

Professional Myths about Latter-day Therapy

Stephen Jay Hammer

AS A SOMEWHAT MINOR CONSUMER of professional counseling and psychotherapy I would like to offer some comments on Mark Koltko's essay, "Latter-day Myths About Counseling and Psychotherapy," which appeared in the winter 1992 issue of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (pages 32-43). Koltko discounts six common myths regarding psychotherapy among contemporary Latter-day Saints:

**Myth of invincible righteousness:* Mormons who live their religion don't need therapy.

**Myth of In-House Therapists:* Church leaders should handle all our counseling needs.

**Myth of the Ungodly Therapist:* Psychotherapists are anti-religious.

**Myth of the Safe Basement:* Normal people don't talk about things like *that* with strangers.

**Myth of the Vulnerable Testimony:* Psychotherapy undermines faith.

**Myth of the Moral Powerboat:* Normal people should be able to solve their own problems under their own power.

He concludes, "When appropriately pursued with a carefully chosen and skilled professional, therapy can be a powerful way to reach a higher level of responsibility, capability, and spirituality" (42).

While I concur with this conclusion, for a client to make a careful choice of a skilled professional requires considerable insight—insight that is often least accessible when in the midst of emotional turmoil and pain. From my reading and observations as a client some of Koltko's myths have a basis in fact and deserve to be reconsidered in developing such insight. In addition, therapists have their own myths that generate mists of darkness on the journey to the tree of life.

THE MYTH OF MYTH

I sometimes hear "myth" used to connote a ridiculous story actually believed or thought to be possible by naive people. Because some myths have a way of showing up as more fact than fancy—as in the story of Troy—I prefer to consider a myth as an undocumented story purporting to represent reality which has not been demonstrated as either true or false; it is a hypothesis. Some myths may be accurate or quasi-accurate representations of reality; others may not. When myths are discredited they become fables.

Koltko suggests that some LDS views of counseling and therapy are fables. On the basis of reason and his experience and observations, he replaces those "LDS misunderstandings" with "facts." I propose that some of those facts need to be towed back into the harbor of mythology, while rescuing some of his myths from the graveyard of fables.

THE MYTH OF "PROFESSIONAL" THERAPY

I cringe when I hear the phrase "get professional help" in the context of therapy. When driving the freeways of Los Angeles I regularly hear local radio therapists advise people in distressed relationships. If a spouse (or sibling or employee) is not willing to "work on the relationship"—defined as "get professional help"—then obviously they don't care enough about the relationship to continue in it and it's time to break it off. The implication is that "professional" is synonymous with "competent," "effective," "good," "worthwhile." I am surprised by the arrogance of such statements.

That the issue is much more complex and unsettled is evidenced by widespread discrediting of each other within the therapy professions: Freudians vs. Jungians; Rogerians vs. rational emotive therapists; behaviorists vs. transactional analysts; psychiatrists vs. psychologists; family systems vs. individual work; and others. The differences are not trivial: short-term vs. long-term (and expense); childhood roots vs. current behavior only; freedom vs. responsibility; feelings vs. rationality; individual vs. couple or family; drug vs. drug-free; non-touching all the way to sexual intercourse with clients¹; humanistic vs. metaphysical; Christian vs. "value free."

1. Even M. Scott Peck, personally one of my favorites for espousing Mormon-like views, asserts, "Moreover were I ever to have a case in which I concluded after careful and judicious consideration that my patient's spiritual growth would be substantially furthered by our having sexual relations, I would proceed to have them. In fifteen years of practice, however, I have not yet had such a case, and I find it difficult to imagine that such a case could really exist" (Peck, *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love*,

The more I have investigated various schools of theory and visited with practitioners, the more I have admired the depth and complexity of the subject. Unfortunately many professionals in this field vastly overestimate their competence. An "advanced degree" often means "dogmatically steeped in a disdain for approaches other than one's mentor, even when that is interdisciplinary"; "experience" means "making the same mistakes over and over"; and "recognized" is "doing it in the company of others of like mind."

Practitioners and clients alike are more at ease when "professional" is defined as "expert and competent," and everybody that is degreed, licensed, experienced, or recognized qualifies. But it is closer to reality to take the word professional at its more generic level: "engaged in an activity as a means of livelihood or gain."²

THE MYTH OF THERAPEUTIC TECHNOLOGY

Koltko says, "Therapy is a set of technologies, a set of techniques and methods, and a special relationship between the therapist and the client" (35). But a set of technologies and methods does not exist, and a definition of what that "special relationship" is or ought to be does not exist. Each of these areas is subject to differences of opinion among experts and lay people alike, and not without considerable passion on differing sides. The art of therapy often masquerades in a jargon of technology which primarily acts as a buffer between vulnerable practitioners and the complex uncertainty of reality.

THE MYTH OF THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS

Blanket urging of therapy by counselors is a marketing technique to generate primary demand for a product. It usually takes the form of "Look how much better off you would be if you used, or had more of whatever" without naming a specific brand. This type of marketing becomes most effective when people can be convinced that they need the class of product and that they are somehow deficient—or deficient in providing for their children, etc.—if they do not use the product. Shaming the consumer into using and continuing to use services is one at which the counseling profession is expert.

I use the word "shaming" because there is a tendency in the helping professions to speak of cures thus labeling someone struggling with emo-

Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth [New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1978], 176). Of course some feel they have had such a case.

2. *Random House College Dictionary* (New York: Random House, 1973), 1057.

tional pain, or sometimes those not struggling with emotional pain but who "ought to be," as diseased. Many therapists speak of people needing counseling and people being cured, as if there was something fundamentally and basically wrong with them if they experience normal even though painful stress in life.

Of course that is not the point, therapists say. The point is that clients can be helped to work through their problems more effectively thereby enhancing their lives. That argument can be made for almost any good or service, and enhancement isn't the same as *need*. We would all be delighted with a bigger house, nicer clothing, help around the house, better car, someone to regularly stroke us and hold our hands, etc. It is not a matter of indifference when a therapist adopts a long, expensive treatment to better someone's life while a client's mission or college education fund crumbles. When the costs of owning a new car outweigh the benefits, one does not speak of the decision to buy a new car as beneficial. The costs of therapy, financial and spiritual, can be substantial and ought to be considered carefully when evaluating whether therapy is a net benefit.

THE MYTH OF NON-JUDGMENTAL THERAPY

The first statement I encountered in two experiences with therapy was, "In here we don't talk about shoulds." My values were swept out the window in the "neutrality" of scientific therapy, and it was done with one enormous value judgment that there should be no shoulds. I also learned a politically-correct terminology. There are no good or bad behaviors or feelings; instead they are "appropriate" (shoulds) and "inappropriate" (should-nots), approved by the therapist.

Professionals often profess to conduct non-judgmental and value-free therapy. But such therapy is permeated with powerful value judgments. Some of the common ones I have heard, and their gospel-oriented counterparts are:

Therapy Values

Trust your feelings.³

Gospel Values

Seek not after your own heart

3. Carl Rogers exemplifies this philosophy: "As the workshop proceeds, there is a shift of value choices made by participants. Values that are based on authority, that derive from sources external to the person, tend to be diminished. Values that are experienced tend to be enhanced. What the person has been told is good and valuable, whether by parents, church, state, or political party, tends to be questioned. Those behaviors or ways of being that are *experienced* as satisfying and meaningful tend to be reinforced. The criteria for making value judgments come more and more to lie in the

You can't help how you feel!⁴

You must find yourself before
you can help others.⁵

(Num. 15:39).
 He that trusteth in his own heart is a
 fool (Prov. 28:26).
 The heart is deceitful above all things
 (Jer. 17:9).
 The pride of thine heart hath deceived
 thee (Obad. 1:3).
 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in
 thine heart ((Lev. 19:7).
 Incline in your heart unto the LORD
 God of Israel (Jos. 24:23).
 And according to his faith there was
 a mighty change wrought in his heart
 (Alma 5:12).
 Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
 with all thy heart, and with all thy
 soul, and with all thy mind
 (Matt. 22:37).
 He that findeth his life shall lose it:
 and he that loseth his life for my sake

person, not in a book, a teacher, or a set of dogmas. The locus of evaluation is in the person, not outside.

"Thus, the individual comes to live increasingly by a set of standards that have an internal, personal basis. Because he or she is aware that these standards are based on ever changing experience, they are held more tentatively, less rigidly. They are not carved in stone, but written by a human heart" (Carl Rogers, *A Way Of Being* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980], 194-95). What Rogers says about internalizing our values rings true. Few would disagree that we ought to strive to live by internalized values. But do we strive to live by what we have already sometimes carelessly or helplessly internalized, or do we seek a higher self? Do our values happen by chance or can we choose "that which goeth into the heart?" There is a difference between internalizing eternally rich values and simply living by what happens to already be within the heart.

4. When an experienced, well-educated LDS marriage counselor explained that my wife did not love me anymore and there was nothing *she* could do about it because we can't help how we feel, I was confused and stunned. I noted in my journal a month later, "I don't think I am buying the idea that love just 'happens to us.' I feel like we can choose to love, to care, and to forgive." This doctrine together with two years of prior therapy with a psychiatrist who taught my wife that it is critical to her health and depression to "trust your feelings" seemed to make progress in our marriage impossible. It was as if she had no choice.

5. The thought, "before you can love your neighbor as yourself you have to love yourself," has almost become an article of faith among people in general. I hear it often. M. Scott Peck says a similar thing, "One must find one's self before one can lose it" (97). Often we interpret this to mean that we are justified in pursuing a multitude of self-centered, self-esteem activities while neglecting interpersonal responsibilities so that

“You can find identity only in work that is of real value to society—work for which, usually, our society pays.”⁶

You must be free . . . of rules, roles, restrictions, and guilt.

Stand up for yourself.⁷

shall find it (Matt. 10:39).

For the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10).

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (2 Cor. 3:17).

And he gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. . . .

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (Eph. 4:11, 14).

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God (Eph. 5:21).

A vulnerable, suffering client can still sense support for values or lack thereof in the therapist. It's like crossing a rope bridge: you can feel when the rope sags a little or firms a little under your feet. Values are in the therapy but the therapist keeps them a secret. Though the client may sense those values, because they are only vaguely present it is sometimes difficult for the client to distinguish that subtle external source from his or her own internal feelings. Such therapists maintain control over value development in the client while denying that as a bridge it moves at all.

Even if a therapist could be clinically pure in neutrality, “valueless”

some day we will be able to give back from a position of strength. Is this similar to saying that even though I have a job, I can't donate to the fast offering fund until I get rich?

6. Betty Friedan, *Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1983), 346.

7. This feels so true I find it hard to argue against it. “All truth is independent in that sphere in which God has placed it, to act for itself, as all intelligence also; otherwise there is no existence” (D&C 93:30). What can be more core to a Latter-day Saint than eternal individuality and autonomy—the eternal me? Surely it must have an appropriate place in the therapist's arsenal. But it is a tool that requires much care, caution, skill, and balance. I keep thinking of how so much of the core of the Lord's ministry and mission revolved around the principle of submission, ultimately focusing on the miracle of the Creator submitting himself to his creation: a model of at-one-ment—not only for humanity with God, but for humans with humans, and for man or woman with his or her self.

counseling would not be neutral. I recall a scene from the play *A Man For All Seasons* where Thomas More goes before a tribunal within lofty halls of justice to defend his right to live. He stands accused of disapproving the king's marriage, and therefore of treason, *by his silence*. He counters that the court cannot construe it thus, for under the law, "Silence gives consent."⁸ Either way, all knew that in the face of such an issue, silence could not be neutral. There are situations in therapy where a client listens and feels for the slightest hint of insight, believing that the issue under consideration is too great for neutrality; in those immense halls of therapeutic intimacy silence is not neutral.

Koltko suggests that a question such as "Have you ever wanted to have an affair?" is neutral (38). Given our sexual nature, such a question goes beyond the silence of neutrality. To a client who is free-falling through emotional space desperately grasping for reality, a "valueless" nudging into the corridor of sexuality is at the very least a suggestion and more likely a recommendation.

THE MYTH OF THE HARMLESS THERAPIST

Similarly many therapists out of concern for imposing on the client's freedom, or who feel a lack of competence to direct clients in the intimacy of the therapeutic relationship, or who are afraid that open and honest disclosure of their personal views will terminate the client relationship, attempt to solve this problem by being non-directive or non-interventionist. Large schools of practitioners patiently and expensively create a climate of safety, awaiting the moment of "transference," insight, or trust. Meanwhile clients bounce their heads off their emotional walls. Koltko likens therapy to using a surgeon (35). But could any brain surgeon justify month after month, year after year of weekly, expensive consultations on the basis of establishing trust before getting down to the messy and painful actual work for their patient?

This "do no harm" approach to therapy can create a huge problem for the client—emotional dependency. In the name of freedom and autonomy the low-profile therapist creates in the client a subtle but powerful dependency on the intimacy of their relationship. As time passes, this relationship becomes the most powerful and intimate relationship in the client's life, possibly displacing the development or maintenance of other intimate relationships.

8. Robert Bolt, *A Man For All Seasons*, in *The New Theatre of Europe: An Anthology*, ed. Robert W. Corrigan (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1962), 127.

THE MYTH OF THE CARING PROFESSIONAL

M. Scott Peck in his book *The Road Less Traveled* describes effective therapy in familiar terms:

commitment is the cornerstone of the psychotherapeutic relationship. Before the patient can risk major change he or she must feel the strength and security that come from believing that the therapist is the patient's constant and stable ally. For this alliance to occur the therapist must demonstrate to the patient, usually over a considerable length of time, the consistent and steadfast caring that can arise only from a capacity for commitment. . . . It is no different in a marriage.⁹

This is an interesting and strange philosophy. In order for a patient to be healed the therapist must essentially become equal to a spouse in the client's life. Therapy focuses on creating a viable intimate relationship with a stranger. Isn't it interesting that spouses are expected to accept such intrusions into their private relationships simply because the third party is paid for his or her services and claims expertise? In fact many spouses are probably not oblivious to that intrusion; they *feel* the displacement even if they cannot label the feeling. Regardless of special titles and vocabulary projected by the therapist, the underlying feeling is as if their loved one, engaged in deeply intimate therapy, is having an affair. That the third party is a professional is no more significant than if the affair were with a prostitute instead of a lover.

Peck further describes what it takes to get a discharge:

I've made a commitment to you. I will work with you as long as is necessary, whether it takes one year or five years or ten years or whatever. I don't know whether you will quit our work together when you're ready or before you're ready. But whichever it is, *you are the one who will terminate our relationship*. Short of my death, my services will be available to you as long as you want them.¹⁰

Again, the therapist becomes the primary "committed," loving, supportive character in the client's life—that is, until the client runs out of money. Then how does the therapist's commitment compare with that of a lackluster, untrained, boring spouse, family member, or ordinary church member? This style of idealized, artificially structured intimacy competes for emotional space with the realities of daily living and the intimacy of those that can bear commitment far beyond checking accounts. It can and

9. Peck, 118.

10. *Ibid.*, 143.

has been argued that such a style often does more harm than good, all in the name of caring professionalism.¹¹

I have often thought that this type of therapy contrasts with that of the Savior:

Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, *and walk* (John 5:8).

And he said unto him, Arise, *go thy way*: thy faith hath made thee whole (Luke 17:19).

She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: *go*, and sin no more (John 8:11).

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:14).

Even the Lord himself, upon whom we depend and with whom we are intimate, seeks at every turn to empower us, his children, and while so doing to strengthen our commitments to family and community.

THE MYTH OF INVINCIBLE THERAPY

"To seek a cure for these illnesses [mental or emotional difficulties] through personal spirituality alone while ignoring other resources is to seek after signs or miracles" (Koltko, 34). The extension of this argument is that refusing "professional treatment" is to seek after signs or miracles. Perhaps I could try selling my construction services on that premise—no "do-it-yourselfers" in the kingdom of God.

THE MYTH OF "OUTSIDE" THERAPISTS

Koltko proposes that church officials and therapists work together: "[I]t is a matter of collaboration between a bishop and a therapy professional. One does not take the place of the other; they each speak to different aspects of a person's experience, and ideally they do so in harmony" (36). This is a well-conceived ideal. But how many therapists advise clients to counsel with their religious leaders? And how many counselors confer with bishops, exchanging information? I think it would be a rare therapist who would do so, legalities aside.

It is a serious problem, however, that bishops are essentially our only

11. "The core of a good marriage is protected by an outer layer of loyalty and privacy. It is no small thing for a third person to intrude. . . . The goal should be to get in and get out as quickly and cleanly as possible" (Carlfred Broderick, *Couples: How to Confront Problems and Maintain Loving Relationships* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979], 213).

authorized intimate in-house counselors in the church. It is unfortunate because they have so much to do and so much to offer. I know they foul up sometimes, but I am astounded at the wisdom and good that bishops offer in minimal time, limited circumstances, and no expense. My own experience is that when I finally humbled myself sufficiently to counsel with my bishop (together with his wife) about severe struggles I faced after spending hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars with professionals, that the comfort and wisdom of one or two meetings exceeded all the other counseling time I had spent, even though the bishop had referred the counselor in the first place.

Bishops referring to counselors can be fraught with difficulties. I actually think it is more difficult for a bishop to choose a good referral than to give good counsel, possibly because it is almost impossible for him to evaluate a referral and get feedback. Church leaders I have talked to typically get little or no feedback regarding referrals they have made, whether to independent counselors or to LDS Social Services. They have little or no idea of how matters are being handled and whether or not they meet any ideals of inspiration or professionalism. I have often wondered if it would be helpful to develop some system of "consumer reports" in wards and stakes for LDS users of counseling services so that members and church leaders alike could make more informed choices.

THE MYTH OF THE GODLY THERAPIST

Koltko disputes the "myth" that psychotherapists are anti-religious (36) with demographic surveys. But 41 percent of psychotherapists surveyed attending church regularly does not refute the myth. While 77 percent agreed with the statement, "I try hard to live my life according to my religious beliefs," 28 percent reported that "Notions of God . . . are illusory products of human imagination." LDS therapists can also be so enmeshed in the wisdom of the world that they downplay the role of religion in their lives and particularly their therapy in the name of professionalism. Such hypersensitivity to religion can actually make LDS counselors less gospel-principle-oriented than non-LDS counselors.

From personal experience I can say that blaming religious commitment and commitment to family responsibilities and values for emotional struggles and believing that freedom from those values and commitments is the path to mental health is still alive and well in the counseling profession among both LDS and non-LDS professionals. Counselors are not necessarily immoral or irreligious people, but for many their professional training has desensitized them to their own religious principles and morals.

A KIND WORD

I have found my probings into psychology and relationship publications over the past several years fascinating, stimulating, and largely satisfying. I am astounded, however, at how often writers in these fields develop impressive findings from well-done research studies and then advocate political agendas exactly contrary to their findings. I am amazed when researchers suggest that the traditional family is no longer suited to the problems of today, while admitting we don't have a substitute for it.¹² They do not seriously consider that many of today's problems may exist as the natural consequence of abandoning some traditional family commitments, and no further "revision" of traditional family commitments will cure that. They seem to insist on a soft landing when they have jumped without a parachute. I wonder how these "scientific studies" impact our "objective therapists." But the research findings and descriptions of therapeutic approaches continue to fascinate and sometimes amaze me, and it seems as though more writers have returned to gospel principles in recent years.¹³

I had many positive experiences with therapy and related studies. A therapist with whom I worked for a brief three months was marvelous. She was not LDS and openly gaped at religious surprises she encountered with me. She spontaneously expressed deep personal convictions about some of the challenges I was facing. She worked on the basis of a limited,

12. After reading eleven excellent chapters in a book describing the heartaches and difficulties children face in divorce, I was astounded at the author's final chapter. Her views seemed totally disconnected from her study: "It is past time, then, not only to accept that the family has many new forms, but to deal with the resulting problems head-on. . . . Misplaced nostalgia governs the efforts of many among us who would turn the clock back to simpler and more rigid times" (Linda Bird Francke, *Growing Up Divorced* [New York: Fawcett Books, 1983], 273). She then argues for more government support of single parenting and financing of care of children by non-parent professionals—directly contrary to the needs for nurturing and family closeness she has spent eleven chapters documenting. But her most astonishing proposal is: "If divorce is handled well, the child may not only survive the aftermath gracefully, but even benefit from it in some ways. 'If we can provide children with healthy divorce and healthy extended families, remarried families, step-families, they can have lots of people in their lives, get ten times as much love and really do very well,' says Nancy Weston, director of the Divorcing Family Clinic at the Center for Legal Psychiatry in Santa Monica, California. . . . 'They become enriched, they have more people that love them, they learn more what life is really about, and they're not nearly as protected. . . . There are a lot of positive things that can grow out of a well-handled divorce'" (281).

13. My current favorite for a blend of LDS values with powerful individual and couple therapy is Harville Hendrix, *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

goal-oriented time frame, and we concluded our work together as much upon her satisfaction with where we had gone as mine.

By the time I found her I was grounded in study and prior therapeutic experience so that I knew more about what I wanted from the therapy, how to evaluate whether I was getting it, and how to retain my core values while doing so. I don't know if my experience would have been as positive in the darkest days of my vulnerability. I am confident that in those dark days with other counselors I was too vulnerable to their prejudices and attacks on core values. I have since come to see those attacks as the product of dogmatic and bigoted training—equal to any from religious quarters. How do clients of just average education fare, awed by the credentials of their healers and aware of their helplessness?

In a world becoming more dedicated to self-centered, self-actualizing, self-fulfilling personal growth above all else, it probably is helpful or necessary to get professional help from time to time. Much of the nurturing we used to get spontaneously from one another, in volunteer community service and family affiliations, is no longer available. But the claim that counseling professionals are experts, value-neutral, and working for a client's best interest based on well-established and universally-accepted scientific principles is a myth that needs to be challenged.

Many therapists urge people to get into counseling as though all therapies lead to productive growth, as revival evangelists urge all people to get into a church, any church, as if all paths lead to heaven. In considering counseling services I have found myself feeling much like I imagine Joseph Smith felt in considering the possibilities before him:

While I was laboring under the difficulties caused by the contests of these parties of religionists [therapists], I was one day reading the Epistle of James, first chapter and fifth verse, which reads: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know; for the teachers of religion [professionals] of the different sects [therapies] understood the same passages of scripture [principles] so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible [science].

At length I came to the conclusion that I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God. I at length came to the determination to "ask of God," concluding that if he gave wisdom to them that lacked wisdom, and would give liberally, and not upbraid, I might venture (JS-H 1:11-13).

Perhaps Latter-day Saints should not be too surprised if the answer that comes is similar to that for Joseph:

My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects [therapies] was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood above me in the light, which of all the sects was right (for at this time it had never entered into my heart that all were wrong) and which I should join.

I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds [statements of belief, principles] were an abomination [defilement, pollution] in his sight; that those professors [public teachers] were all corrupt [abounding in errors]; that: “they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof” (JS-H 1:18,19).

My fear is that as Latter-day Saints we may unduly come to rely on professional counselors who are becoming “those professors,” teaching for doctrine the commandments of men and women. I don’t mean that Latter-day Saints shouldn’t utilize professional counseling and therapy. Careful use can be beneficial. But I am suggesting that counseling does step into the realm of spiritual life and into our souls, where gospel-centered values are the ultimate therapy, and the Latter-day “myth” of gospel-centered values takes precedence over the myth of professional therapy.