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“POURING IN OIL”: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN MORMON HEALING RITUAL

Though many believe that ritual behavior is rigid and unchanging, ritual behavior is highly innovative and sensitive to cultural changes and norms. Certainly that holds true in Latter-day Saint practice as our rituals often change both in form and meaning in response to new cultural views. Jonathan Stapley examines this aspect of ritual by reviewing the rich history of Latter-day Saint healing rituals. While worthwhile for its historical content, the chapter also demonstrates the value of ritual innovation and the power that may come from recognizing it in order to retain our cultural heritage and move forward in the modern era. —DB

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. (Luke 10:33–34)

JESUS’ PARABLE OF THE GOOD Samaritan was intended as an illustrative definition of one’s neighbor and not as a dissertation on healing. Nevertheless, the story incorporates elements of Jesus’ cultural context,

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including the belief that oil was a therapeutic substance as well as food and fuel.¹ In the millennia that followed Christ's response to the clever lawyer, the Christian approach to healing by anointing vacillated greatly. And by the time that Joseph Smith Jr. met with fellow believers on the morning of April 6, 1830, to formally incorporate the Church of Christ, neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant churches formally advocated ritual healing.²

The broader Christian healing culture has changed dramatically in the last 183 years. So too has Mormon healing culture changed from the earliest moments of the Restoration to the present. In the nineteenth century, Mormon healing situated itself in response to Christian cessationism³ and "heroic" allopathic medicine, sometimes incorporating the folk traditions of its converts. In the twentieth century, with the rise of popular Protestant healing movements and clinically viable medical technology, Mormon practice no longer pushed against ideas that God's power had ceased and that medical science was dangerous. Instead, Latter-day Saints adapted their healing liturgy to accommodate the scientific rationalism of their doctors and distinguished themselves from other Christian healers through an emphasis on priesthood. Healing is perhaps the most dynamic area of ritual development in Mormonism, with a host of different rituals and ministrants. It is consequently an area where we can learn much about the development of Mormon theology and practice more broadly, connecting modern believers to their distant past.⁴

Healing during Joseph Smith's Life

On October 25, 1831, William McLellin attended a conference in Orange, Ohio, where he first met Joseph Smith and several other Church leaders. The following day, he traveled the approximately twenty miles back to Kirtland. He recorded the details of those events in his diary:

I stepped off of a large log and strained my ankle very badly—thence I rode; and just as I was abo[u]t to start to bed I asked brother Joseph what he thought about my ancle's being healed. He immediately turned to me and asked me if I believed in my heart

that God through his instrumentality would heal it. I answered that I believed he would. He laid his hands on it and it was healed although It was swelled much and had pained me severely.⁵

In this short vignette, McLellin described activities that challenged the fundamental premises of American Christianity. At the time Joseph Smith wielded the power of God to heal McLellin's injured ankle, American Protestants, with the exception of a few small sectarian Methodist and Baptist groups, generally accepted cessationism, the belief that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, including healing, all ended with the biblical era. The conservative orthodoxy maintained that these gifts were necessary as a witness of the reality of the gospel after Christ's Resurrection, but that they were no longer necessary after the compilation of the Bible.⁶

Instead, in moments of sickness and death, Protestants in Joseph Smith's time invoked a belief in providence—the idea that God dictates all things. From this perspective, passive resignation to suffering and even death was most in harmony with divine will. Beginning with the Book of Mormon and its warning against the lack of miracles and healing, Joseph Smith's career can be viewed as an extended dissent from this position. Conservative Protestants viewed healing rituals as fraudulent, corrupt, and blasphemous. Joseph Smith viewed them as a witness that his people had both the form and the power of godliness.⁷

Like the Apostles described in the New Testament, in the first years of the restored Church of Christ, elders either commanded the sick to be made whole or prayed over the sick and laid their hands on them, reflecting divine instruction given through Joseph Smith exhorting the Saints to ritually administer to the sick (see D&C 35:9; 42:44; 66:9).⁸ Intriguingly, these early healings were not viewed so much as the exclusive exercise of priesthood authority as they were general spiritual gifts available to all Saints. Instead of invoking priesthood, the Saints healed "in the name of Jesus Christ," and the gift was shared by all members—both male and female.⁹ For example, when Joseph Smith Sr. started pronouncing patriarchal blessings on the Saints, he bestowed the gift of healing on both men and women, and he specifically authorized women to perform healing

rituals.¹⁰ Healing in early Mormonism thus exists as one of two gifts of the Spirit: (1) the gift to heal, or to command the sick to be made whole, and (2) prophecy, or the gift to foretell the future.¹¹

Despite this emphasis on healing power and ritual, Joseph Smith did not completely forsake the idea of divine providence. In fact, on February 9, 1831, he dictated a revelation stating that only those who were not “appointed unto death” could be healed (D&C 42:48). Latter-day Saints could receive power to heal and perform healing rituals, but in some cases no healing could be possible. Generally speaking, the invocation of providence in this context is a theodicy and was typically only considered after the failure of a healing ritual to bring about the desired result.¹²

Outside of the healing liturgy, early Mormons, like many evangelical populists during the Second Great Awakening, generally rejected the standard medical treatments of the period.¹³ Referred to as heroic allopathic medicine, these treatments often involved such practices as bloodletting and consuming materials now known to be toxic. The Mormons instead relied on botanic cures popularized as Thomsonianism (pejoratively called “sectarian medicine”),¹⁴ and a number of early Church leaders were botanic physicians. In December 1835, Oliver Cowdery responded to a botanic physician inquiring into the possibility of practicing at Kirtland:

We are a people who design living near the Lord, that our bodies may be healed when we are sick, for a general rule, though our faith is yet weak, being young, weak and surrounded by a wicked enticing world—When, however, we have need of an earthly physician, and in many instances we have, we call upon our highly esteemed friend and brother Dr. F. G. Williams [counselor to Joseph Smith], universally known through this country as an eminent and skillful man. I may say in short, he is also a Botanic Physician—which course of practice is generally approved by us.¹⁵

Describing the conditions in Kirtland in 1837, Willard Richards, himself a botanic physician, wrote that “Poison Drs [allopathic practitioners]

fare no better here than Sectarian Priests. they are all treated well so long as they keep their poisons in their own pockets. When the saints have not faith to be healed, the word of wisdom is, herbs & mild food. consequently the saints are Thomsonians, so far as they know."¹⁶ Willard Richards, pointing to the deleterious effects of some common treatments (a soluble mercury salt—calomel—among other dangerous compounds), alluded to two revelations (D&C 42:48–52 and D&C 89, the latter known as the "Word of Wisdom") that endorsed botanic therapies. In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith advocated for botanic medicine and endorsed Levi Richards as a botanic physician.¹⁷ Highlighting the perceived superiority of botanic medicine later in Utah, President Brigham Young compared Thomsonian remedies to the restored gospel, and the remedies of traditional physicians to apostate Christianity.¹⁸ That such medical beliefs existed alongside ritual healing processes reveals that the Saints were not opposed to secular medical treatment but instead used what they believed were the best medical therapies available. Still, there was hierarchy of effectiveness. For both Richards and Cowdery, healing by faith was preferred, and if the Saints had increased faith, medical therapies would consequently not be necessary.

Joseph Smith introduced consecrated oil to Latter-day Saints as part of the Kirtland Temple liturgy in 1836, whereupon anointing became the dominant form of healing ritual, with anointings on various afflicted parts of the body as well as the head. For example, a few months after William McLellin, then an Apostle, participated in the Kirtland Temple rituals, he, with others, "anointed, prayed for and laid our hands upon A. Culbertson's sore leg."¹⁹ Drinking consecrated oil also became common.²⁰ With revelations supporting the use of plants in healing and wellness and the New Testament's support of anointing the sick (see Mark 6:13; James 5:14–15), the use of consecrated oil as a medical therapy was a likely natural development in Mormon practice.

The relationship between the newly introduced temple and its associated liturgy with healing was a profound one. Moreover, in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith envisioned the temple to be a sacred place for healing. Not only was anointing a commonality between the temple rites and healing

rites—from the first formal day of baptisms in the Nauvoo Temple font, people were also baptized for their health, a practice that was soon common outside the temple.²¹ In addition, the initiatory rituals of the Nauvoo Temple liturgy were also adapted to healing, as was the prayer circle.²² Thus almost every aspect of the temple rites had a healing analogue.

After Joseph Smith's April 28, 1842, sermon to the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, in which he announced as a revelation that women are authorized to lay on hands and administer healing rituals,²³ both men and women participated in a host of rituals evocative of salvation from both physical and spiritual death. Joseph Smith repeatedly taught that the endowment comprised the conferral of spiritual power, including the power to heal. Both men and women were to be endowed with power from on high. By the end of his life, Smith had introduced a number of rituals to channel that power to heal.

Through these rituals, the Saints realized a collapse of the distinction between physical and spiritual in a seeming recapitulation of a biblical worldview, in which healing and exorcism are often indistinguishable.²⁴ The idea that demons were a source of physical maladies had generally died out by the time of the Restoration, and Joseph Smith explicitly stated that the devil did not cause all disease.²⁵ However, many Saints did believe that Satan and evil spirits could wield significant physical power over individuals. Newell Knight described being called to his aunt who was apparently on her deathbed in the first year of the Church. Knight discerned that her illness resulted from demonic possession and "cried unto the Lord for strength and wisdom that we might prevail" over the evil spirit. He "took her by the hand and commanded satan, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to depart. I told my aunt she should not die, but that she should live to se[e] her children grow up," and she was healed.²⁶

Another example on the trail west highlights roles in health of both the temple and diabolical power. Hosea Stout recorded the sickness and death of his namesake son. He gathered "all the men & women who had had their endowment and [to] have the ordinance performed according to the Holy order." The young child appeared to gain health through their administration. However, after a subsequent storm in which he was

soaked, he got worse: "My child seemed strangely affected to night after laying hands on him we found him to [be] troubled with evil spirits who I knew now were determined on his destruction He would show all signs of wrath to wards me & his mother and apparently try to talk. His looks were demoniac accopanned by the most frightful gestures I ever saw in a child." They administered again, but this time to no avail, and little Hosea passed away.²⁷ As this account shows, the temple rituals were understood to be of particular benefit in healing, and as such, the temple stood in contrast to diabolical power that could, and did, affect one's health.

By the time the first Saints arrived in the Great Basin, Mormons had a diverse healing liturgy—a set of rituals adapted from salvific antecedents—and variously employed it to save their loved ones from sickness, disease, and even death. Yet as efficacious as these rites may have been, they were never a guarantee; as Brigham Young stated in a sermon along the Western Trail: "Some times we lay hands upon the sick & they are healed instantly. Other times with all the faith & medicine they are a long time getting well, & others die."²⁸ The struggle to muster faith sufficient for a miracle and the possibility that God willed a particular person's death were consistent companions in Mormon healing practices.

Utah Healing Practice

After the vanguard pioneer company arrived in the Great Basin during the summer of 1847, Saints from around the world converged in the Intermountain West to establish Zion. These converts readily adopted the unique Latter-day Saint approach to healing; however, they also brought aspects of their own cultures with them. In particular, British converts, who accounted for the bulk of Church membership, were often advocates of folk healing practices that could appear "magical" to modern observers, though such appellations serve primarily to indicate otherness.²⁹ There is no question that American Mormons also participated in the folk healing and divination common to their regions,³⁰ but the British Saints appear to have had more commonly retained beliefs and practices in the Utah period that were explicitly evocative of cunning folk and other pre-Mormon folk rituals. Such syncretism of British folk healing and Mormon liturgy is

documented frequently among converts. For example, John Steele, an Irish convert, was a prominent patriarch and healer in Toquerville, Utah, up to the introduction of modern medical societies.³¹ His diary *qua grimoire* is replete with traditional astrological healing texts, charms, and divination methods.³² More broadly, folklorists Wayland D. Hand and Jeannine E. Talley hypothesized that the large amount of unique folk traditions in Utah compared to other areas in the United States is due to the relatively high rate of international immigration to the area.³³

One particular folk healing form was the implementation of wooden canes.³⁴ The following two accounts offer a comparison that potentially highlights the particular syncretism of some British Saints. The first account describes the healing use of a cane in Winter Quarters before the vanguard company left for the Great Basin in 1847. According to his journal, John D. Lee suffered from a violent fever and vomiting. Brigham Young, Wilford Woodruff, Willard Richards, and Levi Stewart came to his residence, whereupon Young “laid on [his] breast a cane built from one of the branches of the Tree of Life that stood in the garden in the Temple.” The sick man described that “this as a matter to be expected, collected my thoughts and centered them on sacred and solemn things.” Stewart and Woodruff then anointed and blessed him.³⁵ In this case, the traditional folk use of the cane was grafted onto the Mormon temple rites and symbolism. While the healing nature of the cane is reflected in its placement upon the chest of the afflicted, the implement itself was metaphorically understood to be a branch from the tree of life, a central image in the temple liturgy. It is also possible that the allusion to the Garden of Eden may have particular meaning to the individuals involved, evoking both the Edenic state without sickness and the image of the Saints cast out from their sacred garden, suffering in the lonely, bitter world. These scraps of the temple to which the Saints clung served as a poignant context to the suffering from disease on the western trail.

The second account can be found in the 1848 *Millennial Star*, which published a letter from John Albiston, a native elder in England, recounting many miraculous healings. Among them were several healings elicited by the use of his cane:

While I was looking about me one day, I left my stick at the brothers in Old Swinford; the brother and father-in-law worked together as nailors, and the young man had a deep cut in his hand, caused by a piece of iron with which he had been at work. He went to my stick and rubbed his hand against it, and the wound immediately closed. Both father-in-law and mother-in-law were witnesses to this healing. The old man and woman had each wounds; they took the stick and rubbed, and were healed,—so there were three healed in that house, one after another.³⁶

Albiston's cane was used again for healing when he visited the Cheltenham Branch: "When I got to Cheltenham, there was a sister there greatly disfigured by two scurvy lumps on her top lip, I told the story of the stick, without thinking she would make use of it. I went to look through the town of Cheltenham, and some time after I again saw the sister, but the lumps were gone! She had made use of my stick. This is truth." These latter examples of healing by cane differ from the Winter Quarters example in that the cane itself was the supernatural therapy and the accounts include no Christian allusions. As one British emigrant described to the 1870 Salt Lake School of the Prophets, "Those who held the power and gift of healing had it in their clothing, tools &c that they handled."³⁷

Despite the influx of folk healing with successive waves of emigration, the emphasis on healing through the accessible liturgy of the Church appears to have pushed Mormons away from the practices. For example, Claire Noall observed from her in-depth study of midwifery that Mormon midwives were extremely less likely than other American midwives to practice folk ritual or teach folk beliefs related to their labors. Instead, these women focused on the healing rituals of the Church and teaching the best medical knowledge available.³⁸ Whereas cunning folk and charmers in England and Europe and the folk healers of early America stood as alternatives to the institutional churches,³⁹ Mormon folk healers were assimilated by the Church and invested with a healing liturgy to channel any energy towards institutional practice.

Examples of objects such as handkerchiefs are documented in Utah-era healing;⁴⁰ however, not surprisingly, consecrated oil continued to be the most commonly ritualized object used by Latter-day Saints in healing.⁴¹ Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, Latter-day Saints took a decidedly therapeutic view of consecrated oil; that is to say, it was viewed in some ways as medicine, often being administered repeatedly as needed.⁴² As general Relief Society president Zina D. H. Young said to the audience of the first annual conference of the YLMIA: "Take pains, mothers, to teach your children the virtue of consecrated oil. Why it has not been long since two Gentile ladies told me they had discovered that it was one of the best medicines in the world. One by one the world are adopting the pure principles that were given to us, and they think they are scientific discoveries, but to us they were gifts from God."⁴³ Olive oil—or sweet oil, as it was also called—is documented outside of Mormonism as a therapeutic agent during this period in both folk and formal contexts.⁴⁴ This view was perhaps facilitated by the Thomsonian approach, popular among many Christians.

This therapeutic view of consecrated oil is commonly documented into the twentieth century and is illustrated in the anointing of afflicted parts of the body. For example, on the trail west, John Johnson described what happened when a wagon wheel rolled over his foot. According to his own words, another traveler "took Some oil and anointed my foot and in a Short time it was all right."⁴⁵ In another account, Mosiah Hancock records what happened to his mother while coming down the East Canyon Creek of Salt Lake City: "While we were going down East Canyon Creek, mother's foot got caught in between the box and wagon tongue and broke the toe at the upper joint; but the skin was not broken. So father anointed her foot there and administered to her and it was healed quite soon."⁴⁶ In Britain in 1849, one elder described his healing ministry, beginning with a cholera patient to whom he gave "a sup of oile and anointed him"; a man with an injured foot, which he "anointed . . . and in ten minits he cud walk as weel as ever"; a man with a chronic ear infection whose ear he "dropt a little oil in and praid[,] he is now well"; and a girl with an injured arm, which he anointed and healed.⁴⁷ Writing

for the *Juvenile Instructor* almost sixty years later, Joseph Clegg described almost dying from an acute skin infection. His father consecrated some oil and "poured it right into my eyes and then on my head," after which his family consumed "a bottle every twenty-four hours" in administering to him.⁴⁸ While afflicted areas were anointed, anointings of the whole body were also a fixture of Latter-day Saint ritual. Wilford Woodruff described administering to Brigham Young with other Church leaders in 1871: "Anointed Presidet Young from the Crown of his head to the Soles of his feet & Blessed him & he was Much Better."⁴⁹ As these accounts show, while anointing was a dominant healing form, there was a variety of ways of experiencing anointing: repeated anointings, anointing the afflicted part of the body, and drinking consecrated oil.

In keeping with the practice of both liturgical and secular healing, Latter-day Saints also mixed consecrated oil with other compounds for medical treatment. Ann Hansen, a folklorist, described many examples from her research:

[Consecrated oil] was taken as a cure for appendicitis. Mixed with grains of sugar, it was given for coughs and croup. Combined with a few drops of camphor, it followed the stinging mustard plaster. It relieved sunburn and scratches, was applied to the scalp for dandruff, and was mixed with soda into paste for severe burns. Bishop Ravsten said at the bedside of one sick patient, "I feel prompted to oil the bowels." An olive oil enema was given.⁵⁰

Such examples abound in the primary documents of the era. Brigham Young sometimes mixed consecrated oil with other materials for use as an enema to relieve constipation.⁵¹ General Relief Society president Zina D. H. Young described in her journal a treatment for rheumatism (arthritis) that involved blending consecrated oil with smaller amounts of ether, turpentine, ammonia, and camphor.⁵²

Yet, even as healing practices incorporated secular approaches, the relationship between healing and the temple appears to have strengthened once the Church got to Utah. While one could technically consecrate oil

anywhere, starting in Nauvoo and continuing in Utah, the temple was viewed as the preferred place to perform this act.⁵³ When John Pulsipher joined a regular prayer circle group in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City, he noted that such meetings were “the proper place to consecrate oil for the use of the sick.”⁵⁴ Elder Abraham H. Cannon of the Quorum of the Twelve stated in his journal that oil consecration was a regular part of his weekly prayer circle meetings following the completion of the Salt Lake Temple.⁵⁵ The temple gate on Temple Square in Salt Lake City hosted a small shop which sold oil consecrated in the temple, and prominent individuals such as Helen Mar Kimball Whitney and Charles Ora Card described purchasing bottles there.⁵⁶ Oil remained available at the temple gate into the first decades of the twentieth century, with at least some of the oil sold there having been consecrated by Elder George F. Richards’s prayer circle.⁵⁷ It is also important to note that with time, regular fast meetings became special meetings for ritual administration, with consecrating oil being a regular feature.⁵⁸

Not only was the temple a source for consecrated oil, but following the pattern of the Nauvoo Temple, the Endowment House and later temples in Utah served as loci of special healing. While baptisms for health were commonly performed outside of temples, they were a regular function of the temple, with records of each ritual performance being kept. In fact, the first baptisms in the Logan and Salt Lake City temple fonts were for the health of the individuals being baptized.⁵⁹ There were, however, other aspects of temple healing. Individuals, both male and female, were called to work in the temples as healers, and people often traveled great lengths to find healing with them. As one child wrote in 1901: “A year ago our mama had her arm broken and it would not get well. She could not raise it to her head until papa took her to the temple and she was administered to. When she got home it was as well as the other one.”⁶⁰ Rachel Elizabeth Pyne Smart described being administered to by the Manti Temple healers in 1897, after which they instructed her “to take the consecrated oil and just take the cork out of the bottle and drink the oil. They promised me I would get well and I did. I took the oil for a year and always sent to the Manti temple for the oil. I would not buy it anywhere else.”⁶¹

Both the therapeutic use of consecrated oil and the recognition of the temple as a place of healing highlight how Latter-day Saints tended to view spiritual and physical spheres as parts of a larger continuous system and healing as a dynamic struggle to access the power of God. Because the temple was a place that opened access to divinity, and a place to manifest one's faith, nineteenth-century Mormons also believed that it was a place of miraculous healing. And as consecrated oil was often applied to the area of affliction, many Latter-day Saints also concluded that the oil had some real medical benefit.

Yet, at the same time, Mormons remained open to new medical advances. Though many continued to reject mainstream medicine in favor of botanic remedies,⁶² during the latter half of the nineteenth century, Mormon leaders embraced modern medicine as it became clinically viable, even as other nineteenth-century religious groups retained their antipathies into the twentieth century (e.g., Christian Scientists and Jehovah's Witnesses). Brigham Young famously sent men and women to eastern medical schools, including his own nephew, and though they may have been sent to thwart the inroads of gentile doctors, they came back with updated medical knowledge and new techniques for healing.⁶³ This appreciation for secular medicine led to an increased relationship between the Church and modern medicine. For instance, it was Relief Society physicians who helped create the Deseret Hospital and regional birthing centers, and many Latter-day Saints labored to bring the best medical technologies to the territory in the last decades of the century, setting the stage for the coming reconciliation between secular medicine and the Church's views of healing in the twentieth century.⁶⁴

Twentieth-Century Healing Practice

The first half of the twentieth century was a period of rapid transformation for the Mormon healing liturgy. Mormons were no longer the only Christian tradition that claimed miraculous healings. Church leaders also began questioning traditional practices and, in concert with a broader culture of modernization, critically evaluated healing rituals in a process that both rationalized and codified them. This process resulted

in the discontinuance of the traditional ritual of baptism for health and the end of temple healing. It also resulted in a formal liturgy focused on priesthood administration, as well as limited use of consecrated oil.

A crucial factor in the changing Mormon healing liturgy appears to have been the rise of Protestant healing in the late nineteenth century and its popularity among Pentecostal groups in the early twentieth. In the days of Joseph Smith and other early Mormons, American Protestants generally rejected the possibility that believers could heal the sick. Within the context of strong cessationist beliefs, successful Mormon healing rituals were a dramatic testimony that the days of miracles had not ceased and that the Restoration was valid. Illustrating this dynamic, Apostle Ezra T. Benson declared in the 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."⁶⁵ When other Christian groups began ritually anointing and healing the sick, Mormons experienced a sort of crisis. Healings were no longer a unique testimony of Mormonism. The resolution of this perceived challenge was for Church leaders to focus teachings and liturgy on priesthood.⁶⁶

A natural extension of this focus was an emphasis on institutional structure and mandate over individual charismatic power. Whereas prominent Latter-day Saint healers were a common feature in the nineteenth century,⁶⁷ at the turn of the century, the First Presidency began to critically evaluate them. One particular case was James Hall, who had begun to lead large healing meetings, similar in style to the increasingly common Protestant healing revivals, which led to his eventual excommunication.⁶⁸ One response in particular, an editorial authored by President Joseph F. Smith in 1902 entitled "The Master of the House," clearly curtailed the boundaries of such charismatic experience. While indicating that it was completely proper to administer outside of one's home ward when asked, President Smith described the activities of charismatic healers as "departures from the recognized order and discipline of the Church [that] should therefore be discountenanced and discouraged."⁶⁹ In subsequent years, the emphasis on priesthood authority over charisma became even more explicit.⁷⁰

The turn of the century also saw new emphases on form within the liturgy itself. On June 3, 1900, First Presidency member Joseph F. Smith instructed those gathered at a fast meeting in the Salt Lake Temple that "it was absurd for men to pour a little drop of oil on the top of the head and pray that it might permeate the whole being[;] we should anoint the sick all over and give them oil inwardly."⁷¹ This instruction is consistent with the traditional modes of anointing. Joseph F. Smith became Church President the following year, and while he mostly remained a supporter of the traditional ritual forms—baptism for health, washings and anointing for health, and corporeal anointings by both men and women—there is some indication that his perspective may have changed with time or was at least more complicated than early statements indicate. In an editorial published in the 1911 *Improvement Era*, President Smith taught that "it is the prayer of faith that saves the sick, and the Lord who raises them up, not the oil." Furthermore, in response to the question of whether one should ask the Lord to cause the oil to penetrate the system of the afflicted individual, he wrote, "It seems reasonable that it is not the oil, but the power and influence of the Spirit of God, that we pray may penetrate the system, to cause the healing." Still Smith affirmed that to anoint was to "rub over with oil."⁷²

To some degree, the shift that was hinted at in President Smith's teachings may be observed in greater relief across the broader American healing culture. As noted earlier, the early twentieth century was a time of modernization, especially in medical science. Clinical medicine replaced the heroic medicine of the nineteenth century, and rational treatment became the standard of care. Like other Americans, Latter-day Saints increasingly went to hospitals for serious illnesses.⁷³ With the opening of a new Church-sponsored hospital in 1905, general handbooks of instruction began to carry a section on hospitals, encouraging Latter-day Saints to use them for surgery and medical treatments. It is likely that therapeutic uses of oil that were not clinically proven, such as anointing an area of affliction or ingesting the oil, simply grew to be viewed pejoratively as magical. Church leaders clearly began viewing consecrated oil as a symbol and not a medicine. Kristine Wright has argued that the decline in use of

the term “holy oil,” a common phrase in the nineteenth-century Church, is indicative of such a shift. The oil itself no longer was viewed as carrying divine power.⁷⁴ Yet the new medical procedures brought their own challenges. For some, taking advantage of these new techniques could result in a lack of faith. The editor of the Relief Society periodical wrote in 1914: “Too much of our time in social affairs is spent in discussing medical problems and medical treatment. The children hear all this and consequently when they are sick their first thought is not to inquire for a spoonful of consecrated oil, but to lean upon the doctor and his advice.”⁷⁵

In any case, it is also during the presidency of Joseph F. Smith that we see the first steps in the official systematization of the healing liturgy as evidenced in missionary instructions. In earlier periods, missionaries were generally married men that had the requisite experience to be trained in ritual administration through folk channels of learning—proximate example and oral instruction. But in the early twentieth century, young and inexperienced men became the staple evangelists for the Church. Though example texts were otherwise discouraged during the first half of the twentieth century,⁷⁶ regional mission offices produced handbooks that included written examples of ritual scripts. The 1913 *Elders' Reference* included an example of oil consecration that asked God to “remove from it everything that is detrimental to health.”⁷⁷ Similarly, the 1915 *Elders' Manual* noted that while not necessary, it was customary to ask God to “purify the oil” during the consecration ritual.⁷⁸

Still, certain elements of the Latter-day Saint liturgy were unaffected. When questions were raised by other General Authorities concerning baptism as a form of healing, Joseph F. Smith and fellow First Presidency member Anthon Lund repeatedly affirmed the practice of baptism for health.⁷⁹ Baptism for health remained a prominent activity throughout his administration, and the temple healers continued their labor. Another area that Joseph F. Smith did not change was the prominent role that women held in the healing liturgy.⁸⁰ As his letters and public statements make clear, his support of female ritual healing was unflinching, including the washing and anointing for pregnancy, and he ensured that older healing practices remained a vital part of lived Mormonism. The culmination

of this support was the October 3, 1914, general circular letter on female healing. That day, President Smith spoke at the general Relief Society conference and celebrated the work of sisters and their administrations to the sick. The same day, he also wrote an extensive letter with his counselors to be distributed to the entire Church leadership. As Kristine Wright and I described in our lengthy history of female healing:

[The letter] 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 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."⁸¹

Liturgical Reform

In many ways, Joseph F. Smith paved the way for the liturgical reforms of the Heber J. Grant administration. After Joseph F. Smith died in 1918, President Grant maintained the status quo in terms of Latter-day Saint healing ritual until his first counselor Anthon Lund died, at which point he initiated a process that revolutionized virtually every aspect of Mormon ritual. Working with Apostle and new Salt Lake Temple president George F. Richards, the First Presidency approved the removal of healers from the temple, the first change of many, including a reformation of the endowment, the end of baptism for health, and the removal of deathbed ritual (dedicating the dying to the Lord) from the Church liturgy.⁸²

The removal of the healers from the temple had a greater impact on female healing than on healing rituals performed by men. The women who administered to the sick at the temple acted as formal examples for the other women in the Church. They not only healed the sick but also taught other women how to perform healing rituals and were a consistent reminder to all members that women had the authority to administer healing rituals. Though women continued to heal the sick after the end of temple healers, President Grant took a position of toleration toward female healing, generally saying nothing at all, rather than advocacy like Joseph F. Smith, who often spoke in support of female healing.⁸³ The Grant administration left female administration of healing rituals uncodified in the folk liturgy of the Church while formalizing the priesthood healing liturgy in instructional materials.⁸⁴

As mentioned above, the reevaluation of consecrated oil as medical therapy began in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁸⁵ In 1903, Church leaders in the Juárez Stake instructed members that “oil should not be given internally.”⁸⁶ In 1907, Apostle Charles W. Penrose wrote in the British periodical of the Church: “Some Elders insist upon the oil internally. This is a mistake. In some cases, no doubt, the inward partaking of the oil is efficacious. Pure olive oil, with the blessing of God, is beneficial to some people, but to others the swallowing of oil produces nausea, and it should not be forced upon anybody.”⁸⁷ Later in 1913, after being called to the First Presidency, he instructed the priesthood session of general conference that “when you have no oil you may lay on hands and bless the sick. Giving of oil inwardly no part of ordinance. May be given if party desires it but should not be given otherwise.”⁸⁸ Traditionalists remained—like William H. Smart, a stake president during the first decades of the twentieth century who frequently anointed his whole body and drank consecrated oil as a means of spiritual purification⁸⁹—but they represented individual preference rather than general Church practice. In 1940, the new *General Handbook of Instructions* for Church leaders explicitly codified the position that ingestion of consecrated oil did not play an active part in healing: “Giving consecrated oil internally is not a part of the administration and should not

be done." At the same time, it stressed the sacral nature of the oil rather than the medicinal use, stating that "consecrated oil should not be used indiscriminately or comingled with other ointments."⁹⁰ Joseph Fielding Smith, President of the Quorum of the Twelve, reiterated this position in 1955, perhaps softening it due to his familiarity with earlier practice, as part of his popular "Answers to Gospel Questions" series in the Church magazine:

"Is it proper to anoint the afflicted parts of the body?"

No. The anointing should be on the crown of the head. (It could be a matter of impropriety to anoint afflicted parts of the body.)

"Is it permissible to administer the oil internally?"

No. Taking the oil internally is not part of the administration. If persons who are ill wish to take oil internally, they are not forbidden, but many sicknesses will not be improved by oil in the stomach.⁹¹

Implicit in this statement is the medicalization of the body and localization of Church liturgy in a spiritual sphere. In contrast to the complete propriety of physicians and other medical professionals to touch the bodies of their patients, it was now improper for Church members to do the same in their attempts to heal. This perspective is illustrated one year later, in 1956, when missionaries serving in Hawaii administered to a woman suffering from Hansen's disease: "Elder Childs & I administered to a Mrs (Sister) Malo at St. Francis Hospital today. She is a leper, and is undergoing surgery tomorrow morning. She is particularly eaten away, but has great faith. We took all rings, etc. off, took off our coats, and put on a white robe. The only things showing were our hands, which we washed twice afterward."⁹² Mormonism thus became less concerned with the interior of the body, instead increasing its focus on regulating the exterior actions of the body, particularly in relation to healing.

One more traditional element of the anointing remained and, in fact, explicitly became a more integral part of the procedure during this time. The Church Radio, Publicity and Missionary Literature Committee,

directed by young Gordon B. Hinckley, produced the first centralized missionary handbook at Church headquarters for missionary use in 1936, which included examples for the priesthood ordinances. The example ritual text for anointing the sick in the *Missionary Hand Book* directed elders to “add words of blessing as the Spirit may dictate” during both the anointing and the sealing, an element of healing ritual from the nineteenth century.⁹³ Missionaries used these instructions into the 1950s. Similarly, a ward ordinance guide produced by the San Bernardino First Ward bishopric in the 1940s directed administrators to pronounce the blessing on the sick while “rubbing the oil” on them.⁹⁴

By the 1950s the healing ritual familiar to current Latter-day Saints became the only ritual described in Church materials.⁹⁵ And though the *Relief Society Handbook* clearly described the possibility of women administering healing rituals until 1968, after the 1940s, documented ritual performance by women is rare. The last public exception to this trend was President Joseph Fielding Smith’s 1955 “Answer to Gospel Questions” on healing mentioned above. He quoted Joseph Smith’s sermon encouraging women to administer healing ritual, as well as his father, Joseph F. Smith, noting that it was not uncommon to have fathers and mothers administer to their children together. However, with a focus in all handbooks and manuals on the streamlined priesthood ritual form of healing—anointing, then sealing with blessing—frequency of female performance of healing ritual steadily declined.

The last major shift in Mormon healing ritual was the decision that repeat anointings should be avoided. Underscoring the purely symbolic nature of oil in the modern ritual, instructions indicated that the afflicted can receive multiple blessing over time, but they are to be only anointed once. The 1976 *General Handbook of Instructions* stated that “care should be taken to avoid too frequent repetitions of anointing with oil.”⁹⁶ In 1981, the *New Era* printed an article authored by President Spencer W. Kimball on administering to the sick. Describing the ritual, he stated that “an elder pours a small quantity of oil on the head of the one to be blessed, near the crown of the head if convenient, never on the other parts of the body.” He further stated:

It is felt that sometimes the holy ordinance is abused. One person I know left a standing order for the elders to administer to her every day for the several weeks she was in the hospital for a broken limb. It is felt by many that too frequent administrations may be an indication of lack of faith or of the ill one trying to pass the responsibility for faith development to the elders rather than self. . . . Sometimes when one still feels the need of further blessing after having recently had an administration, a blessing without the anointing oil is given.⁹⁷

The instruction that one anointing is sufficient and that subsequent blessings may be given without anointing has been included in liturgical instructions to the present and reinforces the idea that there is no medical benefit to the ritual.⁹⁸ At a time when medical therapies are tested with powerful statistical methods in order to confirm efficacy and their mechanisms are well documented, anointing the body with consecrated oil is not easily seen as anything more than symbolic.

Perhaps the most complete discussion of current Latter-day Saint healing ritual administration comes from Elder Dallin H. Oaks's April 2010 general conference address. While acknowledging the necessity of using modern medical therapies in conjunction with faith, he also stressed the popular belief among all Americans that miraculous healings are still possible. With this, he then outlined the necessary factors for a successful Latter-day Saint ritual administration: "There are five parts to the use of priesthood authority to bless the sick: (1) the anointing, (2) the sealing of the anointing, (3) faith, (4) the words of the blessing, and (5) the will of the Lord." Current Latter-day Saints will find Oaks's description familiar and see that the emphasis on priesthood authority is at the forefront. However, Oaks did qualify aspects of the ritual. In discussing the content of blessings, Oaks took the position that beyond the anointing and sealing, additional words of blessing are not technically necessary, placing less importance on the blessing than did earlier documentation. While he made clear that he valued these blessings and indicated that they can be inspired prophecies, he also

recognized that not all those who administer healing rituals are accurate in their pronouncements, whereupon he confessed his own struggles at times to access divine inspiration in the ritual moment. As we have seen, this conflict between the Lord's will and human desire has been the source of great reflection among Latter-day Saints in their healing rituals since the beginning of the Restoration, and Oaks again takes a decidedly modern approach to resolve the tension.⁹⁹ Whereas early Latter-day Saints repeated the healing ritual, sought a recognized healer, tried different healing rituals, or went to the temple for special healing, current Church members, as outlined by Oaks, are to generally exercise faith in the single ritual act and then find comfort in any result as the will of the Lord.

Conclusion

From the early days of the Church to now, healing and its attendant rituals have been an integral facet of Mormon worship. They have also been subject to innovation and change. Why these changes have taken place is not an easy question to answer. Part of the explanation appears to be the increasingly formalized nature of the Church's organizational structure. The twentieth century witnessed a noted decline of charismatic elements in terms of religious experience and a corresponding increase in formalized experiences centered on priesthood authority. In light of the personalized, charismatic nature of healing rites prior to 1900, it is no surprise to find that healing rites also became standardized.

But these changes may also reflect a theological shift in terms of healing. Whereas throughout the nineteenth century, healing collapsed the secular and spiritual realms, as witnessed in its relationship with the temple, with the acceptance of modern clinical approaches the nineteenth-century cosmology ruptured in part. There also appears to have been a growing awareness that some of the traditional healing rituals did not have the medical efficacy once thought. This rationalization is particularly acute when examining healing with oil. No longer does anointing necessarily work against evil or disease, nor is the ingestion of oil understood as beneficial.

That the Latter-day Saint healing liturgy of today differs from the healing rites of the past in form, diversity, and theology does not mean that it no longer is relevant in the life of the believer. To the contrary, healing remains fundamental in the Church's liturgy as a way of demonstrating faith and the power of God, and leaders such as Elder Oaks believe that healing rituals will only become increasingly necessary. Every priesthood holder is expected to remain worthy to perform the healing rites, which remain one of the most common and primary expressions of revelation and prophecy in the Church. And whereas current Church members no longer travel great distances to receive healing rituals in the temple, in the lesson covering the book of Ezekiel, current Sunday School instructors are still "to encourage class members to partake of the life-giving, healing powers that are available in the temple."¹⁰⁰ While many surely view such statements in terms of spiritual and emotional healing, aspects of the temple liturgy remain open to the physically sick or otherwise afflicted.

Though current Latter-day Saints perform healing rituals differently than previous generations of their coreligionists, the message that Joseph Smith persistently taught still forms the center of the Mormon healing liturgy: the days of miracles have not ceased, and the power of God is available in the gifts of the Spirit. Mormon healing rituals are less elaborate today, and Church members have the benefit of modern medical technology. Nevertheless, Latter-day Saints administer to the sick, and if they are not appointed to death, they hope, just as Joseph Smith and the entire early host of the Restoration hoped, that they have faith sufficient to channel the power of God to heal.

Notes

1. On the Jewish view of oil as medical therapy and supernatural cure, see J. Roy Porter, "Oil in the Old Testament," in *The Oil of Gladness: Anointing in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Martin Dudley and Geoffrey Rowell (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 41.
2. See discussion in 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): 44–51. Note, however, that oil

remained a ritual healing object in regional Christian folk healing. See, for example, Lea Olsan, "The Three Good Brothers Charm: Some Historical Points," *Incantatio* 1 (2011): 48–78. Such practice along with other healing rituals existed outside of and in tension with Church liturgy. On Christian healing generally, see Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

3. See, for example, Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People, Containing a Declaration of the Faith and Doctrine of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, Commonly Called Mormons* (New York: W. Sanford, 1837), 204, 211–12; John Hardy, *Hypocrisy Exposed, or J. V. Himes Weighed in the Balances of Truth, Honesty and Common Sense, and Found Wanting; Being a Reply to a Pamphlet Put Forth by Him, Entitled Mormon Delusions and Monstrosities* (Boston: Alber Morgan, 1842), 3, 6–7; William I. Appleby, *A Few Important Questions for the Reverend Clergy to Answer, Being a Scale to Weigh Priestcraft and Sectarianism In* (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking & Guilbert, 1843), 10–11; John Taylor, *Truth Defended and Methodism Weighed in the Balance and Found Wanting; Being a Reply to the Third Address of the Rev. Robert Heys, Wesleyan Minister to the Wesleyan Methodist Societies in Douglas and Its Vicinity, and also an Exposure of the Principles of Methodism* (Liverpool: J. Tompkins, 1841), 12.
4. For a previous discussion of many of the issues addressed in this paper, see Lester E. Bush Jr., *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Crossroad, 1993).
5. *The Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831–1836*, ed. Jan Shippy and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: BYU Studies; Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 45.
6. Readers should note that while this was the position of church authorities during this time, often the lived religion of church members diverged from this orthodoxy.
7. These themes are traced in great detail in several papers: Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Power," 42–87; Jonathan A. Stapley, "Last Rites and the Dynamics of Mormon Liturgy," *BYU Studies* 50, no. 2 (2011): 97–128. See also Jonathan A. Stapley and Kristine Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 37 (Winter 2011): 1–86; 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.
8. An example of this procedure can be seen in the following account by Hyrum Smith: "[I] visited Brother Blackmen he Being Sick[,] he Cald upon mySelf and Elder Theyden to pray for and lay our hands upon him[,] accordengly we did and he began to recover from that time forth." Hyrum Smith,

- Diary, vol. 1, January 19, 1832, 14, digital copy of holograph, Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT (hereafter Lee Digital Collections).
9. Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Power," 57.
 10. Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Power," 59, 63–65; Stapley and Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism."
 11. For an extended discussion of these gifts, see Stapley, "Last Rites and the Dynamics of Mormon Liturgy," 103.
 12. Theodicy is the reconciliation of a benevolent God with the existence of evil and tragedy in the world.
 13. Here I am following Nathan O. Hatch's interpretation regarding the rejection of orthodox medicine during the Second Great Awakening. *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 28–30, 129.
 14. Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Power," 70–71.
 15. Oliver Cowdery to Dr. S. Avord [Samson Avard], Kirtland, December 15, 1835, Oliver Cowdery Letter Book, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA. On Frederick G. Williams's medical practice, see Frederick G. Williams, "The Medical Practice of Dr. Frederick G. Williams," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (2012): 153–69; Frederick G. Williams, *The Life of Dr. Frederick G. Williams: Counselor to the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2012).
 16. Willard Richards to Hepzibah Richards, January 20, 1837, Kirtland, OH, microfilm of holograph, Levi Richards family correspondence, 1827–1848, MS 12765, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City; emphasis in original. At this point, Richards was a recent convert; he was later ordained an Apostle and joined the First Presidency of Brigham Young. See Devery S. Anderson, "From Doctor to Disciple: Willard Richards's Journey to Mormonism," *Journal of Mormon History* 38 (Spring 2012): 67–98.
 17. Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 2: 1842–1843* in *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2011), 356–57, 365.
 18. Fred C. Collier, ed., *The Office Journal of President Brigham Young, 1858–1863, Book D* (Hanna, UT: Collier's Publishing, 2006), 366.
 19. *Journals of William E. McLellin*, 217.
 20. Stapley and Wright, "The Forms and the Power," 65–67.
 21. Joseph Smith led out in example. He baptized his wife Emma Smith for her health when she was sick, as well as a young girl in his care. Hedges, Smith, and Anderson, *Journals, Volume 2*, 161, 165; Lucy Walker Kimball, *Autobiography*, n.d., 7, microfilm of typescript, Church History Library.

- For a complete and detailed history of baptism for health, see Stapley and Wright, “They Shall Be Made Whole.”
22. Stapley and Wright, “The Forms and the Power,” 71–80.
 23. Female Relief Society of Nauvoo, Minutes, April 28, 1842, in *Selected Collections from the Archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, DVD (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 1:19.
 24. For previous discussions of exorcism, see Bush, *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints*, 109–114; Gregory A. Prince, *Power from On High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 111–13.
 25. Minute Book 2, August 21, 1834, 63–64, in *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1844*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 96–97.
 26. Newell Knight, Autobiography, 24–25, microfilm of holograph, MS 767, Church History Library.
 27. *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diaries of Hosea Stout*, ed. Juanita Brooks (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 1:170–71. For other examples of healing exorcisms, including baptisms for health, see John Pulsipher, *A Short Sketch of John Pulsipher* (n.p., 1970), 62–63; Phineas W. Cook, Reminiscences and Journal, microfilm of holograph, 99, MS 6288, Church History Library; Edmund F. Bird to President Wells, Southampton, August 31, 1864, *Millennial Star*, September 24, 1864, 622; Jedediah M. Grant, in *Journal of Discourses*, (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 2:276–77; Rachel Elizabeth Pyne Smart, Autobiography, 1870–1930, 4–5, microfilm of typescript, Church History Library; S. George Ellsworth, *The History of Louisa Barnes Pratt: Mormon Missionary Widow and Pioneer* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1998), 345–46. See also Bush, *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints*, 114.
 28. Brigham Young, sermon, February 23, 1848, in *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833–1898*, ed. Scott G. Kenney (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983–85), 3:325.
 29. The term *magic* is generally pejorative, even in academic literature, and is of poor analytical and descriptive utility. See Jonathan Z. Smith, “Trading Places,” in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 215–29.
 30. Mark Ashurst-McGee, “A Pathway to Prophethood: Joseph Smith Junior as Rodsman, Village Seer, and Judeo-Christian Prophet” (master’s thesis, Utah State University, 2000); Wayland D. Hand, *Magical Medicine: The Folkloric Component of Medicine in the Folk Belief, Custom, and Ritual of the Peoples of Europe and America* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), esp. 321–30; Wayland D. Hand and Jeannine E. Talley, eds., *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from Utah* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984).

31. Kerry William Bate, "John Steele: Medicine Man, Magician, Mormon Patriarch," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 62 (Winter 1994): 71–90.
32. See, for example, John Steele, Diary 650 B, microfilm of holograph, MS 18470, Church History Library; note as well that it appears that he learned much of his folk art in the United States. Bate, "John Steele."
33. Hand and Talley, *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from Utah*, xxvi, xxxvii.
34. Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:294. For an introduction to the healing canes fashioned from Joseph and Hyrum Smith's coffins, see Steven G. Barnett, "Canes of the Restoration," in James B. Allen, ed., "The Historian's Corner," *BYU Studies* 21, no. 2 (1981): 205–11. The case of the coffin canes is interesting but does not readily conform to the traditional folk remedies associated with funereal items. See, for example, "Superstitious Cures," *Atkinson's Casket* (June 1833): 264. See also Wayland D. Hand, *Magical Medicine: The Folkloric Component of Medicine in the Folk Belief, Custom, and Ritual of the Peoples of Europe and America* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 12–13, 69–80; entries related to coffin rings in the *Online Archive of American Folk Medicine*, <http://www.folkmed.ucla.edu>.
35. *The Journal of John D. Lee, 1846–47 and 1859*, ed. Charles Kelly (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1984), 67.
36. John Albiston, letter, April 30, 1848, Ashton-under-Lyne, England, *Millennial Star*, May 15, 1848, 158. Note that during this period, "stick" was a common synonym for cane. See, for example, "Sticks," *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* (September 18, 1841): 277–78.
37. Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minutes, September 3, 1870, photocopy of typescript, Leonard J. Arrington Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University, Logan, UT.
38. Claire Noall, "Superstitions, Customs, and Prescriptions of Mormon Midwives," *California Folklore Quarterly* 3 (April 1944): 103–4; see also Richard C. Poulsen, "Some Botanic Cures in Mormon Folk Medicine: An Analysis," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 44 (Fall 1976): 378–88.
39. See, for example, Owen Davies, *Popular Magic: Cunning-Folk in English History* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2003); Brian P. Levack, ed., *Witchcraft, Healing, and Popular Diseases* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Jonathan Roper, *Charms and Charming in Europe* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004); Jonathan Roper, *English Verbal Charms* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 2005).
40. See, for example, Brigham Young to Sarah B. Foss, January 13, 1875, St. George, microfilm of holograph, MS 16040, Church History Library; William G. Hartley, *My Best for the Kingdom: History and Autobiography of John Lowe Butler, a Mormon Frontiersman* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1993), 114, 452n49. On the broader context of these objects and other examples, see, Stapley and Wright, *The Forms and the Power*, 44, 65–66. On

similar activities by later protestants, see Michael S. Stephens, *Who Healeth All Thy Diseases: Health, Healing, and Holiness in the Church of God Reformation Movement* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2008), 70n23; Amy Sitar, "Praying for Power: Dispositions and Discipline in the Azusa Street Revival's Apostolic Faith," *Poetics* 36 (2008): 458; R. Marie Griffith, "Material Devotion: Pentecostal Prayer Cloths," *Material History of American Religion Project Newsletter* (Spring 1997), 1–3; Douglas H. Pessoni, *With Healing in His Wings: A Complete and Concise Presentation of God's Healing Gospel*, 3rd ed. (British Columbia, Canada: CCB Publishing, 2008), 111.

41. It is unclear what source early Latter-day Saints used for consecrated oil; however, with time, olive oil is increasingly mentioned in early Mormon writings, with other oil types being only rarely documented. For examples of oils besides olive being used, namely peppermint oil, fish oil, bear tallow, and possibly castor oil, see "Memoirs of George A. Smith," July 18, 1844, 254, *Selected Collections; Report of the Glasgow Conference, Held in the Mechanics' Institution Hall, Canning St. Calton, Glasgow, June 15th and 16th, 1850* (n.p., 1850), 4; Ellice Moffitt, oral history, interview by Barbara Lee Hargis, July 6, 1966, quoted in Barbara Lee Hargis, "A Folk History of the Manti Temple: A Study of the Folklore and Traditions Connected with the Settlement of Manti, Utah, and the Building of the Temple" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1968), 32; Mary Jane Dilworth Hammond, *Diary*, vol. 1, 1853–1855, December 23, 25, and 27, 1853, digital copy of holograph, Lee Digital Collections.
42. For a previous discussion of the therapeutic use of oil and subsequent modernization of healing ritual, see Bush, *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints*, 77–80.
43. "Our Girls' Department: First Territorial Annual Conference of the Y. L. M. I. Association," *Young Woman's Journal* 3 (November 1891): 92.
44. See, for example, Adam Clark's commentary on the book of James in his *The Holy Bible . . .* (London: Thomas Tegg and Son, 1836), 2:1857. Elias Smith's *The American Physician and Family Assistant: In Four Parts*, 3rd ed. rev. (Boston: H. Bowen's Print, 1832), xi, includes a ledger of medicines for sale, including "olive ointment." This same list of medicines was for sale by Frederick G. Williams in 1835 in Kirtland. Williams, "The Medical Practice of Dr. Frederick G. Williams," 156. On folk usage, see entries in the Online Archive of American Folk Medicine, <http://www.folkmed.ucla.edu>. See also E. R. Shipp, "Olive Oil," *Salt Lake Sanitarian* 1 (April 1888): 4–5; Maggie C. Shipp, "Cholera Infantum," *Salt Lake Sanitarian* 1 (July 1888): 96; Bush, *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints*, 79.
45. John Johnson, transcription of journal, 9–14. Trail excerpt transcribed from "Pioneer History Collection," available at Pioneer Memorial Museum (Daughters of Utah Pioneers Museum), Salt Lake City; reprinted in the

- Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel Database, 1847–1868, <http://lds.org/churchhistory/library/pioneercompanysearch>.
46. *The Mosiah Hancock Journal*, 25–26, in the Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel Database. See also Phineas W. Cook, *Reminiscences and Journal*, 45, Microfilm of holograph, MS 6288, Church History Library.
 47. [John Newbold] to George Newbold, November 14, 1849, quoted in "Mormonite Miracles," *Northern Star and National Trades Journal* (Leeds, England), January 5, 1850, 3. I thank Ardis Parshall for sharing this document with me.
 48. Joseph Clegg, "Healed of Erysipelas," *Juvenile Instructor*, January 1, 1902, 42–43.
 49. *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 7:32.
 50. Ann Hansen, "Utah State University Folklore Collection: Folk Medicine from Clarkston, Utah," *Western Folklore* 18, no. 2 (April 1959): 111. On the prevalence of enemas as medical therapy in the nineteenth century, see James C. Whorton, *Inner Hygiene: Constipation and the Pursuit of Health in Modern Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). On olive oil enemas, see "Simple Constipation," *Salt Lake Sanitarian* 1 (April 1888): 23.
 51. *Office Journal of President Brigham Young*, 44–45. For use in treatment of pinworms, see "In Woman's Sphere," *Deseret News*, March 11, 1893. See also 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), 431.
 52. Zina D. H. Young, "Journal for 1880," unnumbered pages, microfilm of holograph, Zina Card Brown Family Collection, MS 4780, Box 1, folder 9, Church History Library. As a comparative example, in 1845, prominent midwife Patty Sessions recorded in her diary a cure for milkleg which combined laudanum, carbonate soda, ammonia, camphor, and "sweet oil." *Mormon Midwife: The 1846–1888 Diaries of Patty Bartlett Sessions*, ed. Donna Toland Smart (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1997), 76. Physician Ellis R. Shipp recommended mixing camphor and olive oil for muscle strains. Ellis R. Ship, "Mother's Methods. No. V," *Salt Lake Sanitarian* 1 (October 1888): 172.
 53. See, for example, *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 218; *Journal of John D. Lee*, 148–49.
 54. Pulsipher, *Short Sketch of John Pulsipher*, 34. See also *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 5:229; and Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:187, for preaching referring to this practice near the same time. On Latter-day Saint prayer circle groups, see D. Michael Quinn, "Latter-day Saint Prayer Circles," *BYU Studies* 19 (Fall 1978): 79–105.

55. See Abraham H. Cannon, Journal, October 31, November 7, 14, and 28, December 5, 12, and 26, 1894; January 2 and 9, February 6, 13, 20, and 27, and March 20, 27, 1895, among other entries, photocopy of holograph, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT.
56. *A Widow's Tale: The 1884–1896 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney*, ed. Charles M. Hatch and Todd M. Compton (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2003), 141, 489. In 1894 a “large bottle” cost \$1.00 at the temple gate (p. 635). *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card: The Canadian Years, 1886–1903*, ed. Donald G. Godfrey and Brigham Y. Card (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), 621.
57. Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *Saints without Halos: The Human Side of Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1981), 147; See also *Allen Russell Autobiography and Journal*, ed. Kym Ney, January 1907, typescript (Russell Family, n.d.), holograph in possession of Brandon Gull. See also First Presidency to Lewis Anderson, Manti Temple President, November 1, 1911, abbreviated typescript, Scott Kenney Research Collection, MS 0587, Box 2, Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.
58. George Teasdale, April 6, 1894, *Collected Discourses*, (Sandy, UT: B. H. S. Publishing, 1987), 4:38–39; *Allen Russell Autobiography and Journal*, February 6, December 4, 1898; Joseph F. Smith, “Questions and Answers,” *Improvement Era*, February 1907, 308.
59. Stapley and Wright, ““They Shall Be Made Whole,”” 90.
60. Verna Dewey, Laura Dewey, and Valess Dewey, “For Our Little Folks: Three Little Writers,” *Juvenile Instructor*, May 1, 1901, 284. One especially poignant example of such temple healing is one that Mary McClellan related in Oral History, interview by her daughter Zitelle, February 1931, in Jefferson Ward, Grant Stake, *Gleaners' Treasures of Truth, 1932*, Church History Library. Austin and Alta Fife collected an account of this healing from a friend of the family. Folk Collection 4, FMC, no. 1, ser. 1, vol. 1, item 44, Special Collections, Merrill Library, Utah State University, Logan, UT. Subsequently, the Fifes corresponded with McClellan directly, who supplied a copy of her daughter's interview. McClellan's account appears in Folk Collection 4, FMC, no. 1, ser. 2, vol. 10, item 2.
61. Smart, Autobiography, 5.
62. See, for example, Noall, “Superstitions, Customs, and Prescriptions of Mormon Midwives,” 109–110; Bush, *Health and Medicine among the Mormons*, 98. See also *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card: The Utah Years, 1871–1886*, ed. Donald G. Godfrey and Kenneth W. Godfrey (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2006), 293, 320, 324, 334, 336, 443; *An Uncommon Common Pioneer: The Journals of James Henry*

- Martineau, 1828–1918*, ed. Donald G. Godfrey and Rebecca S. Martineau-McCarty (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2008), 403; *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card: The Canadian Years*, 507–12.
63. See, for example, Thomas Wendell Simpson, "Mormons Study 'Abroad': Brigham Young's Romance with American Higher Education, 1867–1877," *Church History* 76, no. 4 (December 2007): 778–98; Thomas Wendell Simpson, "The Death of Mormon Separatism in American Universities, 1877–1896," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 22, no. 2 (2012): 163–201.
 64. Bush, *Health and Medicine among the Mormons*, 95–97, 100–102; Jill Mulvay Derr, Janath Russell Cannon, and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, *Women of Covenant: The Story of Relief Society* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 107, 166–67, 198–99, 227–32, and 266–68; Robert T. Divett, *Medicine and the Mormons: An Introduction to the History of Latter-day Saint Health Care* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon Publishers, 1981), 144–158; Ralph T. Richards, *Of Medicine, Hospitals and Doctors* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1953).
 65. E[zra]. T. Benson, "General Conference Address, Salt Lake City, October 6, 1852," *Millennial Star*, February 26, 1853, 130.
 66. For an extensive discussion of this trend, see Stapley and Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," 40–46.
 67. Note that prominent healers still persisted well into the twentieth century. For example, James Henry Martineau, a popular healer in his own right, wrote in 1905 of feeling ill and thinking of "my sister-friend Zina V. H. Bull, who has power in healing. I went to her, and asked her to bless me. She did so, and spoke in power. I felt better at once and the next day felt like a new man." *Uncommon Common Pioneer*, 543.
 68. Stapley and Wright, "Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism," 40–46; "The Voice of the People Is the Voice of God," *A Statement by James E. Hall to the Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Utah Stake* (Springville, UT, 1914).
 69. Joseph F. Smith, "Editorial Thoughts: The Master of the House," *Juvenile Instructor*, January 15, 1902, 50–51.
 70. Stapley and Wright, "Female Ritual Healing," 40–53, 64–83.
 71. *Ruth May Fox Diaries*, ed. Brittany Chapman (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, forthcoming), holograph at Church History Library, June 3, 1900. For an example of Joseph F. Smith administering in this manner, see Joseph F. Smith to Hyrum M. Smith, January 9, 1897, Joseph F. Smith Letterpress, in *Selected Collections*, 1:30.
 72. Joseph F. Smith, "Editor's Table: On the Form of Prayer," *Improvement Era*, September 1911, 1034. Text from this editorial was frequently quoted in missionary and Church handbooks of the period and later. The

- specific language “to rub over with oil” was retained as late as 1929, in an unattributed pamphlet of example ritual texts. *Instructions in Ordinance Work* (n.p., 1929), M255 159 1929, Church History Library.
73. Stapley, “Last Rites and the Dynamics of Latter-day Saint Liturgy,” 110; Richards, *Of Medicine, Hospitals and Doctors*; Bush, *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints*, 95–97, 100–102.
 74. Kris Wright, “Consecrating a Community: Uses and Perceptions of Holy Oil, 1834–1955,” paper delivered at the 2009 Mormon History Association Conference, Springfield, IL, copy in my possession. See also Bush, *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints*, 101.
 75. Editorial, “Faith,” *Relief Society Bulletin*, August 1914, 5–6.
 76. For example, the 1948 *Melchizedek Priesthood Handbook* (Salt Lake City: The Council of the Twelve of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1948), 86, states: “The Church earnestly requests that the issuance of small booklets setting forth instructions about ordinances and giving forms of suggested prayers shall be completely discontinued” and that “rather than following set forms, the brethren should live so that they may have the inspiration of the Spirit of God.”
 77. Ben Rich, *Elders’ Reference* (New York: Eastern States Mission, 1913), 37.
 78. Charles A. Callis, *Elders’ Manual* ([Chattanooga, TN?]: Southern States Mission, ca. 1915), 32. Note that this same manual also states that “there is no commandment that the sick should take the oil internally” (p. 33). *Instructions in Ordinance Work* retains this language. With the 1948 US standards governing olive oil purity still decades away, the concern over potential adulteration is understandable. However, this emphasis is a formal accommodation of the therapeutic use of consecrated oil and evinces that the act of consecration contributed to the ritual objects’ special character. See also E. R. Shipp, “Olive Oil,” *Salt Lake Sanitarian* 1 (April 1888): 4–5; Ellis R. Shipp, “Editorial: Adulteration of Foods and Drugs,” *Salt Lake Sanitarian* 3 (November 1890): 38; Bush, *Health and Medicine among the Latter-day Saints*, 79.
 79. Stapley and Wright, ““They Shall Be Made Whole,”” 105–8.
 80. Note that as women more commonly used older ritual forms, which involved anointing areas of the body, it is not surprising that women are documented as supporting the continued therapeutic use of consecrated oil during this period. See, for example, “Health and Hygiene, Lesson II,” *Relief Society Bulletin*, July 1914, 6; “Health and Hygiene, Lesson I,” in *Relief Society Bulletin*, August 1914, 7; Maud Baggerly, “Good Health,” *Relief Society Magazine*, July 1915, 328; Lucy May Green, “Experience,” *Relief Society Magazine*, June 1918, 331–32.
 81. Stapley and Wright, “Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism,” 61–62, quoting 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, Church History Library. Note also that Clark’s discussion of female healing is significantly flawed.
82. Stapley and Wright, ““They Shall Be Made Whole,”” 105–11; Stapley and Wright, “Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism,” 64–75; Stapley, “Last Rites and the Dynamics of Mormon Liturgy,” 114–15.
 83. Stapley and Wright, “Female Ritual Healing in Mormonism.”
 84. The first General Handbook of Instructions to contain material on administering to the sick was published in 1928 and mentioned only the priesthood healing ritual. *Handbook of Instructions for Bishops and Counselors, Stake and Ward Clerks* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1928), 74. This entry also describes only the anointing of the head and that “all blessings and promises made to a sick person should, in general, be sealed upon them according to their faith.”
 85. A notable antecedent of this trend was B. H. Roberts’s instructions to missionaries in 1888, in which he asserted that “we know of no commandment that they should take the oil internally and through the anointing the spirit of the lord will be conducted to the whole system and renovate it and make it whole and there is no need of taking it internally.” “Suggestions to Elders,” *Millennial Star*, August 6, 1888, 506. This was reprinted as “Suggestions to Elders,” *Elders’ Journal*, October 15, 1906, 25.
 86. Anthony W. Ivins, diary, August 29, 1903, Utah State Historical Society Archives.
 87. Charles W. Penrose, “Faith as a Healing Power,” *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*, January 17, 1907, 42–43. Penrose’s article focused on faith. He declared that “anointing with oil is, in itself, in some cases, palliative of pain. It is also object lesson, something visible and tangible, as an incentive faith, but the sick may be, and are frequently healed by the laying on of hands without the oil and even without a touch, by faith through prayer.”
 88. *Mormonism’s Last Colonizer: The Journals of William H. Smart, April 11, 1898–October 24, 1937*, ed. William B. Smart, April 7, 1913, CD-ROM included with William B. Smart, *Mormonism’s Last Colonizer: The Life and Times of William H. Smart* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2008).
 89. See Wright, “Consecrating a Community,” citing *Mormonism’s Last Colonizer*.
 90. *Handbook of Instructions for Stake Presidencies, Bishops and Counselors, Stake and Ward Clerks and Other Church Officers*, No. 16 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1940), 125–26. See also John A. Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 356. *Suggestions to Brethren Who Have Been Called to Administer to the Sick at the L.D.S. Hospital* (n.p., [194?–]), M255.6 S957, Church History Library,

includes the instruction: “Do not administer the oil internally or anoint any part of the body other than the head.”

91. Joseph Fielding Smith, “Answers to Gospel Questions,” *Improvement Era*, August 1955, 558–59, 607.
92. Ronald Blaine Stapley, diary, February 16, 1956, holograph in my possession.
93. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *The Missionary Hand Book* (Independence, MO: Zion’s Printing and Publishing Company, 1937), 141.
94. San Bernardino First Ward Bishopric, *Melchizedek Priesthood Guide on Confirmations, Ordinations, and Blessings* (San Bernardino, CA: n.p., [1940s?]), L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT. In contrast, the unattributed *Suggestions to Brethren Who Have Been Called to Administer to the Sick at the L.D.S. Hospital* states, “In anointing be brief. Do not pronounce blessings, leave this to the one sealing the anointing.”
95. An interesting ritual text produced regionally for missionaries and dated to 1970 by the Church history library, explicitly states that oil is not to be placed on “the afflicted part” and “no blessing need be given” during the anointing. *Ordinances and Ceremonies* (n.p., [1970?]), 10, M255 O65 1970, Church History Library.
96. *General Handbook of Instructions*, No. 21 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1976), 48.
97. Spencer W. Kimball, “President Kimball Speaks Out on Administration to the Sick,” *New Era*, October 1981, 47.
98. *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 20.6.1.
99. Dallin H. Oaks, “Healing the Sick,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 47–50.
100. “Every Thing Shall Live Whither the River Cometh,” lesson 44 in *Old Testament: Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 207–10.