society Minutes and Records, March 3, 1869, microfilm of manuscript, LR 2569 14; Kingston Ward, Relief Society Minutes, May 26, 1879, microfilm of manuscript; Nineteenth Ward, Salt Lake Stake, Ladies' Prayer Meeting Minutes, July 14, 1877, 88, microfilm of manuscript, LR 6092 31. For the administration of healing rituals as part of Relief Society meetings, see, e.g., Seventeenth Ward, Salt Lake Stake, Relief Society Minutes and Records, Vol. 5, March 5, 1874, microfilm of manuscript, LR 8240 14.

<sup>71</sup>Derr and Madsen, "Preserving the Record and Memory of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo," 91–104.

<sup>72</sup>Brigham Young, Sermon, November 14, 1869, *Journal of Discourses*, 13:155.

the power of faith, and to maintain independence from “Gentile” doctors. Furthermore, women who received medical training also administered healing rituals.<sup>73</sup>

Though all Church members could administer healing rituals,<sup>74</sup> the network of women who had been set apart by a priesthood leader (e.g., a stake president, an apostle, a patriarch, etc.) to wash, anoint, and care for the sick modeled ritual practice and mentored women in healing administration. This formalization of authority occurred both within sacred and mundane space—whether washing and anointing for health in the temple or for childbirth outside of it, female networks conveyed knowledge and experience via ritual administration. In addition to addressing women in more formalized Church settings, “leading sisters”<sup>75</sup> like Eliza R. Snow and Zina D. H. Young provided individualized mentoring and ministering by initiating a new generation of women into motherhood through ritual washings and anointings. Helen Mar Whitney Kimball recalled the role that female leaders played in ritually administering to younger women and the need to transmit such knowledge:

The Dr could not cure me, so I'd no other source to look to but my Father in Heaven so concluded to send for Sister [Eliza R.] Snow who came soon bringing Sister [Margaret Thompson] Smoot. They washed & anointed me & I was greatly comforted. We talked about many

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<sup>73</sup>Rachel Emma Woolley Simmons, *Reminiscences and Journals*, May 19, 1883, 72, microfilm of holograph, wrote: “I went to see Mary Whitney, She is suffering much with a bad leg since her confinement. I am her doctor. She wanted me to anoint her leg and administer to her and she said she knew it would be better, so I did as she required, and the Lord heard my prayers and blessed the anointing. I called the next Tuesday, she said it had been getting better ever since. She asked me to administer to her again. I did so and when I called on Friday I found her so much better I will not have to go again for a while.”

<sup>74</sup>In general instructions to the Relief Society, Snow’s successor Zina D. H. Young reiterated: “It is unnecessary to be set apart to administer to the sick with washing and anointing.” Zina D. H. Young, *Relief Society Instructions*, holograph on Relief Society letterhead dated “189\_,” CR 11 301, Box 4, fd 11.

<sup>75</sup>Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, “‘The Leading Sisters’: A Female Hierarchy in Nineteenth-Century Mormon Society,” *Journal of Mormon History* 9 (1982): 25–40.

things—among the rest I told some of my experience. Sister Smoot told me she thought I would be a great benefit to the young sisters to hear my history & she considered it my duty to tell them.<sup>76</sup>

The role of the Joseph Smith's revelatory endorsement of female healing cannot be overestimated in the narrative history of Utah healing culture. Smith's April 28, 1842, discourse to the Relief Society was the rhetorical basis for female participation in ritual healing, being repeatedly referenced in Relief Society meeting minutes. This discourse was also frequently reprinted in various periodicals, including the *Woman's Exponent* and *Deseret News*.

The formal organization of the Relief Society general presidency in 1880, with Eliza R. Snow as president and Zina D. H. Young, and Elizabeth Ann Whitney as counselors, facilitated further training for women in healing ritual and academic medical training.<sup>77</sup> Three months earlier, Church leaders held a special meeting in association with the April 1880 conference for apostles and stake presidencies. Among other instructions, leaders were taught: "Sisters could not lay on hands by authority of the holy priesthood but in the name of Jesus Christ & by the prayer of faith heal the sick."<sup>78</sup> The following fall, the Quorum of the Twelve, then headed by John Taylor who had yet to reorganize the First Presidency after Brigham Young's death, sent out a circular letter reiterating this position on female administration:

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<sup>76</sup>Helen Mar Whitney Papers, "Reminiscences and Diary 1876 and November 1884–September 1885," January 9, 1876, quoted in Jeni Broberg Holzapfel and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, eds., *A Woman's View: Helen Mar Whitney's Reminiscences of Early Church History* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1997), xxxv–xxxviii. Whitney was the recipient of female blessings before the exodus west. The *Woman's Exponent* frequently published memoirs and tributes to prominent sisters which served as a method of transmitting female culture to younger generations. See also Derr and Madsen, "Preserving the Record and Memory of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo," 113.

<sup>77</sup>When John Taylor ordained Zina D. H. Young as a counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, he included in his blessing, "Thou shalt have the gift to heal the sick." John Taylor, ordination of Zina D. H. Young, Minutes of General Meeting Held in the Fourteenth Ward Assembly Hall, July 17, 1880, in Relief Society, Record, 1880–1892, microfilm of CR 11 175.

<sup>78</sup>Godfrey and Godfrey, *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card*, 184.

It is the privilege of all faithful women and lay members of the Church, who believe in Christ, to administer to all the sick or afflicted in their respective families, either by the laying on of hands, or by the anointing with oil in the name of the Lord: but they should administer in these sacred ordinances, not by virtue and authority of the priesthood, but by virtue of their faith in Christ, and the promises made to believers: and thus they should do in all their ministrations.<sup>79</sup>

Local priesthood leaders in turn preached female ritual healing, communicating these general directives to their congregations.<sup>80</sup>

The Relief Society general presidency also played a role in affirming female ritual healing during this period. As the scope of Snow's leadership expanded, she urged women to grasp the full mandate of the Relief Society and began extensively training women as she continued her travels throughout the Utah Territory. She emphasized the essential work of salvation, the legitimacy of women's work in the priesthood order, and the significance of the Relief Society in the Church's history, both ancient and in modern times. She often reaffirmed female healing stating, for example that, "when visiting, the teachers should administer to the sick and wash and anoint them also confirm these blessings upon them by the laying on of hands. We need to be filled with the Spirit of God."<sup>81</sup>

Zina Young and Eliza R. Snow worked together throughout this

<sup>79</sup>Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Circular Letter, October 6, 1880, microfilm of holograph, CR 2 30.

<sup>80</sup>See, e.g., Godfrey and Godfrey, *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card*, 232, 234, 239, 244.

<sup>81</sup>Eliza R. Snow, Special meeting of the Kanosh Relief Society, November 12, 1880, printed in Various, "R. S., Y. L. M. I. A. and Primary Reports," *Woman's Exponent* 9 (December 1, 1880): 103. See also Scipio Ward, Millard Stake, Primary Association Minutes and Records, November 9, 1880, quoted in Jill Mulvay Derr, *Mrs. Smith Goes to Washington: Eliza R. Snow Smith's Visit to Southern Utah*, Juanita Brooks Lecture Series (St. George, Utah: Dixie State College of Utah, 2004), 14; Elizabeth Bean and Catherine A. Hunt, Minutes of the Quarterly Conference of the Relief Society of Sevier Stake, October 25, 1880, printed in Various, "R. S., Y. L. M. I. A. and Primary Reports," *Woman's Exponent* 9 (November 15, 1880): 94; Godfrey and Godfrey, *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card*, 284; S. A. Parsons, Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Manti Relief Society and Y. L. M. I. A., September 23, 1881, printed in Various, "R. S., Y. L. M. I. A. and Primary Reports,"

time period, linked not only as presidency members but also through polygamous kinship (both had been plural wives of, first, Joseph Smith, and second, Brigham Young), further cemented by the experiential bonds formed in Winter Quarters and the proximity of living together in the Lion House. They were referred to as the “yin and yang of nineteenth century Relief Society. . . . Sister Eliza was the head of the women’s work, Aunt Zina was often said to be its heart.”<sup>82</sup> Their role as administrative and ritual guides laid out the paradigm of Relief Society during their lives. Accounts of Relief Society meetings from a broad geographical region reveal similar vignettes throughout the Church. For example, Joseph I. Earl of Bunkerville, Nevada, recorded in 1881:

Bro. Sam Knight brought Sister Eliza R. Snow, Zina D. Young and Minerva Snow. They held a meeting in the forenoon and all spoke by the Spirit and Power of God, giving good counsel to both old and young. In the afternoon they organized the Children’s primary Association. And in the evening they organized the Young Ladies Association. . . . Sisters Snow and Young anointed and blessed Calista, who was sick. Sister Snow spoke in the gift of tongues and Sister Young interpreted and Calista felt much better after they got through.<sup>83</sup>

Throughout the 1880s, this duty of blessing and healing was reiterated at a variety of Relief Society conferences. Invoking the restorationist ideals of Joseph Smith at the first Logan Relief Society conference following the general organization, Eliza R. Snow declared, “We want to contend for the faith that was once delivered to the Sts when the dead were raised Sick healed &c &c, fear and faith never dwell in the Same bosom.”<sup>84</sup> This period was one that secured and consolidated women’s authority and power. Diaries and other records regularly describe healing administrations performed by women. Confinement blessings became a regularly established fixture upon the

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*Woman’s Exponent* 10 (November 15, 1881): 95.

<sup>82</sup>Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 127.

<sup>83</sup>Joseph I. Earl, Journal, January 26, 1881, in Owen Ken Earl, comp., *Journals from the Life and Times of Joseph Ira Earl and His Wife Elethra Claista Bunker and His Wife Agnes Viola Bunker* (Moses Lake, Wash.: Owen Ken Earl, 1986), 58. For a similar healing, see May Jacobs, “Cured by Faith,” *Juvenile Instructor* 29 (April 15, 1894): 146.

<sup>84</sup>Godfrey and Godfrey, *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card*, 283.

landscape of women's health, and women were sought as healers both individually, in groups of Relief Society representatives, and as collaborative administrators with male counterparts.

The establishment of the Deseret Hospital further formalized and institutionalized the relationship between women and healing. At one Relief Society Conference, participants heard a wide range of speakers expound on the importance of blessing and caring for the sick:

Dr. Ellis R. Shipp spoke upon faith and washing and anointing of the sick. . . . Mrs. Phebe Woodruff, in addressing the congregation, spoke earnestly in reference to the Deseret Hospital. . . . She also spoke of the benefit of the washings and anointing for the sick. President Wilford Woodruff spoke very encouraging to the sisters, both in regard to the duties and responsibilities which necessarily devolve upon them and also the administration to the sick and afflicted.<sup>85</sup>

Women like Hannah Adeline Savage found both medical support and ritual healing at Deseret Hospital. Lucy Bigelow Young, one of Brigham Young's wives, toured the hospital with Dr. Romania B. Pratt. Savage wrote that Dr. Pratt "said to me [']Sister Young has great faith['] as she knew that I was desirous of being administered to when an opportunity presented. So I asked Sister Young to bless me and use the holy oil which she did. She gave me a great blessing and told me I should be healed and that I should administer unto thousands."<sup>86</sup>

Perhaps the apex of female ritual healing in the nineteenth century was the fiftieth anniversary jubilee celebrations of the Relief Society, where female healing was repeatedly affirmed. At the Logan celebration, Jane Snyder Richards, spoke about the "rights and privileges of the sisters and their duty in regard to administering to the sick and rebuking disease." Her husband, Apostle Franklin D. Richards, similarly emphasized female healing and recounted Joseph Smith's

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<sup>85</sup>Anonymous, "Relief Society Conference," *Woman's Exponent* 11 (August 1, 1882): 37; line breaks removed.

<sup>86</sup>Hannah Adeline Savage, *Record of Hannah Adeline Savage, Woodruff Arizona, and Journal* (Pinedale, Ariz.: Petersen Publishing, 1976), 14–15; line break removed; see also p. 12. The Relief Society championed the Deseret Hospital as a place for both medical care and ritual administration. Anonymous, "First General Conference of the Relief Society," *Woman's Exponent* 17 (April 15, 1889): 172.

April 28, 1842, revelation at the Ogden celebration.<sup>87</sup> After Apostle John Henry Smith read a discourse by Bathsheba Smith,<sup>88</sup> which highlighted female healing during the Salt Lake City celebration, Joseph F. Smith stated: "It is just as much the right of the mother as of the father [to heal], although he, holding the priesthood, can do it by virtue of this as well as in the name of the Lord. The women are not especially called upon to visit from house to house to administer to the sick, but they can do so properly, if called upon."<sup>89</sup> The original text of Joseph Smith's April 28, 1842, teachings on female healing was also reprinted with the jubilee reports.<sup>90</sup>

The administration of healing rituals to women remained a chief concern during the presidential tenure of Zina D. H. Young, a potent healer who taught in a concrete manner.<sup>91</sup> For three years—1889 to 1891—Young kept a meticulous ledger in which she noted the

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<sup>87</sup>Anonymous, "Relief Society Conference," *Woman's Exponent* 20 (May 1, 1892): 157; F. D Richards, "The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Organization of the Relief Society," [Ogden, Utah] *Standard* 5 (March 20, 1892): 2.

<sup>88</sup>Bathsheba W. Smith stated: "This organization is not only for the purpose of administering to the sick and afflicted, the poor and the needy, but it is to save souls" and that "if the sisters come before the Lord in humility and faith and lay hands upon the sick and the Lord heals them, none should find fault." Bathsheba W. Smith, discourse read by Apostle John Henry Smith in "The Relief Society Jubilee," *Deseret Weekly*, March 26, 1892, 435. Apostle Abraham H. Cannon also spoke in support of female healing: "It must fill the hearts of the Saints with the joy to think of the glorious work the sisters have done. We cannot conceive of how great a help they have been to the Church, although we know of many houses to which they have carried comfort and brought relief in sickness and affliction. God has been with them in their work. Many miraculous cures have been effected through their prayers and this has strengthened the testimony of many. But their work in the future will be even greater than that in the past." Abraham Cannon, Sermon, *ibid.*, 433.

<sup>89</sup>Joseph F. Smith, Sermon, *ibid.*, 435.

<sup>90</sup>Anonymous, "The Relief Society," *Woman's Exponent* 20 (April 1, 1892): 140–41; "The Relief Society Jubilee," *Deseret Weekly*, March 26, 1892, 434–35.

<sup>91</sup>See for example, Emmeline B. Wells's poignant description of Young as an inspired healer in "Zina D. H. Young: A Character Sketch," *Improvement Era* 5 (November 1901): 45–46.



dates, details, and recipients of blessings that she performed in the Logan Temple.<sup>92</sup> During those three years, Young administered anointings, washings and anointings, and blessings to at least 383 individuals in the temple, virtually all women. (See Tables 1 and 2.) Reflecting on her ministry during this time, she wrote simply, "I have seen much of the power of God manifest healing the sick of all most all kinds."<sup>93</sup>

The effect of her ministrations are observable not only in diaries' records of her interpersonal relationships, but also in terms of the pattern that was communicated to Relief Society women for ritual performance. Minutes from a Salt Lake Temple women's meeting reflect the power of her example over decades, "Sister Mary Freeze arose & stated a circumstance of twent [sic] years ago when she was washed & annointed by Aunt Zina Young before her confinement & being told that she was Beloved of the Lord & the effect it had upon her & her strengthening her to become such."<sup>94</sup> Relief Society work, both in and outside of the temple, was the center of attention for Zina through the end of the nineteenth century. Her death in 1901 signaled a deep and long-lasting change to the healing culture of women within the Church.

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<sup>92</sup>Zina D. H. Young, Memorandum, Zina Card Brown Family Collection, microfilm of holograph, MS 4780, Box 1, fd. 15. As blessings were frequently performed on the same day (temples had days specially set apart for healing) and as there are many records of Zina's bestowing blessings outside of the temple during this time that are not included on this ledger, we conclude that the ledger is a record of her temple ministry. For examples of these extra-temple rituals not included in her ledger, see Zina Young, Diary, January 23, February 13, 26, and March 5, 1890 and Oliver B. Huntington, Diary, typescript (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1942), 343.

<sup>93</sup>Zina D. H. Young, Diary, September 26, 1889. In that same entry, Young wrote: "Have been in the temple at work in room no 3 since it opened onely a brief absence of going to the city." Her blessing register chronicles this work in the temple.

<sup>94</sup>Salt Lake Temple, Sisters Meeting Minutes, December 7, 1893, microfilm of manuscript, CR 306 93. See also December 7, 1893; January 18, 1894. Like Eliza R. Snow, Zina frequently exhorted Relief Society members to administer healing rituals. See, e.g., Zina D. H. Young, minutes of discourse, Heber City, July 30, 1878, in Various, "R. S. Reports," *Woman's Exponent* 7 (September 1, 1878): 50.

**TABLE 1**  
**ZINA D. H. YOUNG'S TEMPLE HEALING AND BLESSING RITUALS,**  
**1889-91**

<i>Year</i>	<i>W/A Health</i>	<i>W/A Pregnancy</i>	<i>Anointing Health</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Misc. Blessing</i>	<i>Total</i>
1889	23	60	27	17	14	141
1890	6	52	15	6	11	90
1891	16	57	30	14	35	152
Total	45	169	72	37	60	383

*Note: Temple Healing and Blessing Rituals Performed by Zina D. H. Young, 1889-91. Data extracted from Zina D. H. Young, Memorandum, Zina Card Brown Family Collection, microfilm of holograph, MS 4780, Box 1, fd. 15. W/A signifies "washing and anointing." In some instances, Young noted that the blessing was for "health" but did not indicate which ritual she administered. These instances are grouped in the generic "Health" category. "Miscellaneous" includes blessings for which a purpose was not indicated or for reasons such as a "sisters blessing," a blessing "for her comfort," a "mother's blessing" and blessing a woman "for a mission to Mexico," for which the other categories do not account.*

**TABLE 2**  
**ZINA D. H. YOUNG'S TEMPLE HEALING AND BLESSING RITUALS,**  
**1889-91, BY PERCENTAGE**

<i>Year</i>	<i>W/A Health</i>	<i>W/A Pregnancy</i>	<i>Anointing Health</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Misc. Blessing</i>
1889	16%	43%	19%	12%	10%
1890	7%	58%	17%	7%	12%
1891	11%	38%	20%	9%	23%
All Years	12%	44%	19%	10%	16%

### REFORMATION OF LITURGICAL AUTHORITY

As the nineteenth century ended, both external and internal pressures led to shifts in the liturgical roles of LDS men and women. Specifically in response to non-Mormon healing, Church leaders reformed the relationship of the Melchizedek Priesthood to the Mormon healing liturgy. Leaders changed traditional modes of female ritual healing to accommodate the priesthood's elevated role in stabilizing and strengthening the Church.

#### *Healing Authority, the Temple, and Priesthood*

Before Joseph Smith's death, both men and women derived authority to heal from their Church membership and faith in Christ. The question of priesthood and women's healing during this period is therefore simply an anachronism. Women had healed for years before Joseph Smith delivered his April 28, 1842, revelation on female healing to the Relief Society women, and they did not participate in temple rituals until the fall of 1843. In that discourse, however, Smith indicated that he intended that women join in the temple liturgy and be endowed with power, by receiving the "keys of the kingdom."<sup>95</sup>

With the inclusion of women in the Nauvoo Temple liturgy, beginning with Emma Smith's initiation on September 28, 1843, a measure of ambiguity entered into the relationship between women and the priesthood. Joseph Smith often imbued words in common parlance with new and sometimes radical meaning. Such was the case with "priesthood." Smith administered temple rituals to men and women within a specially created quorum that contemporaries called various names including "the order of the priesthood," "quorum of the priesthood," and simply "the priesthood." Through the temple rituals, women received the "garment of the holy priesthood" and wore the "robes of the holy priesthood." The temple quorum was also a space in which women received an expanded liturgical authority and administered rituals of salvation and empowerment. Records indicate that early female administrants of temple rituals were also referred to as "priestesses," a reflection of the ultimate promise to temple participants of the "fullness of the priesthood." In Smith's temple cosmology, men and women looked for-

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<sup>95</sup>Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Powers."

ward to reigning through eternity as kings and queens, priests and priestesses.<sup>96</sup>

Joseph Smith died before the completion of the Nauvoo Temple, and consequently it was left to the Quorum of the Twelve to transmit these concepts to the broader church. These Church leaders generally assumed a separation between the liturgical or priestly function of the temple (the new cosmological priesthood), the older governing priesthood of the Church, and the authority to administer in the healing liturgy. For example, in 1857 Mary Ellen Kimball, one of the plural wives of Heber C. Kimball, washed and anointed a woman for her health and then wrote:

After I returned home I thought of the instructions I had received from time to time that the priesthood was not bestowed upon woman. I accordingly asked Mr Kimball if woman had a right to wash and anoint the sick for the recovery of thier [sic] health or is it mockery in them to do so. He replied inasmuch as they are obedient to their husbands they have a right to administer in that way in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ but not by authority of the priesthood invested in them for that authority is not given to woman.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>For a more detailed discussion of this priesthood language, see Jonathan A. Stapley, "Adoptive Sealing Ritual in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 3 (Summer 2011). The significance of the priestly aspects of the temple liturgy to the relationship between women and the governing priesthood of the Church is controversial. Further, teachings contemporaneous with Joseph Smith are frequently stripped from their context. D. Michael Quinn, "Mormon Women Have Had the Priesthood Since 1843," argued that women receive the Melchizedek Priesthood through the temple endowment. He also argues that Mormon women healed by this priesthood authority. A complete rebuttal to Quinn's argument is not possible here; however, Church leaders consistently taught from the earliest days of the Church that women healed as members of the Church and in the name of Jesus. Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Mormon Women and Temple: Toward a New Understanding," in *Sisters in Spirit*, 80–110, offers a similar narrative to Quinn. On the Anointed Quorum and the temple liturgy, see Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1982); Devery S. Anderson and Gary James Bergera, eds., *Joseph Smith's Quorum of the Anointed, 1842–1845: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005); and Anderson and Bergera, *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies, 1845–1846*.

There are examples of Church leaders speaking more ambiguously on the relationship of women to the priesthood, specifically in the context of marriage.<sup>98</sup> These examples highlight the linguistic complexity resulting from using words with evolving meaning and the difficulty in discerning personal idiosyncrasy. For example, in a public sermon in 1879, John Taylor asked, “Do they [women] hold the priesthood? Yes, in connection with their husbands and they are one with their husbands.”<sup>99</sup> When Orson Pratt edited an account of Joseph Smith’s teachings for inclusion in the Doctrine and Covenants, he added an editorial clarification that the “Order of the Priesthood” required for the highest eternal blessings was “the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.”<sup>100</sup> This usage is consistent with Joseph Smith’s expansion of priesthood language in Nauvoo, but not with the Church leaders’ view that women do not

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<sup>97</sup>Mary Ellen Harris Abel Kimball, Journal, March 2, 1857, 7, typescript, LDS Church History Library. Helen Mar Kimball Whitney wrote in her diary of a debate in her household over women and the priesthood. Hatch and Compton, *A Widow’s Tale*, 170.

<sup>98</sup>Eliza R. Snow occasionally followed Joseph Smith’s Nauvoo-era usage of the priesthood and the temple. See, e.g., Jill Mulvay Derr and Karen Lynn Davidson, eds., *Eliza R. Snow: The Complete Poetry* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press/Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009), 506.

<sup>99</sup>John Taylor, November 30, 1879, *Journal of Discourses*, 20:359. When John Taylor organized the Relief Society general presidency the following year, he discussed the practice of ordaining Relief Society officers, which dated to Nauvoo, and stated: “The ordination then given did not mean the conferring of the Priesthood upon those Sisters yet the sisters hold a portion of the Priesthood in connection with their husbands. (Sisters E. R. Snow and Bathsheba Smith stated that they so understood it in Nauvoo and have always looked upon it in that light.)” Minutes of General Meeting Held in Fourteenth Ward Assembly Hall, July 17, 1880, Relief Society, Record, 1880–1892, microfilm of manuscript, CR 11 175. See also Brittany Chapman, [Ruth May Fox Diaries] (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, forthcoming), March 8, 1896; microfilm of holograph available at the LDS Church History Library.

<sup>100</sup>Orson Pratt, ed., *The Doctrine and Covenants, of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Containing the Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, Jun., the Prophet for the Building Up the Kingdom of God in the Last Days* (Liverpool: William Budge, 1879), 462–63 [D&C 131]. See also Smith, *An Intimate*

hold the priesthood of Church governance and office.

In 1878 Angus Cannon, president of Salt Lake Stake, whose plural wife, Martha Hughes Cannon, frequently administered healing rituals,<sup>101</sup> spoke at a stake conference. According to the minutes, "in answer to a question that had been asked, [he said] that women could only hold the priesthood in connection with their husbands; man held the priesthood independent of woman. The sisters have a right to anoint the sick, and pray the Father to heal them, and to exercise that faith that will prevail with God; but women must be careful how they use the authority of the priesthood in administering to the sick."<sup>102</sup> Statements such as this clearly relate to the relationship between men and women as solemnized in the temple, where couples are promised eternal glory as royal priests and priestesses.<sup>103</sup> While there is no question that women received real liturgical or priestly authority and power in the temple, taken as a whole, Church leaders consistently taught that the authority to heal was discrete from authority as received in the temple.

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*Chronicle*, 101.

<sup>101</sup>Constance L. Lieber and John Sillito, eds., *Letters from Exile: The Correspondence of Martha Hughes Cannon and Angus M. Cannon 1886–1888* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 88–89, 163. Martha's mother was also a known healer.

<sup>102</sup>"Winnifred," "Quarter Conference: Salt Lake Stake," *Woman's Exponent* 7 (November 1, 1878): 86. An example of a retrospective conflation of temple and priesthood was written by Helen Mar [Kimball] Whitney in, "Scenes and Incidents at Winter Quarters," *Woman's Exponent* 14 (December 15, 1885): 105–6.

<sup>103</sup>For example, chiding a congregation in 1854, John Taylor asked rhetorically, "Have you forgot who you are, and what your object is? Have you forgot that you profess to be Saints of the Most High God, clothed upon with the Holy Priesthood? Have you forgot that you are aiming to become Kings and Priests to the Lord, and Queens and Priestesses to Him?" John Taylor, April 19, 1854, *Journal of Discourses*, 1:372. See also John Taylor, August 30, 1857, *Journal of Discourses*, 5:189. Brigham Young's statement that "the man that honors his Priesthood, the woman that honors her Priesthood, will receive an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of God; but it will not be until this earth is purified and sanctified, and ready to be offered up to the Father" is a similar association of temple priesthood language. June 28, 1874, *Journal of Discourses*, 17:119.

On some occasions when men and women administered together, men did invoke priesthood authority. In 1854, Wilford Woodruff recorded laying hands on his twelve-year-old son's head with his wife Phoebe and delivering a "Fathers blessing" by virtue of the "Holy Priesthood."<sup>104</sup> In relation to healing, similar pronouncements were so common by 1907 that Church President Joseph F. Smith published a statement in the *Improvement Era*: "A wife does not hold the priesthood in connection with her husband"; however, "it is no uncommon thing for a man and wife unitedly to administer to their children, and the husband being mouth, he may properly say out of courtesy, 'By authority of the holy priesthood in us vested.'"<sup>105</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, language that related female ritual healing to the priesthood is extant. For example, Ellen McKay's 1882 obituary stated that she "was a woman of great faith in the healing of the sick by administration according to the order of the priesthood."<sup>106</sup>

Following the dedication of the Logan Temple on May 17, 1884, another wave of emphatic declarations from the Relief Society

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<sup>104</sup>Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 4:243-4.

<sup>105</sup>Joseph F. Smith, "Questions and Answers," *Improvement Era* 10 (February 1907): 308. In 1885, the Salt Lake Stake High Council debated whether women who were married in the temple shared the priesthood with their husbands and could therefore invoke the priesthood when healing alone. Regarding shared priesthood, Bishop Pollard stated, "I will say that I never heard this doctrine before. I have been in the Church a great many years, and I have tried to inform my [sic] concerning the principles of the Gospel but that is something entirely new to me." Others advocated for shared priesthood, but the council concluded that women should not invoke priesthood when healing. Joseph E. Taylor, presiding, stated, "I know nothing of womans' right to the exercise of the power of the priesthood." Salt Lake Stake High Council Minutes of Trials, Manuscript, vol. 10, October 13, 1885, 673-79, CR 604 10.

<sup>106</sup>Anonymous, "Obituaries," *Woman's Exponent* 10 (February 1, 1882): 134. Note as well that the "order of the priesthood" was also used as a euphemism for the temple. Consequently this obituary could be referencing healing ordinances as patterned after temple rituals. For a similar usage, see Fred C. Collier, *The Office Journal of President Brigham Young, 1858-1863, Book D* (Hannah, Utah: Collier's Publishing, 2006), 53, in which Dr. John Lewis Dunyon called healing rituals "ordinances of the House of the Lord."



reiterated women's right to heal but also dramatically altered conceptions of liturgical authority. The *Woman's Exponent* again reprinted Joseph Smith's April 28, 1842, discourse to the Relief Society, and the following issue contained a letter "To the branches of the Relief Society" in which Eliza R. Snow sought to definitively answer the question: "Is it necessary for the sisters to be set apart to officiate in the sacred ordinances of washing and anointing, and laying on of hands in administering to the sick?" Affirming decades of practice, Snow declared emphatically, "It certainly is not." However, she continued:

Any and all sisters who honor their holy endowments, not only have the right, but should feel it a duty, whenever called upon to administer to our sisters in these ordinances, which God has graciously committed to His daughters as well as to His sons; and we testify that when administered and received in faith and humility they are accompanied with all mighty power.

Inasmuch as God our Father has revealed these sacred ordinances and committed them to His Saints, it is not only our privilege but our imperative duty to apply them for the relief of human suffering. We think we may safely say thousands can testify that God has sanctioned the administration of these ordinances by our sisters with the manifestations of His healing influence.<sup>107</sup>

Mormon women understood Snow to be asserting that women who administer healing rituals must be endowed. Snow therefore introduced the idea that the liturgical roles of women in the temple were to be enlarged and conflated with healing authority outside of the temple. Although Latter-day Saints in Kirtland and Nauvoo viewed the endowment as a conferral of healing power,<sup>108</sup> Snow sought to formalize the endowment as the conferral of healing authority, perhaps to strengthen claims to that authority. Her requirement was innovative; and in many ways it muddied the waters, as the question of who was qualified to administer healing ordinances became a dominant theme of Mormon discourse throughout the next decades.

Female Church leaders endorsed this concept of temple endowment as a prerequisite for female healing and taught it in train-

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<sup>107</sup>E. R. Snow Smith, "To the Branches of the Relief Society," letter dated September 12, 1884, *Woman's Exponent* 13 (September 15, 1884): 61.

<sup>108</sup>Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Power."

ing meetings.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, the idea appears to have competed with the occasional practice of being set apart to heal.<sup>110</sup> Reinforcing Snow's role as one of the most decisive interpreters of the early Relief Society documents, some Church leaders, though generally only temporarily, accepted her expansion. Though he later taught differently, when Joseph F. Smith spoke at the 1892 jubilee celebrations, he referenced Snow's concept of deriving healing authority from the temple: "It is a proper thing for mothers, who have received their blessings in the house of God, to pray for their sick and to rebuke diseases."<sup>111</sup> Similarly, on several occasions, Apostle Franklin D. Richards, when addressing women's conferences, associated their "holy anointing" with healing authority.<sup>112</sup>

In the year after Eliza R. Snow's death, however, acting Church President Wilford Woodruff corresponded with several prominent

<sup>109</sup>See, e.g., Zina D. H. Young, Sermon, in Anonymous, "First General Conference of the Relief Society," *Woman's Exponent* 17 (April 15, 1889): 172. The introduction to Young's remarks, which were read by Emmeline Wells, states that Wilford Woodruff had approved her talk.

<sup>110</sup>Anonymous, Synopsis of Minutes of the Quarterly Conference of the Salt Lake Stake Relief Society, December 9, 1886, in Various, "R. S., Y. L. M. I. A. & P. A.," *Woman's Exponent* 15 (December 15, 1886): 110. For a similar statement, see Annie M[ousley]. Cannon, "Our Girls: Officers Conference," *Young Woman's Journal* 6 (May 1895): 386.

<sup>111</sup>Joseph F. Smith, "The Relief Society Jubilee," *Deseret Weekly*, March 26, 1892, 435. As already quoted, he further stated: "It is just as much the right of the mother as of the father [to heal], although he, holding the priesthood, can do it by virtue of this as well as in the name of the Lord. The women are not especially called upon to visit from house to house to administer to the sick, but they can do so properly, if called upon."

<sup>112</sup>Franklin D. Richards, Journal, April 3, 1896, holograph, in *Selected Collections*, 1:35; Franklin D. Richards, July 19, 1888, in Stuy, *Collected Discourses*, 5:18–19; also in Anonymous, "Memorial Anniversary," *Woman's Exponent* 17 (September 1, 1888): 52–54. See also, Anonymous, "At the Tabernacle," [Ogden] *Standard*, 1 (July 20, 1888): 1; also in Anonymous, "Eleventh Anniversary," *Deseret News*, July 25, 1888, 436. This discourse is an important window into views on the priesthood and temple during this period. Emmeline Wells referenced Richards's sermon in the subsequent issue of *Woman's Exponent* and pointed readers to various publications of Joseph Smith's April 28, 1842, sermon. "Editorial Note," *Woman's Exponent* 17 (September 1, 1888): 52.

Relief Society leaders regarding the intersection of healing and the temple. Emphasizing a position which had been normative from Kirtland, Woodruff wrote to Emmeline Wells and, addressing who was authorized to heal, acknowledged that women wash and anoint outside the temple “not as members of the priesthood but as members of the Church exercising faith for, and asking the blessing of the Lord upon their sisters. Just as they and every member of the Church might do in behalf of the members of their families.”<sup>113</sup> To Presendia Kimball, he wrote: “I will say you and all the Sisters who officiate have a right to wash and anoint any Sister for their confinement whethether [sic] they have had their endowments or not and bless them as you feel led by the Spirit of the Lord.”<sup>114</sup> Though Eliza R. Snow’s limitation was occasionally reiterated after her death,<sup>115</sup> Church leaders and members generally followed the more traditional rules that all Church members had authority to administer to the sick. As Zina D. H. Young told the attendees of a ladies’ meeting in 1893: “President Young said when women are living their

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<sup>113</sup>Wilford Woodruff, Letter to Emmeline B. Wells, April 27, 1888, microfilm of holograph. A handwritten copy is, significantly, found in Wilford Woodruff, Letter to Emmeline B. Wells, April 27, 1888, holograph, Relief Society Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1. Only minor differences exist between the two.

<sup>114</sup>Wilford Woodruff, Letters to Presendia Kimball and Mary Isabella Horne, ca. 188[8?], holograph copies by Zina Young Card, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1. It is also possible that this is the letter Salt Lake Stake President Angus Cannon read to a Thursday fast meeting on December 7, 1887. Hatch and Compton, *A Widow’s Tale*, 271.

<sup>115</sup>See, e.g., Maria Willardson, Minutes of the Sanpete Stake Relief Society Meeting, December 11, 1896, in Various, “R. S. Reports,” *Woman’s Exponent* 25 (January 15, 1897): 102; Young Women General Board, Minutes, January 22, 1900, microfilm of typescript, CR 13 6. Note, however, that when Eliza R. Snow’s original letter on the matter was republished in a 1902 Relief Society manual, “sisters who honor their holy endowments” was edited to read, “sisters who honor their holy covenants.” Eliza R. Snow Smith, Letter to Branches of the Relief Society, September 12, 1884, Salt Lake City, reproduced in *The General Relief Society: Officers, Objects and Status* (Salt Lake City: General Officers, 1902), 26–27.

religion they can wash and anoint the sick.”<sup>116</sup>

### *Priesthood Reformation and Female Healing*

In November 1895, the *Juvenile Instructor* published an article by Richard S. Horne, which described the healing of his daughter by his younger son. Previous to the healing, the boy asked, “Pa, has a Deacon authority to rebuke disease?” Horne responded, “Yes, if he is administering to the sick.”<sup>117</sup> Two months later, the *Juvenile Instructor* ran an editorial indicating that an inquiring correspondent had questioned the propriety of Horne’s response. After explaining that all members of the Church, both male and female, have the right to administer healing rituals to the sick, the editor, likely George Q. Cannon of the First Presidency, wrote: “If he were to claim that he had the authority of the holy Priesthood (the Melchizedek Priesthood), we would say that he has no such authority. But suppose that he rebuked the disease in the name of Jesus, has he not authority? And would he be overstepping the bounds of propriety in rebuking disease in the name of Jesus? We think not, if he or she confined the rebuke to the name of Jesus, without using any words that would convey the idea that it was done in the authority of the Priesthood.”<sup>118</sup> The following month another editorial discussed the same matter. A second correspondent wrote and explained that he understood “that to rebuke or to command in the name of Jesus requires the exercise of authority from Him, or, in other words, the authority of the Priesthood.” The editor responded that he thought any member of the Church could rebuke disease or the power of the destroyer in the name of Jesus; however, he also stated that to “satisfy those who might have scruples upon this point, it would be better for members of the Church who do not have the Priesthood to ask the Father in the name of Jesus to rebuke the sickness.”<sup>119</sup>

The cautious positioning of the *Instructor* editor appears to have been reproduced at the turn of the century among the governing quo-

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<sup>116</sup>Zina D. Young, Sermon, November 4, 1893, in Lydia D. Alder, “Ladies’ Semi-Monthly Meeting,” *Woman’s Exponent* 22 (December 1, 1893): 66.

<sup>117</sup>Richard S. Horne, “A Remarkable Healing,” *Juvenile Instructor* 30 (November 1, 1895), 660–63.

<sup>118</sup>[Editor], “Editorial Thoughts: Authority to Rebuke Disease,” *Juvenile Instructor* 31 (January 15, 1896): 60.

rum. In 1901, the First Presidency, then consisting of Lorenzo Snow, Joseph F. Smith, and George Q. Cannon (though Cannon was convalescing in California and died just a few days later), and the Twelve scrutinized the healing liturgy. James Hall, a resident of Springville, had apparently been traveling and holding “special fast meetings and administering to the sick” similar in nature to increasingly popular Protestant healing events.<sup>120</sup> On April 3 and 4, before general conference, the First Presidency and Twelve met and, among other things, discussed Hall’s case and healing generally. Apostle Reed Smoot prepared a document, which the First Presidency approved, that prescribed administration “in a simple manner, without display.”<sup>121</sup>

Smoot addressed the general conference the following day and spoke upon healing specifically. He claimed that there had been a “tendency exhibited by some of the brethren and sisters in some of the Stakes of Zion to add to the form of our simple ordinances . . . and to depart from the method laid down by revelation from God through the Prophet Joseph Smith.” After quoting the James 5:14–15 instruction on anointing the sick, Smoot acknowledged that it was proper for the sick to be administered to in fast meetings and that prayer circles were especially efficacious for the sick; however, Smoot warned, Church members were to focus on unadorned ritual administrations. Most tellingly, Smoot reasoned:

I believe, my brethren and sisters, that the time will come when every ordinance of the Gospel will be imitated in some form or another by the world, and this should be a testimony to every soul that Mormonism is from God. If our testimony were based only upon our belief in administering to the sick and the healing of the sick by that means, we should be in danger; for since that ordinance has been revealed to this Church other denominations have arisen believing the same thing. There is now a denomination in existence which believes in the administering of oil. By and by there will be other denominations formed that

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<sup>119</sup>[Editor], “Editorial Thoughts: Authority to Rebuke Disease,” *Juvenile Instructor* 31 (February 15, 1896): 102–3.

<sup>120</sup>Stan Larson, ed., *A Ministry of Meetings: The Apostolic Diaries of Rudger Clawson* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 263. See also pp. 366, 762. On Protestant healing services, see discussion below.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, 262–63; Jean Bickmore White, ed., *Church, State, and Politics: The Diaries of John Henry Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 480–81.

will, by reading the Bible, conclude that there should be Apostles in the Church, and they will have men-made Apostles.<sup>122</sup>

Here, Smoot outlines a massive shift in Mormonism's relationship to the broader Christian world and to healing specifically.

At the dawn of the Restoration, Mormons were the only American church with institutionalized ritual healing. Both Catholics and Protestants had abandoned the practice of ritual anointing for the healing of the sick.<sup>123</sup> As such and in defiance of Protestant cessationism, Joseph Smith's healing rituals, whether administered by men or women, were potent proof that the age of miracles had not ceased. As Apostle E. T. Benson proclaimed in April 1852 general conference, "The priests in Christendom warn their flocks not to believe in 'Mormonism;' and yet you sisters have power to heal the sick, by the laying on of hands, which they cannot do."<sup>124</sup> However, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Divine Healing, an inter-denominational movement that focused on healing ritual, gained traction among Protestant denominations.<sup>125</sup> Anointing meetings and massive healing revivals were widely described in the media, and prominent healers like

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<sup>122</sup>Reed Smoot, *Report of the Semi-Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, April 1901 (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, semi-annual), 4–5 (hereafter *Conference Report*). Charles Ora Card's notes of Smoot's discourse are cogent: "Elder Reed Smoot spoke of the gift of R[evelation] & the mission we have & the gift of healing we enjoy & need not special fasts but have the Right of the Priesthood to rebuke & not doubt. Made very good suggestion." Godfrey and Card, *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card*, 590.

<sup>123</sup>The Tunkers, or German Baptist Brethren were the only American exception. Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Power."

<sup>124</sup>E. T. Benson, "General Conference Address, Salt Lake City, October 6, 1852," *Millennial Star* 15 (February 26, 1853): 130.

<sup>125</sup>Jonathan R. Baer, "Perfectly Empowered Bodies: Divine Healing in Modernizing America" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2002); Heather D. Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician: Suffering and Divine Healing in American Culture, 1860–1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Michael S. Stephens, "Who Healeth All Thy Diseases": *Health, Healing, and Holiness in the Church of God Reformation Movement* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2008). For examples of the widely circulated healing accounts, see J. W. Byers, *The Grace of Healing* (Moundsville, W.V.: Gospel Trumpet, 1899). The Divine Healing movement spilled over into Pentecostalism, which champi-

John Dowie leveraged Divine Healing into a premillennialist restorationism.<sup>126</sup> Leaders in the Divine Healing movement proscribed alcohol and tobacco, and Dowie even claimed that he was a prophet and an apostle, establishing Zion City, Illinois, on a grid system with a temple on the center lot.<sup>127</sup> Also, after baptism, Holiness believers and Pentecostals sought an “endowment of power” very similar to the early references of the endowment in Mormonism.<sup>128</sup>

With non-Mormons claiming healing power and authority, traditional Mormon rhetoric affirming ritual healing as evidence of the singularity of the Restoration lost potency. To maintain institutional primacy, Church leaders reformed the relationship of the priesthood

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oned faith healing in the first decade of the twentieth century. On Pentecostal healing, see Amy Sitar, “Praying for Power: Dispositions and Discipline in the Azusa Street Revival’s Apostolic Faith,” *Poetics* 36 (2008): 450–61; Grant Wacker, “The Pentecostal Tradition,” in *Caring and Curing: Health and Medicine in the Western Religious Traditions*, edited by Ronald L. Numbers and Darrel W. Amundsen (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1986), 486–513; Nancy A. Hardesty, *Faith Cure: Divine Healing in the Holiness and Pentecostal Movements* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 101–28.

<sup>126</sup>Curtis, *Faith in the Great Physician*, 124, 130–38; Stephens, *Who Healeth All Thy Disease*, 71–75, 79; Jonathan R. Baer, “Redeemed Bodies: The Functions of Divine Healing in Incipient Pentecostalism,” *Church History* 70 (December 2001): 735–71, as well as his dissertation. On the many parallels of Dowie’s movement to early Mormonism (though not all are explicitly categorized as such), see Grant Wacker, “Marching to Zion: Religion in a Modern Utopian Community,” *Church History* 54 (December 1985): 496–511; Grant Wacker, Chris R. Armstrong, and Jay S. F. Blossom, “John Alexander Dowie: Harbinger of Pentecostal Power,” in *Portraits of a Generation: Early Pentecostal Leaders*, edited by James R. Goff Jr. and Grant Wacker (Fayetteville: Arkansas University Press, 2002), 3–19.

<sup>127</sup>Baer, “Redeemed Bodies,” 749–50, 767. On the layout of Zion City, see Map of Zion City in Zion Historical Society, *Zion* [Images of America] (Charleston, W.V.: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 42–43. Latter-day Saints in Utah were aware of Dowie and his labor during this period. See, e.g., [No author], “Dowie’s New Scheme,” *Deseret Evening News*, February 9, 1900, 4; “The Evidence of Pretenders,” *Deseret Evening News*, September 12, 1900, 4; “Dowie’s Zion,” *Deseret Evening News*, November 16, 1900, 4.

<sup>128</sup>John Fea, “Power from on High in an Age of Ecclesiastical Impotence: The ‘Endowment of the Holy Spirit’ in American Fundamentalist



to the healing liturgy.<sup>129</sup> Other churches may or may not heal, LDS

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Thought, 1880–1936,” *Fides et Historia* 26 (Summer 1994): 23–35. Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 59–62. See also the “anointing of power” in the Church of God (Anderson). Stephens, *Who Healeth All Thy Disease*, 79–80. On the early Mormon perception of the endowment of power, see Stapley and Wright, “The Forms and the Power.”

<sup>129</sup>The intersection of Mormonism and non-Mormon healing resulted in questions regarding authority that probed the foundations of Mormon self-identity. This dynamism played out illustratively in the pages of the *Liahona: The Elders’ Journal*, a periodical published for LDS missions in the United States. In 1908 editor B. F. Cummings, wrote that, though only priesthood holders should seal anointings and individuals should first request the elders to administer healing rituals, “any person, male or female, who has faith, may anoint the sick with oil and pray for their recovery.” Cummings reaffirmed this position in a subsequent editorial. This position apparently scandalized several missionaries. In his lengthy response, Cummings navigated the relationship of priesthood and miracles in a fashion very similar to the earliest Mormons. Healing and similar charismata, he said, were the signs of all believers, even those without “valid baptism.” Cummings claimed that “much space might be filled with the personal testimony of members of different churches, quotations from religious publications. . . . We can only repeat that the evidence going to show that, at the present time, many sick are being healed by faith in Christ, without the aid of men who hold the priesthood, is so great in volume and so strong in character that to ignore or deny it would be neither reasonable nor honorable.” Cummings summarized how “Latter-day Saints can no longer claim to be, the only worshipers in the world who heal the sick by faith in Christ.” Cummings proposed an enumerated definition of priesthood that focused primarily on explicitly salvific aspects of Church function and governance. See Cummings’s three “Editorial[s],” 6 (June 20, 1908): 6–7; 6 (August 8, 1908): 182; 6 (September 14, 1908): 326–32. Two years earlier, editor Ben E. Rich wrote that, although God hears the prayers of others, proper ritual healing can be “performed [only] by those men who hold the proper authority in the priesthood.” “Editorial: Administering to the Sick,” *Elders’ Journal* 3 (July 15, 1906), 410. The 1908 *Millennial Star* carried two articles by Apostle Charles W. Penrose that treated divine healing, priesthood, and female ritual healing. Charles W. Penrose, “About Healing by Faith,” *Millennial Star* 70 (May 21 and December 10, 1908): 328–31, 792–95. For a brief

leaders reasoned, but they certainly did not have the “priesthood.”<sup>130</sup> As “evangelicals looked for sources of power and authenticity in the face of alienating social and cultural changes”<sup>131</sup> at the turn of the century through Divine Healing, Mormon leaders sought the same thing through priesthood reformation.

Drawing on language similar to the *Juvenile Instructor* editorials, the day after the general conference in which Smoot spoke, the *Deseret News* carried an unsigned editorial, “Who May Rebuke Disease,” written to answer the question, “Has a woman who belongs to our Church, the right under any circumstances, to rebuke disease by laying hands on the sick?” The anonymous respondent wrote that it was common knowledge that “every person who has faith in Jesus Christ may lay hands on the sick and pray for their recovery” and that “a mother may lay her hands upon her sick child, rebuke the disease in the name of Jesus Christ, and pray the Lord to manifest His power.” Further, the editor claimed, “No one who understands the spirit of the Gospel will find fault with a brother or sister for laying hands, in faith, on the sick.” However, the author also stated:

The ordinance appointed in the Church for the healing of the sick is to be performed by the Elders. They are to anoint with oil and lay their hands upon them. They have authority in the Priesthood to seal the anointing, and the blessing of health and restoration upon those to whom they administer. A Priest, Teacher or Deacon may administer to the sick, and so may a member, male or female, but neither of them can seal the anointing and blessing, because the authority to do that is vested in the Priesthood after the order of Melchisedek; the office of Elder comes under that Priesthood.<sup>132</sup>

This editorial clearly repositioned female participation in the Lat-

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discussion of a church in the Divine Healing movement dealing with healings by “irregular” groups during this same period, see Stephens, *Who Healeth All Thy Diseases*, 163–65.

<sup>130</sup>See, e.g., the following *Liahona* articles: Nephi Anderson, “Real Religion: Healing and Common Sense,” 8 (September 6, 1910): 182; Hugh Ireland, “Mental Healers and Religion,” 14 (July 11, 1916): 24–25; Joseph E. Cardon, “Divine Healing,” 13 (February 15, 1916): 536–37; Jeremiah Stokes Jr., “Healing the Sick,” 16 (November 5, 1918): 1124–27.

<sup>131</sup>Baer, “Perfectly Empowered Bodies,” 3.

<sup>132</sup>Editor, “Who May Rebuke Disease?” *Deseret Evening News*, April 8, 1901, 4. As scriptural corroboration, the author cited James 5:14–15

ter-day Saint healing liturgy, effectually cleaving it. This shift was symptomatic, not of disapprobation of female healing, but of a growing reformation of priesthood self-conceptions. However, the editorial only made public a policy that had been determined the previous year.

In 1900, the office of the First Presidency had received a letter from the Relief Society presidency of the Colonia Dublan Ward in Chihuahua, Mexico. The letter included several questions relating to washing and anointing the sick and the pregnant, among which was whether “the Sisters [have] a right to seal the washing and anointing, using no authority, but doing it in the name of Jesus Christ,—or should men holding the priesthood be called in?”<sup>133</sup> The First Presidency referred the questions to the Relief Society general president, who responded:

The answer to this question was as follows: Brethren are sometimes called in to seal the washing and anointing; usually by the desire of the sister herself, her husband being called, or her father, or someone in whom she has great faith. In case no request is made for brethren to be called, the sealing is done by the sisters officiating, uniting their faith and simply doing so in the name of Jesus, not mentioning authority.

President Smith expressed himself to the effect that in his opinion the word “seal” should not be used by the sisters at all, but that the word “confirm” might be substituted, and that it should be used not in an authoritative way but in the spirit of invocation.

Presidents Snow and Cannon endorsed this response, and then “the secretary was directed to refer the answer back with the request that the sisters of the Relief Society adopt the change.”<sup>134</sup>

The liturgical difference between confirmation and sealing is not readily apparent. Church leaders, like Apostle Rudger Clawson,

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and Doctrine and Covenants 8:44–52. Charles W. Penrose was then editor of the *Deseret News*, but it is not clear that he wrote the editorial. The same day on which the editorial was published, Reed Smoot “read a letter in regard to [the] proper manner of administering to the sick” at the regular meeting of the First Presidency and Twelve. Larson, *A Ministry of Meetings*, 269–70. Anthony W. Ivins, *Diary*, April 8, 1901, Utah State Historical Archives, Salt Lake City, indicates that the letter was intended for stake presidents, so it was likely the document approved in the April 4 meeting discussed above.

<sup>133</sup>Colonia Dublan Relief Society, Chihuahua, Mexico, Letter to Lorenzo Snow, February 23, 1900, photocopy of holograph.

<sup>134</sup>Minutes of the First Presidency’s Office, Journal History of the

frequently wrote of “confirming” ritual anointings in which they participated,<sup>135</sup> and Eliza Snow encouraged the Relief Society visiting teachers to “confirm” ritual healings “by the laying on of hands” as early as 1880.<sup>136</sup> The language employed in the *Deseret News* editorial is clear, however; the shift from “sealing” to “confirmation” enforced the view that ritual healing by Melchizedek Priesthood holders was liturgically superior. The First Presidency were all men of extensive experience regarding female ritual healing; Lorenzo Snow was Eliza R. Snow’s brother. Consequently, Joseph F. Smith’s suggestion is perhaps surprising, though there are rare accounts of similar perspectives in the previous decades.<sup>137</sup> From this point forward, however, all instruction on the forms of female ritual healing underscored a prohibition on “sealing” by women.

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Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (chronological scrapbook of typed entries and newspaper clippings, 1830–present), March 7, 1900, 1, in *Selected Collections*, 2:23. On the letter from the Mexican Relief Society, a secretary for the First Presidency wrote in Pitman shorthand: “In your question to the presidency made on the proper answers to use in the use of the word ‘seal’ they suggested that the word confirm might be substituted by them for it.” Transcription of shorthand by Lajean Carruth. The final approved response is available as General Relief Society Presidency, “Answers to Questions (From Sisters in Mexico),” ca. 1900, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1.

<sup>135</sup>Larson, *A Ministry of Meetings*, 92, 208, 331, 689. For similar usage, see John P. Hatch, ed., *Danish Apostle: The Diaries of Anthon Lund, 1890–1921* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006), 33; Lieber and Sillito, *Letters from Exile*, 232; Mary Ann Freeze, Diary, September 19, 1893; George S. Spencer, “Healed by Faith,” *Deseret Weekly*, December 19, 1896, 4. As late as the 1930s and 1940s, the formal instructions to missionaries about administering to the sick mentioned the “confirming of the anointing and sealing the blessing.” George S. Romney, *The Missionary Guide: A Key to Effective Missionary Work* (Independence, Mo.: Zion’s Printing and Publishing Company, [193?]), 104; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *The Missionary Hand Book* (Independence, Mo.: Zion’s Printing and Publishing Company, 1937, 1940, 1944, 1946 [rev. ed.]), 141 [145–46, 1946 ed.]).

<sup>136</sup>Eliza R. Snow, Special Meeting of the Kanosh Relief Society, November 12, 1880, in “Various: R. S., Y. L. M. I. A. and Primary Reports,” *Woman’s Exponent* 9 (December 1, 1880): 103.

<sup>137</sup>In 1901, Smith reiterated his view that anointing the sick was primarily a Melchizedek Priesthood duty but that women could still partici-

The change from “sealing” to “confirmation” in the female ritual caused a significant amount of controversy among women in the Church. At the September 16, 1901, board meeting of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association, Helen Woodruff indicated that she had responded to a question by “answer[ing], that Aunt Zina & Aunt Bathsheba had lately washed and anointed her and they had sealed the anointing. She took them as very good authority.”<sup>138</sup> Ruth May Fox noted in her journal that “Pres. [Elmina Shepherd] Taylor said that she thought it [sealing] was allright she had received just as great benfit from the sealing of the sisters as from the bretheren but thought it wise to ask the Priesthood to seal the anointing when it was get at-able. And if the bretheren decided that women could not seal the annointing, then we should do as they say, but she could not see any reason why women could not. Aunt Zina always did.”<sup>139</sup> The meeting minutes then indicate that “Counselor [Maria Young] Dougall said, Mother Zina D. H. Young always sealed the washing and anointing, but not by authority of any Priesthood, however. She ^Sr. Dougall^ was to find out from President Snow.”<sup>140</sup> At a board meeting two weeks later, Helen Woodruff reported that she had asked John R. Winder of the Presiding Bishopric if women had the right to seal ritual washings and

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pate in the ritual. Joseph F. Smith, Letter to John D. Chase, August 13, 1901, Joseph F. Smith Letterpress Copybooks, in *Selected Collections*, 1:30. Note, however, that, while “sealing” in Mormon history has had various meanings which have evolved over time, the first use of the term in 1831, referring to sealing people into eternal life, was associated exclusively with the “high priesthood.” Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 20–21, October 25, 1831. Joseph Taylor, a counselor in the Salt Lake Stake presidency, used similar reasoning in 1884 by telling home missionaries that only Melchizedek Priesthood holders should seal healing anointings. Minutes of Home Missionary Meeting, January 20, 1884, Salt Lake Stake, General Minutes, microfilm of manuscript, LR 604.

<sup>138</sup>Young Women, General Board minutes, September 16, 1901, microfilm of typescript, CR 13 6.

<sup>139</sup>Chapman, [Ruth May Fox Diaries], September 16, 1901. See also entries for March 6 and October 18, 1900; October 20, 1901; November 28, 1902; January 12, 1907.

<sup>140</sup>Young Women General Board, Minutes, September 16, 1901.

anointings, and he responded, speaking of women: “positively they had not the power to seal, but they could confirm it.”<sup>141</sup>

Church leaders received many inquiries on the policy change from “sealing” to “confirming.” The day after the *Deseret News* editorial on the change, Louisa (“Lula”) Green Richards, a prominent Relief Society member and former editor of the *Woman’s Exponent*, wrote to President Snow and incredulously pointed out that if women could not seal, then “thousands” of Church members “were laboring under a very serious mistake.” She also stated that Eliza R. Snow, who was instructed “from the Prophet Joseph Smith,” taught the sisters to always seal the anointings.<sup>142</sup> A month later, the Relief Society General Board discussed female healing and “Sister [Emmeline] Wells, the Secretary, stated that she had the answers to questions approved by President Snow in which he had used the word ‘confirm’ instead of ‘seal.’”<sup>143</sup> These inquiries may be the context in which Anthon H. Lund noted in his diary that, in a meeting in June 1901 with the First Presidency and the Twelve, “The question of women anointing came up and was discouraged.”<sup>144</sup> This brief entry is somewhat confusing as there is no evidence of any discouragement of women participating in healing rituals and as the First Presidency consistently affirmed the practice, encouraging women to anoint the sick. It may be that the meeting was about sealing anointings and Lund’s diary entry is incomplete. However, like the *Juvenile Instructor* editorial that suggested it would “satisfy those who might have scruples upon this point” to refrain from rebuking disease without the priesthood, Church leaders may also have, at least temporarily, sought to balance competing views by accommodating perspectives that viewed aspects of female ritual healing with disap-

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<sup>141</sup>Ibid., September 30, 1901. Maria Young Dougall, the first counselor in the YLMIA general presidency, was appointed to ascertain President Lorenzo Snow’s views on the subject for the next meeting, but subsequent minutes do not record a response. John R. Winder was officially set apart in the First Presidency on October 17, 1901.

<sup>142</sup>Louisa Lula Greene Richards, Letter to Lorenzo Snow, April 9, 1901, photocopy of holograph.

<sup>143</sup>Relief Society General Board, Minutes, May 2, 1901. This “answer” is in reference to the “Answers to Questions (From the Sisters in Mexico).” Newell, “Gifts of the Spirit,” 128, misinterprets this meeting.

<sup>144</sup>Hatch, *Danish Apostle*, 130.

probation. The First Presidency engaged in very similar positioning a decade later when baptism for health became controversial in the leading quorums.<sup>145</sup>

Still, despite instructions against it, the old ritual form apparently lasted for some time. Emmeline Wells, then general secretary of the Relief Society, wrote in her diary on February 20, 1903: "We went up to Sister Lydia Spencer Clawson's to wash and anoint her preparatory to her confinement. Sister Smith offered prayer and I washed & sealed that and Sister Smith anointed—and she sealed the anointing."<sup>146</sup> Several Relief Societies wrote down example rituals for washing and anointing expectant mothers in their minutes during the first decade of the twentieth century. The Relief Society in both Cannonville, Utah, and Oakley, Idaho, recorded detailed blessings at this time and both include example "sealings."<sup>147</sup> By the second decade, however, it is clear that the Relief Society fully supported the shift.<sup>148</sup> In responding to one stake Relief Society president, the Relief Society General Board wrote: "In washing and anointing the sick, it is customary to confirm both washing and anointing. Sister Eliza R. Snow always followed this rule, but it is not a binding rule. The matter is optional with those who officiate. If the bishop has instructed the sister to have the anointing sealed by those holding the Priesthood, such sisters should comply with the bishop's request."<sup>149</sup>

The first few years of the twentieth century were a confusion of competing policy and practice. In 1902 and 1903, several

<sup>145</sup>Stapley and Wright, "They Shall Be Made Whole," 106–7.

<sup>146</sup>Emmeline B. Wells, Diary, February 20, 1903, typescript, Perry Special Collections. On October 31, 1904, Wells wrote of another ritual administration where "we all joined in the confirmation of sealing the anointing." Ibid., October 31, 1904.

<sup>147</sup>See note 19. Note that the example blessings produced by the Relief Society General Board and a mimeograph apparently produced for circulation from the Cannonville blessing text both include a "confirmation" instead of "sealing." Relief Society Washing and Anointing Files, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 2.

<sup>148</sup>Some women, however, did continue to "seal" rituals. See Griffiths, Diary, March 20, 1926.

<sup>149</sup>[On behalf of the Relief Society General Board], Letter to Sarah A. Mercer, June 7, 1915, typescript, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1.



Church publications stated positions giving ritual primacy to the Melchizedek Priesthood. An anonymous article in the *Juvenile Instructor* stated: "If it is an ordinary anointing of the head, according to the established ordinances of the Church, it should be done by one holding the Priesthood; not by a sister when an Elder is present. It is clearly out of order to do so."<sup>150</sup> Even the *Young Woman's Journal* included a lesson that declared, "Only the higher or Melchisedek Priesthood has the right to lay on hands for the healing of the sick, or to direct the administration . . . though to pray for the sick is the right that necessarily belongs to every member of the Church."<sup>151</sup> The First Presidency and Twelve also moved "that the practice [of administering to the sick] be confined to the elders; but in the case of absolute necessity . . . he may, if opportunity affords, avail himself of the company of a member of the Aaronic Priesthood, or even a lay member, but for the purpose only of being supported by the faith of such member or members."<sup>152</sup> Female and male healings were no longer viewed as equal. Joseph Smith's Nauvoo-era teachings and revelation on female healing were not canonized, and the Church quickly leaned on the 1831 revelation that the elders were to be called to lay hands on the sick, in conjunction with the exhortation in James 5:14–15 to seek the elders. Female healing became a "separate sphere"—a special case. Yet on September 7, 1903, several General Authorities stayed with Alberta Stake President Edward J. Wood. While there, Wood's daughter became ill; and with Wood, President Lund, and Elder Reed Smoot looking on, it was President Joseph F. Smith's wife, Alice, who anointed the

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<sup>150</sup>Anonymous, "Answers to Questions: Anointing the Sick," *Juvenile Instructor* 37 (May 15, 1902): 307. It continued: "There may be occasions of disease or accident when it is desirable that other parts of the body be anointed. It would be obviously improper for any but a sister to attend to such an anointing; but when this has been done, it is quite consistent for the Elders to anoint the head in the usual form, and then to seal the anointing."

<sup>151</sup>Anonymous, "Book of Doctrine and Covenants: Lesson XII: Gifts of the Spirit—Healing the Sick," *Young Woman's Journal* 14 (August 1903): 384.

<sup>152</sup>Meeting Minutes of the First Presidency and Twelve, Journal History, February 18, 1903, 4, *Selected Collections*, 2:25. Cf. Larson, *A Ministry of Meetings*, 548.

child, with Joseph F. Smith sealing the anointing.<sup>153</sup> While public rhetoric continued from this time to focus on male priesthood healing, Latter-day Saints like the Smith family maintained the ritual forms with which they were raised.

Church leaders ultimately publicly affirmed female ritual healing; however, the first years of the twentieth century marked a period of liturgical reconstruction. Along with the vitalization of the Seventies quorums, the debate and policy changes regarding female ritual healing presaged President Joseph F. Smith's "priesthood reform movement," which systematized and augmented priesthood roles just a few years later.<sup>154</sup> Church activity at the turn of the century was generally below 15 percent, quorum attendance was low, and the participation of young men was inconsistent.<sup>155</sup> While the Relief Society also struggled with activity, Church leaders viewed the priesthood organization as a means of training male youth and offering fraternity to adult men. As with healing in the first years of the twentieth century, non-priesthood duties, like preparing and passing the sacrament, were assigned to Aaronic Priesthood quorums to instill pur-

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<sup>153</sup>Edward J. Wood, Diary, September 1903, quoted in Olive Wood Nielson, *A Treasury of Edward J. Wood* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1983), 289–90.

<sup>154</sup>William G. Hartley, "The Priesthood Reform Movement, 1908–1922," *BYU Studies* 13 (Winter 1973): 137–56; William G. Hartley, "From Men to Boys: LDS Aaronic Priesthood Offices, 1829–1996," *Journal of Mormon History* 22 (Spring 1996): 115–17. On the antecedent reformation of the Seventies, see Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930*, 109–11. Two years before establishing the General Priesthood Committee, which was charged with spearheading this reformation, Joseph F. Smith declared in the April 1906 general conference that, when the priesthood quorums fully understood and executed their duties, "there will not be so much necessity for work that is now being done by the auxiliary organizations, because it will be done by the regular quorums of the Priesthood. The Lord designed and comprehended it from the beginning, and He has made provision in the Church whereby every need may be met and satisfied through the regular organizations of the Priesthood." Joseph F. Smith, *Conference Report*, April 1906, 3.

<sup>155</sup>Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 109, 114. Compare to the 1922 figures in Seymour B. Young, Diary, April 6, 1922, MS 1345, Box 13.

pose and eventually became inextricably associated with them.<sup>156</sup> Yet the “priesthood reform movement” was more than the reflection of modern progressive ideals institutionalized in the Church; these changes came at the nexus of Mormonism’s reconceptualization. Abandoning polygamy created a self-perceptual void, and Kathleen Flake has argued that Church leaders elevated the “Joseph Smith Story” and his “First Vision” in Latter-day Saint discourse to fill it.<sup>157</sup> Concurrently and perhaps more emphatically, priesthood reform solidified institutional structures that arose from the same narrative but that also critically directed the activities of Church members, much as polygamy did before the Manifesto.

### AFFIRMATION OF FEMALE RITUAL HEALING

Despite his role as priesthood reformer, Joseph F. Smith was a consistent proponent of female ritual healing and was a frequent participant in male-female collaborative healing.<sup>158</sup> Also during his tenure, the Relief Society reenvisioned the way it executed its work, and ritual administration continued to be an integral part of that service. The 1914 First Presidency circular letter on female ritual healing was the culmination of this support.

#### *Affirmation and Clarification*

Perhaps due to confusion surrounding liturgical reform, the First Presidency responded to many inquiries regarding female healing in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1906 the First Presidency wrote to several individuals instructing them: “There could be no objection whatever to a mother administering oil to her children in the absence of her husband”<sup>159</sup> and, further, “we would say it is the privilege of any good faithful woman to anoint the sick with oil and

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<sup>156</sup>Hartley, “From Men to Boys,” 112–20, 127–28; Hartley, “The Priesthood Reform Movement,” 149–52.

<sup>157</sup>Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 109–37.

<sup>158</sup>See, for example, Joseph F. Smith’s description of healing George Romney with Smith’s wives the year before Smith passed away. [Joseph F. Smith], Sermon at the Funeral of Joseph H. Grant, “Editor’s Table,” *Improvement Era* 21 (February 1918): 355.

<sup>159</sup>Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund, Letter to J.

pray for their recovery.”<sup>160</sup> That same year, Emmeline B. Wells, Relief Society general secretary, gave Joseph F. Smith the letter on washing and anointing for confinement that President Wilford Woodruff had written to her in 1888.<sup>161</sup> Smith then used this letter in subsequent instruction to local leaders.<sup>162</sup>

Likely due to the ritual homology between washing and anointing for health and those performed in the temple liturgy, questions persisted regarding its propriety beyond that of other forms of female healing. The precise policies governing these washings and anointings were not generally clear; and the First Presidency, over several years, responded to questions that helped rectify this ambiguity. Specifically, the First Presidency addressed whether, as with temple rituals, women needed special authority to administer the washings and anointings for confinement or health.

Using the previous instruction from the Relief Society general leaders as a base text, the First Presidency wrote to one stake president explaining that recipients of washings and anointings for health or childbirth need not have been endowed and that “it should be understood that such labors of love are not necessarily under the direction of the presidency of the Relief Society. . . . Some sisters are gifted in administering and comforting with faith, and yet may hold no official position in the Relief Society.” Like Wilford Woodruff in 1888, the First Presidency instructed that women “should avoid all reference to ceremonies of the temple, and should be very careful not to detract from or encroach upon the privileges or uses of the priesthood.”<sup>163</sup>

The 1902 Relief Society instructional book reprinted Eliza R.

T. Lesueur and Counselors, January 20, 1906, microfilm of typescript, CR 1 20.

<sup>160</sup>Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder and Anthon H. Lund, Letter to Eugene E. Branch Jr., October 3, 1906, microfilm of typescript, CR 1 20.

<sup>161</sup>Mimeographed copies of the letter, later distributed by the General Relief Society included the following header: “This is a correct copy of the original which Sister Wells has deposited in our office. Mar. 7th, 1906, (Signed) Joseph F. Smith.” Wilford Woodruff, Mimeographed letter to Emmeline Wells, April 28, 1888, ca. 1909, on Relief Society letterhead.

<sup>162</sup>Compare *ibid.*, to Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund, Letter to Nephi Pratt, December 21, 1908, microfilm of typescript, CR 1 20.

<sup>163</sup>Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund, Letter to

Snow's 1884 letter, which indicated that women need not be set apart to wash and anoint the sick.<sup>164</sup> However and not surprisingly considering the nineteenth-century antecedents, local Relief Societies continued to call women to bless expectant mothers. For example, one woman wrote that, from 1904 to 1911, she "was chosen and set apart to help wash and dress the dead. Also to wash and anoint the sisters."<sup>165</sup> In a 1906 ward meeting, James Henry Martineau assisted in setting apart "several sisters, as officers in Relief Society, also washing anointing the sick, and other duties."<sup>166</sup> Speaking specifically of the ritual washing and anointing for childbirth, the First Presidency was emphatic:

Members of Relief Societies are not set apart and given authority to wash and anoint sisters for their confinement, for the reason that this practice, which has grown up among some of our Relief Societies, is not an ordinance, and because it is not an ordinance authority to act in it need not be given, and is therefore not given. Some of our Relief Society sisters appear to have confounded this practice with one of the temple ordinances; and because certain sisters, as temple workers, are set apart as such, Relief Society sisters appear to have jumped at the conclusion that they too should be authorized and set apart to wash and anoint sisters for their confinement.

Despite this caution, the First Presidency continued:

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William A. Hyde, October 3, 1905, microfilm of typescript, CR 1 20.

<sup>164</sup>*The General Relief Society: Officers, Objects, and Status* (Salt Lake City: General Officers, 1902), 26–27.

<sup>165</sup>"Some Excerpts from the Diary of Mary Anderson Jensen," in Clo Ann Mason Christensen, comp., *Pearl, Baby! The Amazing Life and Chronicles of Reba Pearl Bischoff Mason* (River Ridge, Calif.: C.A.M. Christensen, 1994), 154.

<sup>166</sup>Godfrey and Martineau-McCarty, *An Uncommon Common Pioneer*, 557. For other examples, see Anonymous, "Unusual Mothers: M. Melissa Summerhays," *Relief Society Magazine* 5 (June 1918): 333; LaRue Latimer Schoenfeld, ed., "Ann Elizabeth 'Lizzie' Bertock Wallace," in Ruth Mae Harris, comp., *They Shall Be Mine: Books of Remembrance of Willard George Bawden [and] Annie Elizabeth Wallace* (Orem, Utah: Likes Publishing, 1999), 365; Elizabeth Allington, "Her Faith Sustained Her," in *Our Pioneer Heritage* 13:390; Ruby Smith Steele, Oral History, Interviewed by Amy Bentley, typescript, 4–5, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Brigham Young University, LDS Family Life Oral History Project, MSS OH-612.

In this writing we do not wish it understood that sisters may not wash and anoint for the purpose mentioned, as there is no impropriety whatever in their doing so, inasmuch as they do it in a proper way, that is, in the spirit of faith and prayer, and without assumption of special authority, not any more in fact than members of the Church generally might do in behalf of members of their own families. . . . But if sisters have faith enough themselves to ask worthy women to thus petition the Lord in their behalf, as they would ask the elders to administer to them, there need be no hesitation whatever on the part of discreet worthy women administering to their faithful sisters in this way. And we may add that such women may thus act whether the person administered to shall have received her endowments or not; and no member of the Church therefore need be barred from receiving a blessing at the hands of faithful women inasmuch as she has faith enough to desire and ask that this be done in her behalf.<sup>167</sup>

Just as the authority to administer temple rituals was conflated with healing authority, temple attendance as a prerequisite for similar healing blessings outside the temple was likewise a natural association. From the time the temples first opened, both men and women went to them in order to receive washing and anointing blessings and other rituals for their health. In 1903, the Relief Society General Board discussed these issues, as one board member had told local women that only endowed women could be washed and anointed for childbirth. "Sister [Bathsheba] Smith refuted this and so did Sister [Emmeline] Wells."<sup>168</sup> Two years later, the First Presidency made a similar statement to a stake president inquiring on the matter.<sup>169</sup> No similar questions are extant in the case of "baptism for health" which was administered both in and outside of temples, possibly because other baptismal rituals were so commonly performed outside temples and all members had by definition been previously baptized.

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<sup>167</sup>Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund, Letter to Nephi Pratt, December 21, 1908, microfilm of typescript, CR 1 20.

<sup>168</sup>Relief Society General Board, Minutes, September 4, 1903, microfilm of typescript, CR 11 10. Several board members had understood that temple endowment was a prerequisite, having apparently been taught so during "a meeting of officers convened in the Assembly Hall in 1889." Ibid.

<sup>169</sup>First Presidency, Letter to Hyde, October 3, 1905.

*The 1904 and 1910 Instructional Letters and Ritual Codification*

In an effort to clarify Church policy regarding female ritual administration, the Relief Society general presidency and board prepared two circulars with the aid of the First Presidency. In 1900 as already discussed, the First Presidency worked with the general Relief Society to answer questions from a Relief Society in Colonia Dublan, Mexico, regarding healing. This process resulted in the change from “sealing” to “confirming.” In 1903, the General Relief Society submitted this same document to the First Presidency, now composed of Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder and Anthon Lund, who again approved it on December 30.<sup>170</sup> From this document, the Relief Society prepared a mimeographed “Answers to Questions” sheet, which bore the notation of First Presidency approval. Leaders then circulated this document throughout the Relief Society.<sup>171</sup>

Furthermore, late in 1909, the Relief Society General Board asked the First Presidency’s permission to distribute copies of Wilford Woodruff’s 1888 letter to Emmeline Wells to stake Relief Society presidents.<sup>172</sup> The First Presidency approved the proposal, and the Relief Society created mimeographed versions on Relief Society let-

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<sup>170</sup>“ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS (FROM SISTERS IN MEXICO —),” typescript, Relief Society Washing and Anointing Files, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1. The end of the document includes the handwritten text: “Approved by President Lorenzo Snow.” Below this is written in a different hand: “Dec. 30th 1903 We Approve of the foregoing” followed by the signatures of Joseph F. Smith, John R. Winder, and Anthon H. Lund.

<sup>171</sup>Relief Society Washing and Anointing Files, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1, includes what appears to be two drafts based on the 1903 approved text, in preparation for the final circular, which appears in James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–75), 5:224. The mimeographed letter was distributed in several mimeographed forms. One mimeograph was on Relief Society letterhead, the masthead of which listed Bathsheba Smith (served 1901–10) as the general president and Annie Taylor Hyde as first counselor (died 1909). Another mimeograph is without letterhead. See copies in Salt Lake Liberty Stake, Relief Society Scrapbook Selections, 1915–33, LR 4880 41, fd. 2. Clark’s commentary on the history of the circular is inaccurate, as is Newell, “Gifts of the Spirit,” 128.

<sup>172</sup>Relief Society General Board, Minutes, December 17, 1909. The First Presidency granted permission. *Ibid.*, January 21, 1910. According to



terhead, which included a headnote that the holograph letter was in Joseph F. Smith's possession.<sup>173</sup> The General Board then disseminated both of these instructional documents to local Relief Societies, frequently when questions arose.<sup>174</sup> An excellent example of a local interaction with these documents is recorded in the minutes of the Logan Cache Stake Relief Society. After reading the general board's instructions, the local women variously testified, related experiences, and asked questions about participating in healing rituals, with a general spirit of mutual support.<sup>175</sup>

Despite these instructions, however, confusion still persisted. For example, in June 1911 Martha H. Tingey, general president of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association, addressed the association's general conference, noting that some had come "to the conclusion that women did not have any right to anoint with oil and administer to the sick." She responded:

Now I want to correct that impression because that is wrong. The Prophet Joseph was asked this same question in his time, and he said

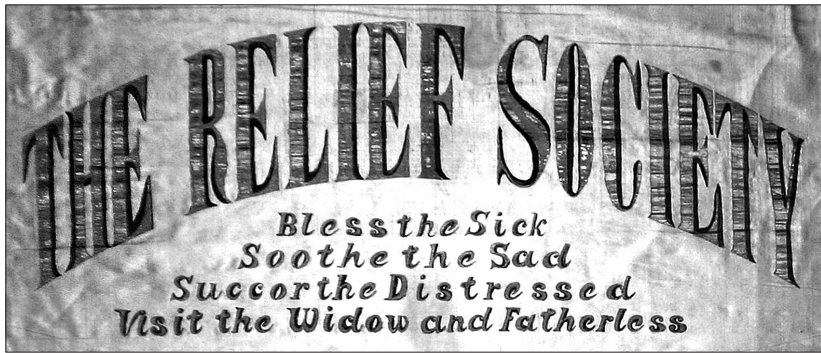
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the September 10, 1910, minutes, "There was a letter from the First Presidency stating that Pres. Woodruff's letter on the washing and anointing [sic] should be the pattern for us to follow unless the presidency should give further instructions to the society." On December 19, 1912, in response to a question at the general board meeting regarding the form of the healing ritual, Emmeline Wells directed the individual to the prepared "Answers to Questions" document. Ibid.

<sup>173</sup>Wilford Woodruff, Mimeographed letter to Emmeline Wells, April 28, 1888, ca. 1910, on Relief Society Letterhead, Relief Society Washing and Anointing Files, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 2. Copy also available in Salt Lake Liberty Stake, Relief Society Scrapbook Selections, 1915–33, LR 4880 41, fd. 2.

<sup>174</sup>See, e.g., Relief Society General Board, Minutes, August 18, 1913, when the board received a letter "asking if Stake [Relief Society] Presidents are required to have a sister in each Ward set apart for the purpose of washing and anointing the sick. After discussion, the Secretary was instructed to answer the letter according to the instructions in the Circular letter on this subject, approved by the First Presidency." At this time Stake Relief Society presidents had autonomy over questions regarding female healing rituals. Anonymous, "Address," *Relief Society Bulletin* 1 (February 1914): 3.

<sup>175</sup>Logan Utah Cache Stake, Relief Society Minutes and Records, March 5, 1910, 438–40, microfilm of manuscript, LR 1280 14.



*Detail from the Relief Society Banner, 1905. The motto reads: "Bless the Sick. Soothe the Sad. Succor the Distressed. Visit the Widow and Fatherless." The original banner was displayed in the "Something Extraordinary" Relief Society exhibit, May 2007–September 2009, LDS Church History Museum, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. Photo courtesy of the LDS Church History Museum.*

that women were pure in heart and they had a right to anoint with holy oil. . . . This is the point we want to make—a woman never administers the oil, nor administers to the sick in the name of the Priesthood. But she has the right to anoint with oil and lay on hands, and ask the blessing of the Lord upon her sisters, upon her children, or any who ask in the name of Jesus Christ; and we could bring you many evidences that will testify to you that the Lord does hear and answer the prayers of His daughters. We who are here on this stand, and many others in this congregation, I know, can testify that their own children have been healed under their hands and they have also been led of the Lord to give promises and blessings unto their sisters, which have been realized and verified, word for word.<sup>176</sup>

In 1913, Emmeline Wells expressed her concern to the Relief Society General Board that some men did not approve female ritual healing;<sup>177</sup> however, Joseph Smith's April 28, 1842, revelatory teaching remained a foundation for female participation in the healing liturgy and accounts of his sermon were published in the 1913 and 1915 Relief Society periodicals.<sup>178</sup>

<sup>176</sup>Anonymous, "Report of the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the Y. L. M. I. A. (Continued)," *Young Woman's Journal* 22 (August 1911): 439–40.

<sup>177</sup>Relief Society General Board, Minutes, October 7, 1913.

Perhaps in an effort to ensure ritual preservation, local Relief Societies appear to have been concerned with codifying ritual administrations during this period. As already discussed, it was in 1906 that the Cannonville Relief Society entered an example washing and anointing blessing in its minute book,<sup>179</sup> while the Oakley, Idaho, Relief Society did the same in 1909.<sup>180</sup> The textual similarity between these ritual examples, despite temporal and geographic discontinuity, indicates either a successful oral transmission by ritual proponents or the widespread distribution of written examples. In support of the former explanation, in 1923, the office record of the Relief Society General Board shows that Maria Young Dougall visited the office and explained that Zina Young taught her how to officiate in washings and anointings and then recorded an example blessing which shares a striking textual similarity to the Cannonville and Oakley texts.<sup>181</sup>

*The 1914 General Circular on Female Ritual Healing*

In 1914, the Relief Society General Board invited President Jo-

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<sup>178</sup>Anonymous, "The Relief Society (Copied from the Original Record)," *Woman's Exponent* 41 (March 1, 1913): 46; Anonymous, "Instructions of the Prophet Joseph Smith," *Relief Society Magazine* 2 (March 1915): 91. That these instructions were important to individual members is evidenced by Hannah Adeline Savage, who handcopied these instructions into her journal. Savage, *Record of Hannah Adeline Savage*, 115–20. For other examples, see Derr and Madsen, "Preserving a Record and Memory of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, 1842–92," 108 note 57.

<sup>179</sup>Cannonville Relief Society Record, microfilm of manuscript, 126–30, LR 1371 22. Although the ritual itself is undated, we date it at 1906 as pp. 124–25 of the record include the minutes of the meeting on June 7, 1906, while a report of attendance for 1907 appears on p. 132.

<sup>180</sup>Oakley, Idaho, Second Ward Relief Society, Minute Book, 1901–9, 195–98, LR 6360 14. We date this document at 1909 as minutes of the December 16, 1909, meeting appear on pp. 186–87, while p. 187 includes the stake auditors' annual certification. After the blessing text, the remaining pages were cut out of the bound volume, and a new volume was started for 1910.

<sup>181</sup>Relief Society General Board, Office Minutes, August 7, 1923, typescript, Washing and Anointing Blessing Texts, ca. 1923, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 2. Griffiths, Diary, March 20, 1926, includes a detailed example of a washing and anointing for health that is also very similar.

seph F. Smith to speak at its October general conference.<sup>182</sup> In delivering his discourse, Smith recounted a story which he had “told a good many times.” He described visiting a remote region of the Church where malaria was prevalent. Accompanied by a local Church leader, President Smith “called on them [the sick], visited them, and administered to them.” In one home in particular, the mother “lay prostrate upon her bed, and her husband [was] distracted for fear she was going to pass away, the little children helpless.” Smith then described a woman who came to the home with a basket of food. She washed the children and prepared a meal for them.

Then she turned and administered to the sick mother, and she remained there during, at least, the fore part of the night.

I asked, “How is this done?”

“Well,” she said, “our Relief Society is doing it. The Society is providing these things; I am only acting here for the Relief Society, for this evening until midnight, or until sometime in the night, when I will be relieved by another sister, who will bring other things that will be needful during the latter part of the night and for the morning meal.”

And I said, “Is this being done throughout the settlement by the Relief Society?”

She said, “Yes.”

And I added, “and none are neglected?”

“No, not one, all are provided for. Yes, all are provided for to the best of our ability.”

And I said in my heart, God bless the Relief Society. I felt that the Lord would bless them, because they were doing their duty to the sick and to the afflicted.<sup>183</sup>

The same day that Joseph F. Smith recounted this story to the Relief Society general conference, he and his counselors wrote a circular letter to all stake presidents and bishops. It commented that the First Presidency frequently received questions “in regard to washing and anointing our sisters preparatory to their confinement.” Even though the Relief Society had previously sent circulars

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<sup>182</sup>Relief Society General Board, Minutes, October 1, 1914.

<sup>183</sup>Joseph F. Smith, “Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men. Remarks by President Joseph F. Smith at Relief Society Conference, October 3, 1914,” *Relief Society Magazine* 2 (January, 1915): 19. Anthon H. Lund, a counselor in the First Presidency, similarly affirmed female ritual healing and gave instructions while speaking in Manti, Utah, in 1911. Hatch, *Danish Apostle*, 452.

to answer such questions, “there exists some uncertainty as to the proper persons to engage in this administration” with the result that the First Presidency “have therefore considered it necessary to answer some of these questions, and give such explanations as will place this matter in the right light. We quote some of these questions and give our answers.” The answers reaffirmed the consistent policies that any woman “full of faith” can participate in the rituals and that the Relief Society need not direct all administrations. The First Presidency affirmed that women “have the same right to administer to sick children as to adults, and may anoint and lay hands upon them in faith.”

The letter also carefully outlined the importance of reserving “sealings” to the priesthood and specified that being endowed was not a prerequisite to ritual healing.<sup>184</sup> The fact that the First Presidency received questions on washing and anointing pregnant women but responded with answers regarding female participation in healing generally affirms their support, as outlined in Smith’s discourse the same day, of female authority to participate in the broader healing liturgy. The Relief Society reproduced this letter in many formats. Besides the original on First Presidency letterhead, the Relief Society General Board mimeographed at least two different versions for distribution to its leaders.<sup>185</sup> For example, in responding to one woman’s questions regarding procedures for washing and anointing, the General Board wrote: “If you will apply to the President of your stake she will, no doubt, furnish you the information contained in a circular letter which was issued from this office several years ago.”<sup>186</sup> Individ-

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<sup>184</sup>First Presidency to Stake Presidents and Bishops, October 3, 1914, Salt Lake City, in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 4:314–15; see also Relief Society Circulars, microfilm, CR 11 8.

<sup>185</sup>See, e.g., [On behalf of the Relief Society General Board], Letter to Sarah A. Mercer, June 7, 1915, typescript, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1. Example mimeographs are available in microfilm in Relief Society Circulars, CR 11 8; Salt Lake Liberty Stake, Relief Society Scrapbook Selections.

<sup>186</sup>[On behalf of the Relief Society General Board], Letter to L. Nettie Behmann, October 10, 1916, typescript, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1.

**TABLE 3**  
**RELIEF SOCIETY STATISTICAL REPORT, 1914–16**

	COMPARATIVE ITEMS FOR 1914, 1915, AND 1916		
	1914	1915	1916
Balance net resources	\$510,536.05	\$534,041.88	\$606,027.59
Wheat on hand (bushels)	193,805	210,050 <sup>1/3</sup>	215,393 <sup>17/60</sup>
Paid for charitable purposes	48,482.12	56,967.31	56,162.25
Membership	37,826	41,274	43,894
Days spent with sick		22,797	21,985
Special visits to sick		78,500	88,140
No. of visits by stake officers		4,722	9,682
No. of days spent in Temple work		16,889	26,201

*Note:* Reproduced from Amy Brown Lyman, "Notes from the Field," *Relief Society Magazine* 4 (May 1917): 276.

uals also copied it for their own records.<sup>187</sup>

Joseph F. Smith's Relief Society conference discourse also highlighted the massive labor of Relief Societies in caring for the sick. Women in the Relief Societyspent hundreds of thousands of hours a year visiting the sick; and as Smith included in his description, they certainly administered healing rituals in the process. Local Relief Societies reported their service to the sick and the totals were included in their annual reports. "Special visits to the sick" were visits by Relief Society sisters on behalf of the society. Visits to friends and neighbors were considered personal and not reported.<sup>188</sup>

According to later Relief Society manuals, "in recording care of the sick, a total of eight hours is counted as a day."<sup>189</sup> Each local Relief Society customized its ministry to the sick. Highlighting this transition to scientific management, in 1918, the South Davis Stake Relief

<sup>187</sup>For example, Sarah Jane Jenne Cannon (1839–1928), Notebook, T, CR 11 301, Box 3, fd. 2, includes a typescript created specifically to fit her notebook.

<sup>188</sup>*Relief Society Ward Record Book* (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1922), 152; Sarah Jane Jenne Cannon, Notebook, Q.

<sup>189</sup>Relief Society, *Handbook of the Relief Society of the Church of Jesus*

Society reported that “during the past year, every fifth Tuesday has been devoted by Relief Society members to special visits to the sick and aged who cannot attend the Relief Society meetings. In some associations the women have made it a practice to spend one whole day a month with each sick and aged person, while other associations have special teachers whose duty it is to see that the sick and aged are not allowed to become lonely.”<sup>190</sup>

### THE FORMALIZATION OF MORMON LITURGY AND THE PRESIDENCY OF CLARISSA S. WILLIAMS

During his administration, President Joseph F. Smith started a process of bureaucratic reform that facilitated the Church’s modernization. Concomitant with this period was the modernization of medical science that completely transformed healthcare in the United States.<sup>191</sup> This transition, coupled with internal institutional pressures, led Church leaders to reevaluate liturgy generally and healing specifically. Smith’s successor, Heber J. Grant, directed an almost

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*Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1949), 82–83. According to *Relief Society Ward Record Book*, 152, “‘Days Spent with the Sick’ means the number of days or nights spent by volunteer workers in caring for the sick (one night being equal to one day). Less than one day’s service is recorded as a visit. Days spent caring for member of one’s family are not reported in Relief Society.”

<sup>190</sup>South Davis Stake, “Notes from the Field,” *Relief Society Magazine* 5 (May 1918): 278.

<sup>191</sup>Besides ministering to its own, the Relief Society was a driving force in progressive health reform. Unlike other sectarian organizations that rejected the deleterious heroic allopathic remedies of the early and mid-nineteenth century, Mormons did not persist in their rejection of medicine as it became clinically viable. While some individuals cleaved to their historical affinity to botanic cures or faith healing alone, the bulk of the Latter-day Saints adopted modern medical treatments in combination with their healing rituals. The Relief Society had participated in the modernization of American medicine from Brigham Young’s first calls to women to become physicians, to the establishment of the Deseret Hospital, founded in 1882, and LDS Hospital, founded in 1905. In the Progressive Era, the Relief Society continued an activist role in promoting public health and hygiene, incorporating the topic in its curriculum, hosting lectures, and lobbying government officials. It also sponsored a nursing school and maternity hospitals in addition to supporting the Sheppard–Towner Act. Derr,



complete retooling of Mormon liturgy to the formal, with one significant exception: female ritual healing. The result of this emphasis on a formal codified liturgy was tension with persistent female healing folk practice.

The modernization of both Church and medical institutions was facilitated by the standardization and documentation of policy and labor. Unlike modern medicine and bureaucracy, Mormon liturgy had generally existed as oral tradition. While the prayers for baptism and the Lord's supper were codified in the Mormon canon, no written prescriptions existed for them; and in the nineteenth century, significant variability existed in ritual practice. Each of the temples offered subtly different activities,<sup>192</sup> and Latter-day Saints participated in a set of rituals governing life and death not described in the canon: anointing sealings, baptism for health, temple healing, washing and anointing the sick or pregnant, therapeutic application of consecrated oil, and deathbed rituals.<sup>193</sup>

The integration of modern medical practice and the greater American culture with LDS communities led to a reevaluation of Mormon rituals that, in contrast, appeared increasingly magical. Consequently, the therapeutic use of oil, notably manifest in repeat anointings, anointing the area of affliction, and drinking consecrated oil, fell out of favor.<sup>194</sup> The old ritual forms of washing and anointing became increasingly anachronistic. This change in the institutional zeitgeist was also a function of the ascendance of younger Church leaders who did not remember or learn liturgical histories. The de-

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Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 166–67, 198–99, 227–32, 266–68. On the modernization of American medicine, see Charles E. Rosenberg, ed., *The Structure of American Medical Practice, 1875–1941* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 1–36. On Mormon adoption of modern medicine, see Lester E. Bush, *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints*, 78–80, 93–103.

<sup>192</sup>Dale C. Mouritsen, "A Symbol of New Directions: George F. Richards and the Mormon Church, 1861–1950" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1982), 201–4.

<sup>193</sup>Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Power"; Stapley and Wright, "They Shall Be Made Whole." For a history of deathbed rituals, see Jonathan A. Stapley, "Mormonism's Last Rites," under review.

<sup>194</sup>See e.g., Smart, *Mormonism's Last Colonizer: The Journals of William H. Smart*, April 7, 1913.

bates surrounding baptism for health in the 1910s vividly illustrate this trend.<sup>195</sup> Through this period, however, Joseph F. Smith and his first counselor, Anthon H. Lund, were defenders of the old practices.

Smith's successor, Heber J. Grant, maintained the status quo for several years. Grant had a long association with female healing and blessing; his mother was a celebrated healer<sup>196</sup> and he spoke no fewer than five times in general conference about blessings he had received at the hands of Eliza R. Snow and his wife.<sup>197</sup> After Lund died in March 1921, however, Grant initiated a program of reformation that had deep and lasting implications for female healing. Four weeks after Lund's death, the First Presidency released Emmeline Wells, who though ill, was the first Relief Society general president not to die in office.<sup>198</sup> In reaction to increased logistical pressure,<sup>199</sup> President Grant then initiated a broad liturgical formalization project. Working with Apostle and Salt Lake Temple President George F. Richards, over a period of several years, Grant approved the reformation of the endowment—including the first written versions of all the temple rituals for distribution in the temples—and terminated baptisms for health altogether.<sup>200</sup> The First Presidency also issued instructions

<sup>195</sup>Stapley and Wright, "They Shall Be Made Whole," 105–11.

<sup>196</sup>Anonymous, "In Memoriam: Rachel Ridgeway Ivins Grant," *Woman's Exponent* 37 (April 1, 1909): 53. See also Emmeline B. Wells, *Diary*, June 24, 1909.

<sup>197</sup>Heber J. Grant, *Conference Report*: April 1900, 61–62; October 1910, 119–20; October 1919, 31–32; April 1927, 17–18; April 1935, 12–14. See also Chapman, [Ruth May Fox Diaries], August 15, 1898, which describes the Tooele Conjoint Stake Conference in which Grant described the blessing.

<sup>198</sup>Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 221–22.

<sup>199</sup>On June 2, 1924, Heber J. Grant and A. W. Ivins, wrote to B. H. Roberts explaining, "We have discontinued the practice of administering to the sick in the Temple. People seem to get it into their minds that a blessing in the Temple is far superior to one by the brethren holding the Priesthood, given outside of the Temple; and the increased number desiring to go to the Temple for administrations interfered with our regular Temple work. Therefore, the brethren decided to discontinue the practise of blessing and baptizing people for their health in the Temple." Microfilm of typescript, CR 1 20. See also Stapley and Wright, "They Shall Be Made Whole," 105–11.

<sup>200</sup>Mouritsen, "A Symbol of New Directions," 203–10; Alexander,

against dedicating the dying,<sup>201</sup> and the limited use of consecrated oil became standard. Most significantly for the future of female ritual healing, among the first of Richards's proposals approved by the First Presidency in June 1921, was the removal of healers from the temple, both male and female.<sup>202</sup>

The letter from the Colonia Dublan Relief Society which catalyzed the change from "sealing" to "confirmation" was initiated on the grounds that the women were "away from the body of the Church and deprived of the blessings of the Temples" so that "a great many require this ordinance [washing and anointing for health/childbirth] performed, and while wishing to give and receive all the blessings we are entitled to, we do not wish to do anything wrong."<sup>203</sup> With the temple healers gone, a major channel of folk instruction was broken. Almost immediately after the healers were removed from the temple, Relief Societies began to more formally organize the ritual administration of women to compensate. The Relief Society general officers again sent out circular instructions on female ritual administration;<sup>204</sup> and as one woman remembered, "When our temples did away with this ordinance [washing and anointing] for the sick and expectant mothers, in many of our wards in this stake, as well as adjoining stakes, committees of sisters, generally two or three in each committee, were called and set apart for this work of 'washing' and 'anointing,' in their respective wards, wherever this ordinance was de-

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*Mormonism in Transition*, 302; Stapley and Wright, "They Shall Be Made Whole."

<sup>201</sup>Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:219–20.

<sup>202</sup>Mouritsen, "A Symbol of New Directions," 201–2. It appears that temple healing still persisted in some locations for a few years. For example, the Arizona Temple included "Blessings for Health" among the rituals performed until at least 1926. [No Author], "Outlines for the Month of March," *Genealogical and Historical Magazine of the Arizona Temple District 1* (January, 1924): 64; [No Author], "Outlines for the Month of September, 1926," *Genealogical and Historical Magazine of the Arizona Temple District 3* (July, 1926): 24.

<sup>203</sup>Colonia Dublan Relief Society, Chihuahua, Mexico, Letter to Lorenzo Snow, February 23, 1900.

<sup>204</sup>Amy Brown Lyman, "Instructions to Relief Society Stake Presidents," February 1922, microfilm collection, Relief Society Circulars, CR 11 8. This document lists all the instructional materials distributed in 1921.

**Temple Recommend**  
VOID SIX MONTHS FROM DATE

Date September 28, 1918

This Certifies that Ethel Naylor  
Married  
is a member of the Hyrum 3rd Ward, Hyrum Stake,  
of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in full fellowship and as such is  
hereby recommended to the Logan Temple  
for to be Baptized for her health  
NATURE OF WORK TO BE PERFORMED MUST BE STATED IN EVERY INSTANCE—SEE INSTRUCTIONS 6 AND 7

**TO THE HOLDER:**  
If you are going for your own endowments, fill in information required on other side of this recommend. Otherwise please leave it blank.

Levi O. Maughan Bishop  
W. C. Parkinson President of Stake

**Temple Recommend**  
VOID SIX MONTHS FROM DATE

Date July 26 1920

This Certifies that Ethel H. Naylor  
is a member of the Eighth Ward, Logan Stake,  
of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in full fellowship and as such is  
hereby recommended to the Logan Temple  
for Anointing for Her health and Endowments for the Dead  
NATURE OF WORK TO BE PERFORMED MUST BE STATED IN EVERY INSTANCE—SEE INSTRUCTIONS 6 AND 7

**TO THE HOLDER:**  
If you are going for your own endowments, fill in information required on other side of this recommend. Otherwise please leave it blank.

Joseph Gibbons Bishop  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President of Stake

*Recommends of Ethel H. Naylor for the Logan Temple, The 1918 recommend allows her "to be Baptized [sic] for her health" and the 1920 recommend is for "Anointing for Her health and Endowments for the Dead." Photocopy of originals in the possession of Ben and Whitney Mortensen; used by permission.*

sired.” This woman herself acted as the “head” of the Logan Stake First Ward committee for more than ten years.<sup>205</sup> A similar committee in the Salt Lake City Thirty-first Ward began a record book that chronicled their blessing ministry for more than twenty years.<sup>206</sup> Many women who served in these capacities reported finding “much joy and satisfaction.”<sup>207</sup>

During this period of liturgical reformation, the First Presidency largely left female participation in the healing unadjusted; however, the result was a natural tension between a Church emphasis on formal codified liturgy and the essentially folk nature of female participation in healing rituals. This tension is evident in one instructional letter written by the First Presidency in 1922, which answered a question relating to women having elders collaboratively “confirm” their ritual healings, a practice which had previously been common:

We fail to see the consistency of sisters administering to the sick in the way mentioned by you and then sending for Elders to confirm their ministrations. The word of the Lord through the Apostle James to the former day Saints . . . was to send for the Elders to administer this ordinance. . . . But there can be no objection to any good sister full of faith in God and in the efficacy of prayer officiating in this ordinance.<sup>208</sup>

With female healers no longer ministering in the temple, a formal emphasis on priesthood, and instruction on female participation

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<sup>205</sup>Martha A. Hickman, Logan, Utah, Letter to Louise Y. Robison, November 28, 1935, MS 6020.

<sup>206</sup>“Washings and Anointings Done by Sisters in 31st Ward 1921–1945,” MS 8797 10.

<sup>207</sup>Eileen Andersen, ed., *Life and History of Caroline Mellor Smith* (N.p.: N.pub., 2002), 2–3, digital copy available BYU–Idaho Special Collections. For other examples, see Bruce H. Jensen, *Grandma in the Pink House: The Life Story of Melba Melvina Penrod Jensen* (Salt Lake City: Bruce H. Jensen, 1996), 45–46; Ellen Elvira Nash Parkinson, Autobiography, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 8:216–17; Melba Phyllis Brown Andrus Interview, May 12, 1982, Ucon, Idaho, in Alyn B. Andrus, *Experiences: Transcribed Oral Interviews with Samuel Reed Andrus and Melba Phyllis Brown, Husband and Wife* (Rexburg, Ida.: A. B. Andrus, 1992), 75–76.

<sup>208</sup>Heber J. Grant, Charles W. Penrose, and A. W. Ivins, Letter to A. W. Horsley and Counselors, December 29, 1922, microfilm of typescript, CR 1 20. Eight months later, the First Presidency sent an almost identical letter to the Relief Society general presidency indicating that they had been

limited to letters (general and priesthood handbooks lacked instruction on the matter), Church members continued to have questions regarding the propriety of female ritual administration. The Relief Society general officers and board continued to circulate mimeographed copies of the 1914 First Presidency instructions on female healing, but even this proved insufficient for some. To one woman seeking information in 1922, a General Relief Society leader wrote:

Aside from this circular, we have no instructions on the matter. The sisters performing this service, usually kneel in prayer before they begin. They then wash and bless the sister who is covered with a shield. At the close of the washing, there is a confirmation. The sister is then anointed in the same way, which is also followed by a confirmation. There are no special words to be used in connection with this ceremony. The sister who is officiating usually prays for the things desired by the sister who has asked for this service, praying that all the parts of the body will be strengthened and cleansed from impurities.<sup>209</sup>

The following year, Clarissa Smith Williams, who succeeded Emmeline B. Wells as Relief Society general president, created an addendum to the 1914 General Circular with instructions reinforcing that all women, even those who had not previously been endowed, could be washed, anointed, and blessed for childbirth.<sup>210</sup>

Despite the new emphasis on codified liturgy, it is clear that the

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contacted with questions regarding female ritual healing. First Presidency, Letter to Relief Society Presidency, August 11, 1923, typescript, Salt Lake Liberty Stake, Relief Society Scrapbook Selections, 1915–33. While Wilford Woodruff and Joseph F. Smith had saved the appellation of “ordination” for salvific rituals, Grant’s usage shows that this terminology was dynamic over time.

<sup>209</sup>[No Author], typescript note, March 31, 1922, stapled to mimeograph copies of the First Presidency letter on female ritual healing, October 3, 1914, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1. For an example of ritual performance that describes the use of a “shield,” see Sabina Josephine Larson Geoff, Diary, August 24, 1924, in *The Kemp-Goff Book: Histories of Willard A. Kemp and Carol Goff Kemp and Their Ancestors*, edited by Pamela Kemp Bishop and Robyn Bishop Warner (N.p.: N.pub., n.d.), 181.

<sup>210</sup>Undated instructions regarding washing and anointings, three small pieces of paper found with a mimeograph copy of First Presidency,



First Presidency continued to support female ritual healing. When one woman wrote President Grant about washings and anointing blessings, Grant referred the question to President Williams, instructing her to “inform her [the questioner] that matters of this kind are attended to by the Relief Society sisters and under their direction.”<sup>211</sup> However, not all Church leaders were as equally encouraging. While visiting Arizona in 1921, Apostle George Albert Smith questioned one stake president about washings and anointings for childbirth and apparently instructed a “Sister Robinson” to discountenance the practice. In response, the stake president sent Smith a copy of the 1914 First Presidency circular affirming the rituals.<sup>212</sup> Two months before the healers were removed from the temple, Charles W. Penrose, first counselor in the First Presidency, spoke in general conference on healing. He affirmed that women had the right to administer healing rituals; however, he clarified, “When women go around and declare that they have been set apart to administer to the sick and take the place that is given to the elders of the Church by revelation as declared through James of old, and through the Prophet Joseph in modern times, that is an assumption of authority and contrary to scripture.” Furthermore he equated female ritual healing with healing by “people out of the Church.”<sup>213</sup> Fifty years earlier, Brigham Young had preached to the women in the Tabernacle: “Why do you not live so as to rebuke disease? It is your privilege to do so without

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Letter, October 3, 1914, Relief Society Circulars, microfilm, CR 11 8. The third piece of paper is a typed postscript dated April 4, 1923.

<sup>211</sup>Heber J. Grant, Postscript to letter to Clarissa S. Williams, April 4, 1923, microfilm of typescript among three undated instructions regarding washing and anointings, filed with First Presidency, Letter of October 3, 1914, microfilm, CR 11 8.

<sup>212</sup>Samuel F. Smith, Snowflake, Arizona, Letter to George Albert Smith, November 29, 1921, George Albert Smith Papers, Marriott Library. “Sister Robinson” may have been Mary Jane Robinson West, who was Relief Society president of the Snowflake Stake.

<sup>213</sup>Charles W. Penrose, *Conference Report*, April 1921, 199. Later that fall, *Liahona: The Elders’ Journal* reprinted an article from the *Millennial Star* which Penrose had written in 1908 and which discussed priesthood, Protestant healing, and female healing. Charles W. Penrose, “About Healing by Faith,” *Liahona: The Elders’ Journal* 19 (September 13, 1921): 110–11; “About Healing by Faith,” *Millennial Star* 70 (May 21, 1908): 328–31.



sending for the Elders.”<sup>214</sup> He also set women apart to heal. Penrose’s discourse shows how the recently separated spheres of Mormon healing were becoming increasingly disconnected.

Penrose’s conference address appears to have had a significant effect. Two months after his talk, the Relief Society General Board discussed the case of Liberty Stake, where “the giving of blessings and administering by women were apparently carried too far. There was a ruling made that women should administer only in case of expectant mothers and when the Priesthood could not be obtained.”<sup>215</sup> Though the language of the minutes is somewhat equivocal, it appears that the general board ruled to end female healing, except in cases of exigency and pregnancy. After this point, washing and anointings for childbirth make up the preponderance of documented female-only rituals.<sup>216</sup> Though the specific washing and anointing ritual for childbirth was of rather late vintage, it related to a part of female life relatively inaccessible to men. This decision appears to be the first formal limitation of female ritual healing in its history among Mormon practitioners.

Two years later and for apparently different reasons, Rachel Grant Taylor, Heber J. Grant’s daughter, while presiding over the Relief Societies of the Northern States Mission, where her husband was mission president, ruled that women of the mission were not to perform washing and anointings as they were “hardly prepared.” The lack of local preparation was surely due to the inaccessibility of traditional folk instruction based on proximate example. The general board, discussing this decision, concluded: “President Williams felt that this was a very wise ruling, and recommended that the secretary report this decision to Sister Marie Young, president of the Relief Societies in the Northwestern States Mission, where there has been some misunderstanding regarding washing and anointing.”<sup>217</sup> Not all missions followed this lead, however. In 1924, Elder Joseph W. McMurrin of the First Council of the Seventy, who was serving as

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<sup>214</sup>Brigham Young, November 14, 1869, *Journal of Discourses*, 13:155.

<sup>215</sup>Relief Society General Board, Minutes, June 29, 1921.

<sup>216</sup>For a detailed example of one later healing ritual, see Griffiths, Diary, March 20, 1926. For a 1937 healing, see Gertrude A. Viehweg Todd, *Spiritual Experiences* (N.p.: N.pub., 1993), 5–6.

<sup>217</sup>Relief Society General Board, Minutes, May 9, 1923. One female missionary who served in the Northwest Mission in 1921–22, remembered

president of the California Mission, reported that washings and anointings by women were “carried on in his mission to the same extent, approximately, that it is in the stakes at home, without any harm having come of it.”<sup>218</sup>

Perhaps echoing the General Relief Society’s demission, the First Presidency wrote to a stake presidency in the fall of 1923 that, while they “certainly would not desire to refuse a good sister that wanted this privilege,” they were “neither encouraging nor discouraging the washing and anointing of expectant mothers.”<sup>219</sup> That same fall, Maria Young Dougall, a daughter of Brigham Young who had been raised by Zina D. H. Young, visited the offices of the Relief Society. Perhaps sensing some institutional ambivalence, she indicated that Joseph Smith had set at least seven women apart to administer to the sick and that her “mother, Zina,” had taught her how to administer. She then apparently dictated an example of washing, anointing, and blessing in preparation for childbirth for official transcription.<sup>220</sup> The transcript was kept with example washing and anointing texts for the sick, all of which appear to have never been circulated<sup>221</sup> despite recurring requests for such forms by local Relief

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washing and anointing pregnant women while serving, just as “any lady in this Church is allowed to do.” Mary Lavon Wagstaff, Autobiography, in *The Henry Wagstaff Family* (N.p.: N.pub., 1987), 95.

<sup>218</sup>Relief Society General Board, Minutes, April 16, 1924.

<sup>219</sup>First Presidency, Letter to Albert Choules and Counselors, Teton Stake, Idaho, November 6, 1923, microfilm of typescript, CR 1 20.

<sup>220</sup>Washing and Anointing Blessing Texts, ca. 1923, 7 pp., Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 2. Six years later, the Relief Society General Board evaluated the evidence that Joseph Smith had instructed Nauvoo women to wash and anoint. They determined that “while the evidence is not strictly documentary, there is ample proof to substantiate the claim that this ordinance was used by the women who received endowments under the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, and dates back to that period in Church history.” Relief Society General Board, Minutes, January 2, 1929.

<sup>221</sup>Stapled to the Washing and Anointing Blessing Texts is a holograph note signed by Velma N. Simonsen and dated June 27, 1951, which states: “Found in the files of the General Board of Relief Society. Has not been distributed during the administration of the present general Board officers.”

Societies.<sup>222</sup> Whereas instructional documents on male healing were increasingly available, knowledge of female healing rituals was apparently transmitted only by traditional folk means from woman to woman.

Still, local Relief Societies maintained the practices where feasible. Often the women who administered these rituals were local Relief Society officers. One Relief Society president in Logan was set apart to “wash and anoint expectant mothers” in 1929, a job she dutifully performed for more than a decade.<sup>223</sup> Another Relief Society president during this time described that her newly constructed ward meetinghouse had a closet equipped with a water faucet and a “number three tub” used for these rituals.<sup>224</sup> Not all Relief Societies had such facilities. In 1936, the Relief Society president of the Salt Lake City Thirty-first Ward administered to her pregnant daughter in the parlor of the mother’s home.<sup>225</sup> A woman in the Granger Ward in the Salt Lake Valley described “Three Special Relief Society Angels of Mercy” who were set apart and who washed and anointed her before

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<sup>222</sup>Relief Society General Board, Minutes, October 21, 1925, note that, after one such request, “President Williams stated that while the General Board had been asked many times for a definite form to be used in this work, the request had never been granted, and she felt that it would be unwise at the present time to comply with the request.”

<sup>223</sup>Laura Pearl Knowles Everton, Diary, undated entries in book covering 1942, typescript, photocopy in our possession, holograph in possession of Frank Everton Wagstaff; used by permission. This diary section documents Everton’s being set apart with other women and then includes a register of blessings for childbirth and health which she delivered from 1929 to 1940. One of the recipients of her blessings was Nora Perry, the mother of current LDS Apostle L. Tom Perry.

<sup>224</sup>Ann Amelia Chamberlain Esplin (1896–1976), Oral History, interviewed by Ronald K. Esplin, Salt Lake City, 1973, OH 27.

<sup>225</sup>Marian Coulam Free, Oral History, telephone-interviewed by Kristine Wright, April 14, 2007, transcript in our possession. Documentation of the ritual is in “Washings and Anointings Done by Sisters in 31st Ward, 1921–1945.” One member of the ward Relief Society presidency in Calgary, Alberta, remembered similarly administering as a presidency to the women of her ward from the “early 1930s on.” Lucile H. Ursenbach, unaddressed letter, August 14, 1980, holograph, Jill Mulvay Derr Research Collection.

the births of her three children from 1936 to 1947.<sup>226</sup> Women also administered to other women receiving care at the Cottonwood Stake Maternity Hospital in Salt Lake City during this period.<sup>227</sup>

Whereas folk liturgy met the ritual and worship needs of the isolated and intimate nineteenth-century Mormon community, the Church at the turn of the twentieth century faced increasing pressure from both internal and external stressors. Thomas G. Alexander's description of Church modernization under Joseph F. Smith, is equally valid in describing liturgical formalization under Heber J. Grant: "As the society in which the Latter-day Saints lived became increasingly pluralistic, if not secular, the Mormon community no longer created its own internal regulatory mechanism. Under those circumstances, rational organization and fixed rules replaced a sense of community as the means of establishing norms which the Saints were expected to observe."<sup>228</sup> While the degree to which religious norms of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints was successfully controlled has yet to be demonstrated, the success of the modern Mormon Church in creating meaningful religious community is surely in part attributable to the liturgical formality initiated by Grant. That both male and female Church leaders did not include ritual healing and blessing by women in that formalization process highlights the cleavage in healing liturgy created as Latter-day Saints looked to priesthood as a means of solidifying community and self-perceived institutional primacy in the previous decades. The result of this formalization was a distinct curtailing of female ritual administration to their pregnant sisters in certain geographical regions.

### PRIESTHOOD EVOLUTION AND FEMALE RITUAL HEALING

After the priesthood reform at the turn of the century and the liturgical formalization of the 1920s, the relationship of the priesthood quorums to Church bureaucracy and liturgy continued to evolve. Specifically, in the 1930s due to pressure from schismatic polygamist groups, Church leaders more formally associated the priesthood with ecclesial bureaucratic structure. This association in turn facilitated

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<sup>226</sup>Gertrude Avonia Viehweg Todd, *Personal History of Gertrude Avonia Viehweg Todd* (N.p., N.pub., n.d.), chap 8, pp. 3, 10, 15.

<sup>227</sup>Evelyn Bateman Spratling, Autobiography, in Jennifer Jeppson Cheney, comp., *A History of the Family of Thomas Philip Bateman and Mary Josephine Wilson* (N.p.: N.pub., 2006), 142.

<sup>228</sup>Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 94.

the “correlation” movement which rebuilt that structure along priesthood lines in subsequent decades. Liturgy during this period became increasingly priesthood-centric; and although female ritual healing persisted for decades during these changes, it also followed a path of declension to its end.

In 1920, the newly amalgamated Correlation Committee and the Social Advisory Committee issued a report intended to define “the relationship of the auxiliary organizations and agencies of the Church each to the other and to the quorums and organization to the Priesthood, and of defining the activities and fields of endeavor of each of the auxiliary associations and Church agencies.” Though the report’s suggestions were not adopted—leaders viewed the changes as too dramatic—many of the ideas found traction later. The report concluded that the duties of the Relief Society including caring for the sick and the poor and providing education on welfare, health and sex education, and household management, though this range of activity “does not preclude work and discussion of a theological or doctrinal nature.” The report then suggested that bishops work with and manage local Relief Societies.<sup>229</sup>

While instructional materials followed the suggestions of the Correlation Committee in the 1920s,<sup>230</sup> the First Presidency continued to encourage the general board’s governance of the Relief Societies’ ritual blessing activities. However, by the 1930s, local priesthood officials started to manage female ritual healing. In 1935 one woman who had served for over a decade in a blessing committee wrote Louise Yates Robison, now the Relief Society general president. She asked if it was still “orthodox and sanctioned by the Church” to wash and

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<sup>229</sup>“Report of the Correlation—Social Advisory Committee to the First Presidency and the Council of Twelve on the Definition and Assignment of Auxiliary Functions and Organizations,” April 12, 1921, CR 4 301, Box 4, fd. 3. See also Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*, 153–54.

<sup>230</sup>*Instructions to Bishops and Counselors, Stake and Ward Clerks, No. 13* ([Salt Lake City: LDS Church], 1921), 26–27, states: “The ward Relief Society will labor under the direction of the Bishop and will be his chief aid in caring for the poor and unfortunate. The Relief Society teachers should visit every family once a month, or oftener if necessary, and report immediately to the President of the Society cases of need, poverty, distress or sickness. The President, under the direction of the Bishop will see that relief is promptly given.”

anoint pregnant mothers, claiming that neither her "Stake Relief Society President, nor our Stake President seem to have nothing definite on this matter."<sup>231</sup> This statement highlights the general inability of the folk transmission of the ritual to maintain liturgical consistency in the new era. Robison wrote that the inquiring sister should contact her stake Relief Society president and also, with her counselor, Julia Lund, sent that president these instructions:

In reference to the question raised, may we say that this beautiful ordinance has always been with the Relief Society, and it is our earnest hope that we may continue to have that privilege, and up to the present time the Presidents of the Church have always allowed it to us. There are some places, however, where a definite stand against it has been taken by the Priesthood Authorities, and where such is the case we cannot do anything but accept their will in the matter. However, where the sisters are permitted to do this for expectant mothers we wish it done very quietly, and without any infringement upon the Temple Service. It is in reality a mother's blessing, and we do not advocate the appointment of any committees to have this in charge, but any worthy good sister is eligible to perform this service if she has faith, and is in good standing in the Church. It is something that should be treated very carefully, and as we have suggested, with no show or discussion made of it.<sup>232</sup>

While the Relief Society General Board thus limited female participation in healings, and blessings of pregnant women were curtailed in certain regions in the 1920s, it appears that some priesthood leaders by this time began to further limit the practice. The Robison-Lund letter of instructions to the stake Relief Society president includes elements that reappeared in a letter from Robison to a bishop in an unspecified locale a few months later. In this letter, Robison noted that the rituals were to be "very quietly performed" but acknowledged that some women "have been over-zealous, or made too much publicity, then the Priesthood authorities have refused to sanction it."<sup>233</sup> The nature of this "over-zealous" behavior is not clear; however, it is certain that the ritual performance common to the nineteenth century was, at

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<sup>231</sup>Martha A. Hickman, Letter to Louise Y. Robison, November 28, 1935, Logan, Utah, microfilm of typescript, MS 6020.

<sup>232</sup>Louise Y. Robison and Julia A. F. Lund, Letter to Mrs. Ada E. Morrell, December 5, 1935, copy in private possession, quoted in Newell, "Gifts of the Spirit," 137–38.

<sup>233</sup>Louise Y. Robison to Bishop Wm. Albert McClellan, March 31,

this point, beyond the bounds of ecclesial propriety.

The transition to formal priesthood governance over all facets of the Church was facilitated by the rhetorical evolution of the term “priesthood” and the new emphasis that priesthood is essential and inextricably connected with Church bureaucratic structure. Apostle John A. Widtsoe’s *Priesthood and Church Government* was an important volume used as the Melchizedek Priesthood study manual during 1940–41. This compilation of scripture and quotations of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Church leaders outlined the role of the priesthood in Church government, with the new bureaucratic functions being heavily evidenced by contemporary leaders’ teachings. This shift was an apparent response to schismatic polygamist threats to the governing authority of the First Presidency and Twelve.<sup>234</sup>

Beyond the debates induced by non-Mormon healing at the turn of the century, Widtsoe asserted in his section on “Spiritual Gifts,” which treated healing, tongues, prophecy, and other charismata, that “the spiritual gifts which always accompany the Church of Christ and are signs of its verity, are properly exercised under the power of the Priesthood.”<sup>235</sup> While this phrase could be read in the context of Doctrine and Covenants 46 to indicate that charismata is managed by the priesthood, it is also easily construed to mean that charismata occurs only through the priesthood.<sup>236</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, Widtsoe’s section on ritual healing outlines standard priesthood practice, but it also quotes Joseph Smith’s 1842 revelation regarding female ritual healing without commentary.<sup>237</sup> Contemporaneous with Widtsoe’s publication, Joseph Fielding Smith edited and published various teachings attributed to Joseph Smith in his influen-

1936, Relief Society Headquarters Historical Files quoted in Derr, Cannon, and Beecher, *Women of Covenant*, 221.

<sup>234</sup>Daymon Mickel Smith, “The Last Shall Be First and the First Shall Be Last’: Discourse and Mormon History” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2007), esp. 416–23.

<sup>235</sup>John A. Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 383–89.

<sup>236</sup>Though there are similar antecedent usages, the catechismal idea that the priesthood is the power to act in the name of God was popularized during the era of correlation.

<sup>237</sup>*Ibid.*, 356–57.



tial *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, which followed Widtsoe's volume as the Melchizedek Priesthood curriculum for two years. Smith also included an extended excerpt of the same Joseph Smith teachings on female ritual healing.<sup>238</sup>

While there was a systematic effort to consolidate power in the Church bureaucracy through priesthood government during this period, the Church liturgy—an intimate part of Latter-day Saint life—did not radically and immediately transform. Still, the codified liturgy increasingly emphasized priesthood. For example, the dedication of graves, which started as a folk ritual in nineteenth-century Utah,<sup>239</sup> was successfully formalized in the 1920s as part of the codified liturgy. The ritual was not traditionally a “priesthood ordinance”; and in discussing the ritual, Widtsoe stated, “Though one holding the Priesthood is generally chosen, any suitable person may dedicate a grave.”<sup>240</sup> The Melchizedek Priesthood Committee of the Council of the Twelve reaffirmed this inclusive policy in 1941.<sup>241</sup> By the end of that decade, however, this same committee, though composed of somewhat different membership, instructed that grave dedication, like healing and other priesthood rituals “be performed by the authority of the priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ.”<sup>242</sup> Since this time, dedicating graves has been formally considered a priesthood ritual.

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<sup>238</sup>Joseph Fielding Smith, comp. and ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 224–25.

<sup>239</sup>While there are likely earlier examples, the first grave dedication of which we are currently aware is that of George A. Smith. [no author], “Brigham Young,” *Deseret News*, September 9, 1875, 505.

<sup>240</sup>Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government*, 360. For an example of an early grave dedicatory prayer, see Edward H. Anderson, “An Incident of Everyday Life,” *Improvement Era* 8 (May 1905): 823–26.

<sup>241</sup>Melchizedek Priesthood Committee of the Council of the Twelve, “Melchizedek Priesthood: Melchizedek Priesthood Outline of Study, December, 1941,” *Improvement Era* 44 (November 1841): 685.

<sup>242</sup>Melchizedek Priesthood Committee of the Council of the Twelve, “Melchizedek Priesthood: Ordinances and Ceremonies,” *Improvement Era* 51 (November 1848): 731; General Priesthood Committee, *Melchizedek Priesthood Handbook* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1948), 86. The same change can be viewed in the instructions for dedicating graves in *The Missionary Hand Book*. The 1937, 1940, and 1944 editions indicate that any

From the 1930s on, as Church leaders increasingly associated priesthood with Church bureaucracy, priesthood also became increasingly associated with Church liturgy. This trend persisted through the twentieth century, as manifested by questions regarding whether women could pray or be the concluding speaker in sacrament meetings.<sup>243</sup>

The blessing of pregnant women by other women endured for a surprisingly long time under these circumstances, though with decreasing frequency. When the Relief Society General Board met in 1940, General President Amy Brown Lyman reported a recent inquiry into the policy regarding washing and anointing. The board discussed the matter and “various reports indicated that this service is still rendered in some stakes, but has been discontinued in others where all administrations are performed by members of the Priesthood.”<sup>244</sup> A few months later, in response to questions from one stake Relief Society president in Idaho, Vera W. Pohlman, the Relief Society general secretary, made similar observations indicating that in areas where washing and anointings did not occur, the petitioner was to request a blessing from a priesthood holder. She cautioned, however, that where the ritual was still performed that it be “done quietly and unostentatiously, and that no one be especially set apart to officiate.”<sup>245</sup>

Deference to priesthood is a persistent theme in subsequent

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member can dedicate a grave. However, the 1946 revised edition indicates that the grave should be dedicated by one holding the Melchizedek Priesthood.

<sup>243</sup>On the policy shifts regarding female prayer in sacrament meeting, see Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Working Manuscript), chap. 17, p. 16, on *Spencer W. Kimball CD Library*, included with *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005).

<sup>244</sup>Relief Society General Board, Minutes, February 21, 1940. For an example blessing that occurred in Shelley, Idaho, in February 1944, see Della Maude Dial Fielding, “Maude’s Life: An Annual Autobiography,” typescript edition (N.p.: Privately published, forthcoming); courtesy of Lavina Fielding Anderson. This blessing was administered in Eaton’s Maternity Home in Shelley for the first of her six children but not for the remaining five, the second of whom was born only two years later.

<sup>245</sup>Vera W. Pohlman, Letter to Afton W. Hunt, May 27, 1940, typescript, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1.

years. In 1941 when writing to another stake Relief Society president in Utah, Pohlman instructed that "it is left to the discretion of your stake Priesthood authorities as to whether they wish women in the stake to perform this service." Pohlman further instructed that it "is not recommended that women be set apart for this purpose, but the Priesthood authorities may, if they desire to do so, appoint women to perform this service."<sup>246</sup> Questions were sufficiently common that in 1946 the general board queried Joseph Fielding Smith, who was generally viewed as the Church's authority on doctrine and policy, about this practice. Smith responded:

While the authorities of the Church have ruled that it is permissible, under certain conditions and with the approval of the priesthood, for sisters to wash and anoint other sisters, yet they feel that it is far better for us to follow the plan the Lord has given us and send for the elders of the Church to come and administer to the sick and afflicted.

The service of washing and anointing is not a Relief Society function, and therefore, is not under the direction of the Relief Society. Women should not be set apart to perform this ordinance, but the presiding priesthood authorities may determine if such an ordinance is to be performed and designate the sisters to perform it. The washing and anointing by our sisters in the past was greatly abused and improperly done, and for this reason, as well as for the reason that the Lord has given by revelation the order for the administration of those who are sick or in need of a blessing, the washing and anointing by the sisters has not been encouraged.<sup>247</sup>

This letter became the definitive statement on female ritual administration for the next several decades. In the years after its reception, General President Belle Spafford read it to the Relief Society Board when discussing the topic and it was included in instructional letters

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<sup>246</sup>Vera W. Pohlman, Letter to Vera S. Hilton, May 9, 1941, typescript, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1.

<sup>247</sup>Joseph Fielding Smith, Letter, July 29, 1946, typescript on Relief Society letterhead, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1. This typescript, apparently a draft copy prepared for circulation, included the following typed headnote: "This letter written by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, July 29, 1946. (Said we might add to it if we wish.)" A typed footer, an apparent addition, stated: "Your letter of recent date with respect to washing and anointing has been received. Many such enquiries have reached this office and after consultation with the proper authorities we have been advised as follows."

to local leaders.<sup>248</sup> When Relief Society Board member Leone G. Layton, prepared the new Relief Society handbook, printed in 1949, it included the text of Smith's letter but without attribution in the section entitled "Care for the Sick."<sup>249</sup> This text remained in the handbook until 1968, when the Relief Society prepared a new handbook and published it through the Correlation Department.<sup>250</sup>

As the Relief Society Board had done in the years before receiving the 1946 Joseph Fielding Smith letter, its publication in the Relief Society's handbook unequivocally situated female ritual administration firmly under the direction of local priesthood leaders throughout the entire Church. At the same time, local priesthood leaders re-

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<sup>248</sup>Relief Society General Board, Minutes, December 11, 1946. Margaret C. Pickering, Letter to Sina Mecham, December 8, 1947, typescript, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1. Pickering was responding to Sina Mecham, Taber, Alberta, Letter to Margaret C. Pickering, December 1, 1947, holograph, Relief Society Washing and Anointing File, CR 11 304, Box 1, fd. 1.

<sup>249</sup>Relief Society, *Handbook of the Relief Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: General Board of Relief Society, 1949), 82–83. According to [no author identified], *History of the Relief Society, 1842–1966* (Salt Lake City: General Board of the Relief Society, 1966), 99, the handbooks printed between 1949 and 1966 were all the same and were based on the 1931 handbook issued by the Relief Society Board that Amy Brown Lyman and Annie Wells Cannon had prepared. There is however, no mention of administering to the sick in the 1931 edition. The 1949 handbook was prepared by Leone G. Layton, who "studied all the General Board Minutes up to that time, the Magazines, all instructions, record books, etc., in the preparation" for its creation. Relief Society General Board, Minutes, August 4, 1965, 297–98; line breaks removed.

<sup>250</sup>On August 4, 1965, Relief Society President Belle Spafford, speaking to the general board about the new handbook, said that it was "to be issued under the direction of the Church Coordinating Committee with Elder Bruce R. McConkie in charge. As preliminary work, she said, Sisters Evon W. Peterson and Anna B. Hart had accomplished a remarkable work in going through all the rules, regulations, and recommendations set up by the General Board, in evaluating them, and in organizing them for a Handbook. Since there will be a Church Handbook, rather than auxiliary handbooks, this preliminary work had been completed just in time." Relief Society General Board, Minutes, August 4, 1965, 297–98; line breaks removed.

ceived training only on the codified formal liturgy of the Church. Only those local leaders who had been recipients of folk instruction and therefore had a personal history with female ritual administration could direct such activities. And with time such leaders became increasingly rare.

### CONCLUSION

The last general instruction on female participation in healing rituals was also an instruction on collaborative healing and was delivered by Joseph Fielding Smith, then president of the Quorum of the Twelve, in 1955. In response to a question in his regular "Answers to Gospel Questions" column in the *Improvement Era*, Smith quoted his father, Joseph F. Smith, as saying that it was "no uncommon thing" for a man and women to join their faith in administering to their children together. He also quoted Joseph Smith's 1842 revelation on female healing from his popular *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*.<sup>251</sup> Joseph Fielding Smith's parents regularly administered healing rituals together. Aware of this, and of his father's documented support of female healing as Church President, he had to negotiate between his Church's increasingly formalized liturgy and the reality of his personal experience in his family of origin. Perhaps surprisingly, Smith's affirmation of female ritual healing is still in print and available in a recent edition at popular Church-owned book sellers as *Answers to Gospel Questions*.<sup>252</sup> When Bruce R. McConkie silently edited Smith's teachings for inclusion in *Doctrines of Salvation*, however, it is clear that the tension had been resolved in favor of the formalized liturgy and priesthood primacy.<sup>253</sup>

It is notable that the last remaining remnant of Church-approved female participation in healing rituals recalls the union of faith

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<sup>251</sup>Joseph Fielding Smith, "Answers to Gospel Questions," *Improvement Era* 58 (August 1955): 558–59, 607.

<sup>252</sup>Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions* (1957–66; rpt., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998), 1:149.

<sup>253</sup>An unattributed section states: "The Brethren do not consider it necessary or wise for the women of the Relief Society to wash and anoint women who are sick. The Lord has given us directions in matters of this kind; we are to call in the elders, and they are to anoint with oil on the head and bless by the laying on of hands." Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols., edited by Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft,

that was born of the Nauvoo period. The iconic expression of “no uncommon thing” still resonates with a disappearing generation of Church leaders, who likely saw their own mothers participate in some form of ritual administration during their childhoods. The enduring power of such folk administration, despite the legacy of formalization can be seen in a powerful example of unity that occurred in the life of President Spencer W. Kimball who struggled with a significant number of health problems and received frequent administrations from other Church leaders as an apostle and as Church president. In September 1979, after Kimball’s first brain surgery for a subdural hematoma, his son, Edward, recorded in his diary:

Dad had just been given some codeine for headache; he had not said much according to the nurse, but he had asked for a blessing. . . . Pres. Benson was taking a treatment at the Deseret Gym and could not come right away, so the security man had called Elders McConkie and Hanks; Mother was glad. Elder Hanks anointed Dad and Elder McConkie sealed the anointing as I joined them. At Elder McConkie’s suggestion Mother also placed her hands on Dad’s head. That was unusual; it seemed right to me, but I would not have felt free to suggest it on my own because of an ingrained sense that the ordinance is a priesthood ordinance (though I recalled Joseph Smith’s talking of mothers blessing their children). After the administration Mother wept almost uncontrollably for some minutes, gradually calming down.<sup>254</sup>

A circle that includes mother and son as well as representatives of the Church leading quorums provides a compelling image, which highlights the enduring legacy of collaborative healing among Mormons.

The evolution of liturgical authority is an ongoing process in Mormonism and the role of both women in the liturgy is still dynamic. Female ritual healing was a natural feature of the Mormon landscape and, for over a century, highlighted changing institutional views of women and authority. Max Weber astutely observed that women are granted greater equality in nascent religions among

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1954–56), 3:178. Note that *Answers to Gospel Questions* was published after this and retains the supportive statements.

<sup>254</sup>Edward L. Kimball, Diary, September 7, 1979, typescript excerpt in our possession, courtesy of Edward Kimball. President Kimball’s mother recorded several instances when she administered rituals for health. See, e.g., Olive Woolley Kimball, Diary, May 17, 1901, and May 24, 1902, microfilm of holograph, MS 2136.

socially marginal groups. These women generally participate in “unconstrained relationships” with prophetic figures, but that “only in very rare cases does this practice continue beyond the first stage of a religious community’s formation, when the pneumatic manifestations of charisma are valued as hallmark[s] of specifically religious exultation.”<sup>255</sup> The degree to which Weber’s characterization is useful in understanding female participation in Mormon healing is complicated by the degree to which female healing praxis was marginalized not just by the “routinization of charisma” but by the dynamic reconceptualization of liturgical authority due to extrinsic pressures by competitive religious movements. Both the temple liturgy and female healing rituals were mediated by the conventions of oral tradition.<sup>256</sup> While the temple and other rites were adapted to accommodate the modern era of codification, female healing rituals were subsumed in the same process.

Beginning as simply a sign that follows those who believe, female ritual healing was an integral part of the development of Mormon healing generally. Affirming years of practice, Joseph Smith revealed that women in the Church had both the authority to heal and access to divine power. Equipped with the same rituals as male members, even sometimes ministering with them, women helped to establish Mormonism’s unique culture, blending medicine and divine cures. Women learned how to ritually administer as did men; they relied on the ready examples of trusted leaders, communal experience, and oral communication. The twentieth century brought dramatic changes, first with liturgical and then priesthood reformation. While female healing persisted for decades, relying on older and outmoded methods of pedagogy, it eventually faded as modern systems and new perspectives dominated the liturgy and leadership of the Church. Though the Church currently does not authorize women to administer healing rituals, the heritage of female healing in the LDS Church is an essential facet of Mormon history and testament to the faith, power, and community of Mormon women.

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<sup>255</sup>Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, translated by Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 104.

<sup>256</sup>Kathleen Flake, “‘Not to be Riten’: The Mormon Temple Rite as Oral Canon,” *Journal of Ritual Studies* 9 (Summer 1995): 1–21.