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Rites of Healing

Wendy L. Ulrich, PhD¹

Somewhere along the Yellow River near Beijing, China, an unusual childcare custom has persisted for many generations. Shortly after birth each newborn is placed in a sack of yellow silt from the river bed and the sack is tied around the baby's neck so only the head emerges. Because the new mother immediately returns to the fields to work in this region of abject poverty, this sack of sand will provide child care, blanket, and diaper for the first one to two years of the child's life. The mother will come home to nurse the child at midday, but she does not cuddle or play with the baby. She will remove the infant from the sack only once every few days to change the soiled sand.

At first these infants cry like other babies when hungry or uncomfortable, but parents do not respond to the cries and forbid anyone else to. Within weeks the babies learn the futility of tears or protest and become quiet, docile, and totally undemanding—characteristics highly prized in their culture. Within our lifetime literally millions of children will spend their earliest formative years in sacks of sand.

Those of us raised with different parenting norms probably wonder at this description. Our experience and training both teach us that normal bonding and development cannot occur under such circum-

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stances. The thought of generations of children growing up in conditions so emotionally and physically depriving stuns us.

Unfortunately, our society has its own insidious versions of sandbagging children. Sexual abuse, like a sandbag on a baby, stunts development and obscures healthy bonding. Sexual abuse submerges the child in a numbing quicksand that can cut her off from the feelings and sensations of her own body which the perpetrator attempts to possess. Like a woven cord around the child's throat, a conspiracy of silence implicitly or explicitly weaves around the child, making it difficult for her to speak or even know her reality. Out of ignorance or their own emotional poverty, nonabusive parents often do not hear or respond to the child's cries for help in whatever form they take. Eventually the child stops crying out and adjusts her perception of pain or deprivation to what she or her environment can tolerate. Just as the peasants on the Yellow River follow the same parenting patterns for generations, victims of sexual abuse often become perpetrators, inflicting their crippled sexuality upon the next generation. Children growing up on the Yellow River eventually get out of the sand; children in the sandbags of abuse may spend an entire life there, cut off at the neck, their agency confined, their trust crippled.

I believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ can provide a way out of spiritual sand. Through the healing truths of Christ's atoning life and love, both victim and perpetrator can, if willing, get out of the body bags to find increased freedom, peace, and healing. Psychology, social work, medicine, and other healing arts can provide healing environments, technology, and skills, all of which we have a professional duty and ethical obligation to discover and practice within the highest standards of our professions. However, healing power multiplies as we build upon the sure foundation of the Rock of Christ and not on spiritual sand.

The lasting principles of psychospiritual healing are essential to effective therapy. The word therapy comes from the Greek word, *therapeuo*, which means healing, reminding us that as therapists healing is our business. But the concept of healing in Christian tradition refers to a gift of the spirit which we obtain through faith in Christ, reminding us that as Latter-day Saints healing is our gift. I wish to focus on

this juncture between the professional goal and the spiritual gift, drawing upon both my personal search for the principles of healing and my tenuous, often frustrating efforts to assist others in the healing process.

A House of Healing

When injured or sick, a child runs home to heal under the caring hands of those who love him. When those who should provide healing become instruments of violation instead, God provides other hands, and other houses—including his house, the House of the Lord—where his healing work can go forth. Christ's most frequent and impressive miracle was and is still healing; God's house is ever a house of healing. In the soothing, dream-hymn cadence of the temple, we find healing principles and patterns which we can emulate and teach. I have concluded that specific gospel ordinances embody these healing principles with remarkable accuracy and power, providing healing rites and metaphors to instruct and comfort us. Without violating the sanctity of the House of the Lord, I hope to deepen our appreciation for the richness and healing precision of our liturgy, for as John Widtsoe (1921) reminds us, we cannot "come out of the temple endowed as [we] should be unless [we have] seen, beyond the symbol, the mighty realities for which the symbols stand" (p. 62).

God commands his laborers as they assemble together: "Purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean ... from the blood of this wicked generation" (D&C 88:74-75). As we seek through temple initiation to be cleansed from the blood of this generation we realize that ultimately people get bloody in the first place because they are wounded. Although I may get bloody from someone else being wounded and bleeding on me, none of us escape mortal life without getting wounded ourselves. We wound each other and we wound ourselves by our own actions, intentional or not. When Christ comes again we are told his garments will be red, dyed in blood, the blood of our spiritual and psychic wounds, for "he was wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5). His garments are dyed in the blood we have bled and the blood we have shed.

Some pretty bloody people come into my office. Some of them hemorrhage faster, it seems, than I can staunch the flow. Some use drastic measures to stop their bleeding, such as psychological tourniquets that cut off feeling and amputate essential parts of the self. Repression and dissociation may stop the bleeding and preserve life, but as tourniquets on the soul they often do considerable damage of their own. When they are removed the wounded limb may be excruciating, may start to bleed anew, or worse, may hang uselessly. Sometimes abused children inflict wounds upon themselves, perhaps an attempt to give overt expression to hidden psychic pain.

To the extent that all parents fail to fully recognize and value the preciousness of their offspring, all children are wounded. The question is not really, "Have I been injured or abused?" or even, "Have I injured or abused?" but how, and how much. But in the case of sexual abuse the damage is almost always severe, pervasive, and lasting. As practitioners of the healer's art, we wrestle with how to help people stop bleeding and start healing from such abuse.

Healing from Life and Death

We find remnants of God's healing principles and ordinances in many cultures, and the Lord invites us to bring to the temple "all your antiquities; and with all who have knowledge of antiquities" (D&C 124:26). Perhaps we need knowledge of antiquities in the temple because this knowledge can help us understand our own rites better. In most cultures in antiquity, ritual surrounds the two essential life experiences—puberty, or the transition out of childhood, and death, the transition out of adulthood (Campbell, 1988). Ultimately, both kinds of rites involve the putting off of one life or level of consciousness and the taking on of another. Each transition requires that we wrestle with questions of healing: Do we "heal" from death? Will we conquer this looming, ultimate transition? Our closest conscious practice run will be our experience with the transition from childhood to adulthood. Can we "heal" from childhood—from the loss of innocence that is both deplorable and inevitable in mortality? A religion that teaches us to "heal" from life holds promise for teaching us to

“heal” from death as well. As Christ demonstrates the healing in his wings—wings under which he longs to gather us, he says,—as a protective mother hen gathers her chicks, we experience his power to free us from the grasp of others’ sins and the resulting death of our innocence. This experience justifies our faith in his power to heal and free us from the grasp of death as well.

In primitive cultures, the onset of menses marks the adolescent transition for girls. This physical marker becomes an outward symbol of consciousness of the bleeding, wounded aspects of feminine development into adult roles of self-sacrifice such as in bearing and nurturing children. For boys, whose transition into adulthood is less clearly delineated, degenerate initiation ceremonies may involve the inflicting of physical wounds as an outward symbol of the bleeding, wounded aspects of masculine development into adult roles of self-sacrifice for familial and societal security and protection. Initiation rites often purposefully frighten and wound by unanesthetized cutting of the genitals, physical deprivation, separation from family and friends, and scarification. The result is clear and intended: No one can go back to being a naive and innocent child after such an experience. Sandbagging babies sounds minor in comparison.

While we abhor the violence in these primitive rituals, many scholars proclaim the need for ritual in modern society (Bly, 1990; Campbell, 1988; Estes, 1992; Jung, 1972; Keen, 1991)—rituals that symbolize and then gloriously transcend the psychic wounding we all experience without having to go looking for it. For example, being held under the water of baptism simulates in a benign way the experience of dying that we might experience the joy of rebirth. Like a child under the baptismal water, those who attend the temple for the first time may feel disoriented, even fearful, pulled away from familiar supports and rules, perhaps because only then are we willing to wrestle with the unlikely mysteries and joys of the inner, spiritual realm. If we can surpass our negative transference we can learn that the rules of abuse do not apply in God’s house, where submission need not injure, vulnerability need not debase, touching need not humiliate, receiving need not violate, and secrets need not isolate. By learning these new lessons in contexts of some uncertainty and isolation—feelings famil-

iar to the contexts in which we learned to distrust and dissociate—we can hopefully find release from some of the painful lessons of the past and embrace a new world view.

For those who have been seriously abused, however, the temple context may trigger so much association with old trauma as to interfere with trust and learning. For one previously led by would-be mentors into dangerous paths, situations requiring trust can induce fear and dissociation. Despite this risk, I believe the temple holds unique promise for the wounded as a place for corrective experience. Healing rites appropriately surface old conflicts and wounds—but this time with a different ending. Kathleen Flake (1993) describes the temple as an opportunity for the wounded child within to curl up on the couch and watch a movie, so to speak, within the comforting embrace of the spirit of God. Whether or not we fully understand the program, the important thing is to feel that spirit which makes us cry, *Abba—Abba*, the intimate, familial name for Father.

Healing Ordinances

The Lord says in Doctrine and Covenants 124:39, “Therefore, verily I say unto you, that your anointings, and your washings . . . are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house.” When do we wash and anoint someone? As most six-year-olds know, the thing to do when you cut your finger is to wash it, apply some medicated ointment, and put on a Band-Aid. Washing is how we become clean from blood and infection. Anointing oil, the medicinal agent used in ancient times as a healing balm, was also used for nourishment and a source of light—contributing to its powerful symbolism. Clean, white dressing completes the healing effort. We see these principles when Christ asks those he heals to wash in the river, or when we anoint with oil before giving a healing blessing, or when we dress in white for baptism for the remission of sins. On this basis, I look to the ordinances of washing and anointing for information about the healing process.

The Lord teaches that through temple ordinances he will “reveal unto [the] church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world” (v. 41), and will “bless you, and crown you

with honor, immortality, and eternal life" (v. 55). These ordinances, then, teach universal principles central to the healing process, culminating in the ultimate healing of resurrection and eternal life.

I will present seven such healing principles suggested in these rites of spiritual initiation. Although these seven principles are all grounded in the initiatory ordinances, they also draw upon the imagery of what I identify as the seven rooms of the temple: the baptistery, the initiatory ordinance rooms, the creation room, the garden room, the world room, the terrestrial room, and the celestial and sealing rooms. These seven temple locations in turn provide an overlay for the seven periods of the creation of the earth, another metaphor for the soul.

Principles of Healing

Principle Number One: Healing occurs within relationships of trust.

The temple is not for neophytes in the things of the spirit but for those already familiar with the spirit's workings. The first room of the temple, the baptismal room, reminds us that we are not ready for the more advanced healing rites of the temple until we have been spiritually born of Christ and received the Comforter promised us at baptism. Likewise, the first step in therapy is for the injured to learn to internalize the comforting, truth-witnessing voice of the therapist and to trust and heed that newly internalized parental voice. The scriptures refer to saviors on Mount Zion; healers can be comforters and testators on Mount Zion as well.

Establishing relationships of trust is not a trivial task when trust has been seriously violated. The old, distrusting self must die, followed by a rebirth of openness to change. Just as we must trust a medical doctor's expertise before we will submit to her interventions, trust in a therapist's wisdom and care is the first step in healing. The first goal of therapy is to help the client feel safe enough to say what hurts, begin to identify what she wants, and develop her capacity to get her needs met. Some of the most useful questions a therapist asks are: "Where does it hurt?" "What do you want?" "What do you need?" Trust builds through respectful listening, careful questions, and precise interventions geared to the client's innermost desires. Ultimately,

trusting relationships with people model the essential trust we must develop in God if we are to open our hearts to his healing.

Rebuilding trust takes time when we have been injured by those we have trusted before. Like medics and temple workers, therapists can be as good Samaritans to bleeding souls left naked by the roadside. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the wounded man does nothing, says nothing, but only receives—a worthwhile initial model for the healer. To children whose tender feelings have been subverted and ignored by sexual perpetrators, the experience of simple receiving from others can be vital, however new and disconcerting. Sometimes clients test us for months before allowing themselves to receive. They miss appointments or talk of quitting whenever they feel cared for, or they become demanding and provocative, expecting abandonment and rejection. An abused client told me how frightened she felt as she began to trust me for she assumed that once I gained her trust I would hurt her—a telling transference. Another client became acutely sensitive to my moods and emotional availability as he tried to discern if I was safe to lean on. Healing requires willingness on the part of the healer to give. It also requires willingness on the part of the wounded to receive—to be vulnerable, to feel and acknowledge pain, to allow someone else to minister to them, to be patient and long-suffering when healing takes time.

In the world, of course, admitting that one is wounded, naked, or vulnerable is not usually wise. Most of us expend enormous energy trying to deny our wounds, avoid the sight of blood, and avert our eyes from unpleasant mutilations. We run from our pain in a thousand directions, hoping, perhaps, to be more acceptable to other people who are disgusted and frightened by the brutality a wound implies. Some people seek friends and mates who will help them maintain an illusion of wholeness. Society urges men in particular to deny their suffering, ignore their wounds, and gain prestige by claiming that nothing hurts. But companionship and growth cannot flourish in the midst of such denial. Trust and intimacy require that we admit our wounds, not externalize them as something out there that if we could just drink hard enough or work hard enough or play hard enough we could get rid of (Bly, 1990; Keen, 1991). Men (and

women) who must be prepared to go to war or compete aggressively in emotionally dangerous settings often feel trapped between society's contradictory expectations that they both acknowledge their wounds in the service of familial intimacy and ignore their wounds unflinchingly in the service of protecting the family and society. Christ exemplifies in the atonement that spiritual power flows from soul-searching humility and willingness to bleed, if necessary from every pore. To live in this world is to risk being wounded, and once we are strong enough to do so we must be willing for the sake of both growth and intimacy to feel our pain.

Even after careful preparation, there may be times in the course of therapy or temple initiation when the wounded feel self-conscious, exposed, or uncertain. Uncertainty has a certain purpose of stretching us to new levels of understanding and inviting deep change. After experiences like these, one cannot go back to being a naive child. Trust increases as we learn that temples and therapy are places of healing and humility, not hurt or humiliation. Learning to be soothed, to soothe oneself, to use one's cognitive capacities to manage intense affect or ambiguity, and to feel the spirit of both human and heavenly comforters prepare us for the next steps in the healing processes of therapy.

Principle Number Two: Healing requires surrender of innocence, acceptance of personal responsibility, and appropriate self-disclosure, which lead to spiritual power. In apocryphal writings and legends, ritual washing, anointing, and/or dressing of wounds prepare the hero or heroine for healing and spiritual power. In the words of the parable cited above, "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 brought him to an inn, and took care of him." (Luke 10:33-34). The Samaritan, like a ministering angel, anoints and bandages the traveler, then takes him to a safe place for rest and healing. This is where the initiate's journey through the temple begins as well: with the invitation of a heaven-authorized minister into a healing sanctuary of cleansing and safety. These initiatory ordinances embody all of the principles of healing described in this paper.

In the apocryphal Gospel of Bartholomew, (Nibley, 1992, p. 316-7), Mary, the mother of Christ, describes her experience in the temple at the annunciation: "I was washed and anointed and wiped off and clothed in a garment by one who hailed me as a 'blessed vessel,' took me by the right hand and took me through the veil." Washing is the first of several steps in her spiritual preparation to enter within the veil.

Another example of the power of washing occurs in Clarissa Pinkola Estes' rendition of the story, "The Handless Maiden." In this story the heroine's father foolishly bargains to give the devil his daughter in exchange for wealth. When the devil comes to collect, the heroine finds that the devil has no power over her as long as she has washed and dressed in white. When the devil forbids her to bathe she cries in fear, and her hands are washed clean in the process, once again thwarting the evil one. The devil commands that her tear-washed hands be chopped off, but the bloody stumps are again washed with her tears after which she is permanently freed from the devil's grasp (Estes, 1992, pp. 390-391). Her violated body, washed in her own tears, becomes the door out of innocence and into the underworld of initiation, a place where she will "learn immense power" (Estes, 1992, p. 405).

We come to earth, the temple, and therapy to surrender our naivete and acquire power. Losing our innocent acceptance of every voice that entices us can result in increased spiritual power, but the process is a painful one. As unpleasant as it is to be bloody, blood and sin are inherent to the mortal condition. We make bad bargains with the devil, naive to his ways, or others make such bargains at our expense, charging their guilt to our account and leaving us maimed. Healing involves cleansing mind and body from both deserved and undeserved blood-guiltiness, learning to submit to the instructive qualities of suffering without seeking it, inflicting it, or excessively blaming ourselves for it.

Blaming oneself for being sexually abused is a common way of gaining a false sense of control: if we believe that we deserved the abuse in some way, then by improving ourselves we can avoid it. At the very least, self-blame allows us to avoid the even more frightening

implication that we live in a world where adults cannot be trusted, where we are on our own, and where terrible things can happen to us without provocation. Yet in very fact we do live in just such a world, and spiritual maturity and healing require us to make peace with that fact and let go of the illusion of having been in control of the abuse or having been responsible for it when we were not.

One outcome of having our wounds washed is that we experience being both understood and accepted, cleansed and absolved by one who sees us in our wounded nakedness for just what we are. Washing implies divine and human forgiveness as in the words of the Lord to Isaiah: "Wash you, make you clean....Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:16, 18). Filled with self-hatred, the abused expect others to hate them as well. They either hide their nakedness and then live in fear of discovery and judgment (Kelly, 1992), or they act out their shame, provoking others to reject them and get it over with. The healer neither condemns nor rejects, places the actions of the abused in context, and allows the wounded to experience being both understood and accepted by one who sees them in their nakedness. While they are yet naked and imperfect, the healer reflects back to them their true, infinitely precious nature as potential kings and queens, priests and priestesses.

Principle Number Three: To claim God's healing blessings we must submit to his authority in the name of his Son. The story of the earth's creation testifies of God's power and plan. In contrast to the orderly unfolding of creation, sexual abuse leaves the inner world in chaos and the inner spirit doubtful of God's goodness or power. Even when God through his ministers comes down to us in our unorganized state, claims us as his, and pronounces us good, we in turn must choose him as our Father and God. As victims begin to organize their life experiences in therapy, allowing the dry land of consciousness to emerge from the murky waters of the unconsciousness, they struggle to reconcile tragic realities with the idea of a God who is omnipotent and omnibenevolent.

While sophisticated philosophical discourse can help with such reconciliation, ultimately we choose to believe in God out of desire,

experience with the spirit, and coming to know the Savior rather than out of convincing arguments. We choose to believe despite our doubts, not by eliminating them. Laman and Lemuel saw an angel, yet doubted that God could answer their prayers (see 1 Nephi 15:8-9; 17:45). The brother of Jared, having seen the finger of the premortal Christ, was still asked, "Believest thou the words which I shall speak?" (Ether 3:11). Ultimately we choose to submit to God not because his ways are easy or fully comprehensible but because we recognize with Peter that there is no place else to go, for here are the words of eternal life (see John 6:66-68).

Principle Number Four: Healing requires careful distinction between truth and error, right and wrong. As healing continues we must learn, through the careful tuning of our mind and body, to distinguish right from wrong, truth from error, good from evil, the loving voice of God from the voice of the destroyer masquerading as a friendly messenger in the Garden of Eden. Psychic numbing in response to severe pain can distort our vision and feelings. Cut off from our body, we find it difficult to feel the voice of the Spirit or to know our inner realities. We misunderstand, attribute wrong motives, overgeneralize, underestimate, exaggerate, minimize. We may not perceive psychic invasion until too late, ignoring internal warning signals until our anger explodes upon us like a missile from a stealth bomber. We confuse what we value, what we want, what we like, what we need. We cannot embrace the ambiguity inherent in all things, perhaps because we have to work so hard just to see the black and white.

Therapists need great artistry and skill to help clients retain what loving feelings they have for an abusive family member while rejecting the violation, to retain the capacity for pleasure while rejecting inappropriate touch, to maintain a trusting posture with the world while protecting themselves against real dangers. The wounded may have particular difficulty perceiving the Spirit of the Lord. Even the spiritually experienced seem to lose their ability to feel God's voice when their systems are reeling from their own internal screams. When we hurt, we need loving mentors to nurture, speak truth, and confirm the witness of the Holy Ghost, inaudible to us for now.

Seeing clearly to distinguish truth from error is particularly important in the process of forgiveness. In my experience, most LDS clients anxiously strive to forgive. Clients often feel burdened with guilt over their difficulty in doing so. In their determination to gain closure on the past and remove the cancer of vengeance from their life they may not take the time to distinguish healthy from unhealthy tissue before surgery.

Anger appropriately and irrevocably follows injustice; we must distinguish this righteous indignation from anger that becomes an evil in its own right. The scriptures clearly state that mercy cannot rob justice, which I take to mean that we cannot forgive when we are lying to ourselves (Ulrich, 1991; 1993). Our spiritual integrity rebels at such a task. When we struggle with forgiving we may be trying to say that what happened to us was not that bad, did not really hurt, or was really our fault and not the perpetrator's, denying the realities of our own experience and the judgment of God about the abhorrence of sin. At the other extreme, we may be insisting that what happened to us was fatal rather than merely devastating, or that the fault was entirely the perpetrator's with no mitigating circumstances whatsoever, denying the power of Christ to heal, redeem, and judge. Either/or thinking almost never represents reality. A victim with an accurate understanding of what he has lost is in the best position to absolve the debt and truly forgive.

Amid ongoing debate about the veracity of recovered memories of sexual abuse, therapists must be willing to grapple with divergent perspectives in our search for truth. Latter-day Saints have our roots deep in that quest, beginning with Joseph Smith's search for truth amid discordant opinions and uncertainty. We acquire a testimony of either spiritual or psychological truth through a similar process of accumulating evidence from many sources. Impressions, dreams, physical sensations, powerful emotions, memories, and fragments of familiarity may all contribute. Like an accumulation of spiritual experiences that lead one to conclude which church is true, a sufficient accumulation of evidence may convince one—even in the absence of sure knowledge—that she has been sexually abused. Sufficiently compelling evidence leads to more accurate and dependable conclusions. Correct

interpretation of our spiritual and psychic impressions is vital if we are to come to the correct conclusions. Whether in a scientific experiment, a court of law, a testimony of the Book of Mormon, or a repressed childhood memory, we rarely reach absolute certainty.

Teaching people to tolerate ambiguity is an important aspect of therapy, and as therapists we must model that tolerance for uncertainty. As therapists we must remember the importance of being scrupulous about not “leading the witness” or jumping to conclusions. Our job is to assist clients in gathering evidence, testing hypotheses, considering alternatives, and drawing conclusions based on the highest principles of truth, justice, and mercy. It is irresponsible to assume that the world is a black-and-white place where all the truth lines up on one side of an issue and all the guilt on the other. I find it equally irresponsible to assume that we can simply ignore or take no stand on issues that do not lend themselves to black-and-white analysis.

Principle Number Five: The spirit without the body cannot have a fullness of joy. Like innocents evicted from the garden of Eden, victims of sexual abuse find themselves in a lone and dreary world, cut off from previous understanding of reality, separated from their truest sense of self as if they were in a bag of sand from the neck down. They may have a sense of depersonalization and separation from their body and its sensations and feelings. They are doubly subject to spiritual death, the separation from God, because without clear access to their feelings they have extra difficulty discerning his spirit. They are also doubly subject to physical death, the separation of body and spirit, because they are, while living, cut off from the emotions and perceptions of their body. Addictions of various kinds perpetuate the separation of mind and body, numbing the body and distracting the mind. The scriptures remind us that the dead view the separation of spirit and body as a bondage (see D&C 45:17), and that only spirit and body inseparably connected allow a fullness of joy (see D&C 93:33).

When cut off from our physical reality, affect and cognition seem to operate independently. The mind claims nothing is wrong but the body feels terror; the mind perceives danger but the body becomes numb; the body responds sexually but the mind is a blank. As the

abused tune in to physical feelings again, the negative feelings return first: fear in the belly, anger in the arms and hands, knots of tension in the shoulders, a hard, black, sadness in the chest. The abused child's underdeveloped ego boundaries allow the child to incorporate into her body elements of the abusive environment and lose into that environment elements of her body (Grove, 1989). For example, an adult sexually abused as a child withdraws into a black space inside her head when threatened, eventually equating the internal black space with the blackness of the room in which she was abused. Another survivor's mind wanders, as if her eyes float out of her head and wander through the childhood home, still checking on the whereabouts of potential perpetrators.²

Healing involves a consecration of each part of the body for its rightful purpose and to its rightful owner. A healthy adult has eyes that see clearly and accurately, a mouth that speaks the truth, a head solidly connected to the input and actions of the body, a nose that brings pleasurable and finely-tuned sensations. According to Hugh Nibley, an ancient temple document known as the Shabako Stone states:

The way one becomes a member of the universe is through one's sensory perceptors. Whatever gets to us from out there must come through "the seven gateways" of the eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. These are the avenues made functional by the initiatory rite of the Egyptian temples. The Opening of the Mouth [ceremony], in which the organs of the senses are first washed and then anointed, is to make the organs efficient conveyors to a clear and active brain, by which the mind evaluates, structures, and comprehends reality (Nibley, 1992, p. 60).

Healing rites legitimize and enact our need for healing touch that is not erotic or exploitative. The laying on of healing hands by ministers of our own gender in intimate but nonsexual expression legitimizes our need for carefully boundaried, nonsexualized, soothing. Although we may never completely replicate missing tenderness I believe God can help us get what we need to heal, to accept and mourn our losses and move forward.

Touch serves several purposes. Loving parental touch serves a developmental function, orienting a child to his body and making of

²I recommend David Grove's innovative work with metaphor therapy for ways to help clients remove these invaders.

it a home for his spirit. Reparative touch provides comfort to the physically or psychologically injured. Some touch performs what one severely abused client called an “exorcistic” function, releasing body memories of the trail of abuse. While new therapies are developing to treat the mind-body split (e.g., Grove, 1989), the Spirit is still the surest guide for the LDS therapist. Temple ordinances provide a template for this sensitive healing work.

Complicating the issue of receiving others’ touch, the sexually abused often experience gender confusion and eroticization of the non-sexual need for comfort. The sexually exploited of either sex may over-identify with the aggressor even while they hate him or her, may avoid identifying with adults who have failed to safeguard them even while they long for their protection and care. These complex identifications and longings may become eroticized in adulthood as same-sex attractions.

Astoundingly, I know adults who do not remember ever being held or touched in a nonsexual way. As we help clients identify the legitimate needs, fears, and hurts that underpin some same-sex attraction, erotic elements can be reduced and real needs addressed within the boundaries the Lord has established.

Principle Number Six: Healing is not complete until new boundaries, like new skin, forms over the wound. The sexually abused need assistance in developing appropriate boundaries to shield and protect them from those who would destroy or injure. Fully operational spiritual boundaries shield us from the soul-destructive power of evil and usher us into a terrestrial state of increased access to God’s messengers. The abused may need permission to have boundaries at all, or may need assistance in developing flexible rather than rigid boundaries. They often feel they lack this psychic protection from evil and may wear layers of shapeless clothing to provide the barrier missing in their self-perceptions. Conversely, they may have a poor sense of the need for protective boundaries and may too readily lay their protective shields aside, seeking refuge in a fantasized invincibility.

Skin and clothing are useful metaphors for helpful boundaries because they are protective but flexible. Sacred clothing with the char-

acteristics of protective new skin characterizes ancient rituals (see Nibley, 1992, pp. 91-138). For example, in ancient Egypt, a skin worn over one shoulder by the Egyptian priest symbolized authority and heavenly power. In ancient myth, Heracles wore a special leather garment for protection in the risky world of humans. In fairy tales and myths, the hero or heroine often receives sacred clothing with magical powers to ward off evil.

In important ways, sacred clothing becomes like a second skin, representative of a new, covenant-bound body consecrated to God and hallowed by his protective care. This body is marked with the scars of our mortal experience and wisdom, suggesting as in ancient cultures that we are now adults who have fought the enemy, been subject to wounding, and survived. Sacred scars attest that, as the scriptures require, we have engraven the image of God upon our countenances (see Alma 5:14), written the word of God in our flesh (see Deuteronomy 11:18), and acquired spiritual understanding transcending the intellect and carved into our very being—like the sacred marks in the hands and feet of the resurrected Christ. They symbolize the covenants with God which become our ultimate protection, accessing for us his power to preserve and defend.

Principle Number Seven: Healing must be followed by reorientation to one's new identity and choices—a period of cognitive restructuring and reintegration. The healing process comes to some conclusion as we incorporate into our identity a new understanding of ourselves and as we learn to enter more fully into God's promised rest. New names have been used in the Old Testament and elsewhere to signify such a change of identity. For example, years after Jacob flees from the murderous intentions of his brother Esau, God commands Jacob to go home. As Jacob gets closer to his homeland with his now large family, he receives word that Esau is approaching with four hundred men. Imagine Jacob's terror as he considers the real possibility that his brother is coming to make good on his threat to kill him. Jacob does all he can to protect his wives and children and then fervently prays, reminding the Lord of His promises of protection. Jacob spends a long and lonely night wrestling with God. Jacob is wounded in the strug-

gle, yet he refuses to quit until God assures him that the promised blessings will be realized. In that moment God gives Jacob a new name, Israel, meaning one who has struggled with God and prevailed. We become the true house of Israel when we, too, wrestle with God, not letting go through the lonely night of doubt and pain until we receive the promised blessings, the final healing.

Abram, whose name God changed to Abraham, was a victim of abuse (we might call it ritual abuse) at the hands of his father and his father's religion. God says to Abraham and to all victims of domestic violence, "Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee ... from thy father's house, and from all thy kinsfolk ... and this because they have turned their hearts away from me.... Therefore I have come down ... to destroy him who hath lifted up his hand against thee, Abraham, my son, to take away thy life. Behold, I will lead thee by my hand, and I will take thee, to put upon thee my name, even the Priesthood of thy father, and my power shall be over thee" (Abraham 1:16-18).

Final Healing

As I keep vigil with others through long nights of struggle and confusion, I sometimes wonder why someone cannot lay hands on their heads and restore health and faith as quickly as they were taken away by a perpetrator's unholy hands. The spirit has gently witnessed that a different kind of healing is also needed here. Christ could heal a wounded body in seconds, but to heal distorted thinking, a bruised heart, a wounded agency required months and years among his most willing disciples. Although some think therapists should perform these miracles in a few days or weeks, healing requires practice, patience, and enduring to the end.

Just as a house in a dream symbolizes the dreamer, ultimately I believe God provides the house of the Lord as a symbol of the follower of Christ. In our house, our temple of the self, we find many rooms. Within that house each of us needs a place for healing, cleansing, renewing hope in God's promised blessings, and receiving without having to say a word. In such an inner room we bathe and dress in the

whole, white cloth of our covenant body, remembering as if through a veil the distant moment when we received that holy gift upon leaving the premortal existence. In the holy temple, God's abused children can reclaim their precious body and wounded spirit from a sack of psychic sand. These sacred rites portend the day when all God's children will reclaim their precious physical and spiritual inheritance—the day of resurrection when Christ, the Rock of Israel upon which we build, comes to us personally with redemption in his hands and healing in his wings.

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