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# Beyond the Study of the Natural Man: A Gospel Perspective on Human Nature

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TIMOTHY B.  
SMITH  
AND  
MATTHEW  
DRAPER

*Beyond  
the  
Study  
of the  
Natural  
Man*

A GOSPEL PERSPECTIVE  
ON HUMAN NATURE

*Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow.*

— D&C 58:3

One of us (Tim) had the following experience:

I once heard a story of a bright, young Buddhist priest who studied the meaning and purpose of life for many years under a famous master. More than anything else, this student of life was troubled with the one question that seemed central to all other concerns. After many years of deliberating the issue, the young scholar finally worked up enough nerve to ask this most central question of the great master: “What is human nature?” To this, the master replied, “I do not know.”

As a student of psychology, I was struck by the contrast of this scholar’s experience with my own training as a mental health practitioner. Not only had I failed to consider the clear implications of the question “What is human nature?” for my work in therapy, but I had never even thought to raise it, although each psychological theory I studied seemed to have very clear assumptions about human nature. Besides, I had never known a professor to say, “I do not know.”

As others in this volume assert, our assumptions about human nature do matter. Such assumptions become the foundation for our beliefs and practices. Fortunately, we are blessed as students of the gospel with a firm foundation (Hel. 5:12) on which to build our beliefs about human nature and our practices of healing. Although we do not know the answers to all questions about human nature, we are invited by the Master to seek, ask, and eventually “know as [we] are known” (D&C 76:94). A psychology built upon gospel teachings about human nature can transform our practice and our profession (Williams, 1998).

### **Gospel Perspectives on Human Nature**

The scriptures reveal that there are at least two ways to view human nature: in terms of our fallen state or in terms of our divine potential. This article will briefly review these two doctrinal perspectives on human nature and draw implications for the science and practice of psychology.

**The Natural Man.** The doctrine that humans now exist in a fallen state is central to all Christian religions. It pervades the sacred writings of the restored gospel, particularly the Book of Mormon (e.g., 1 Ne. 10:6; Mosiah 16:4–5; Alma 42:10). Indeed, our fallen nature is perhaps best summarized by the following passage: “O how great

is the nothingness of the children of men; yea, even they are less than the dust of the earth” (Hel. 12:7). Given the image evoked by the metaphor “less than the dust,” one can assume that our fallen state is indeed a spiritual reality.

From the scriptures, we learn that the fall of Adam “was the cause of all mankind becoming carnal, sensual, devilish, knowing evil from good, subjecting themselves to the devil” (Mosiah 16:3). With our fallen nature, we are inclined to trust our physical (carnal) senses more than our spiritual ones. We are naturally sinful and weak (Hel. 12:4–5).

Unlike many other doctrines of the gospel, the scriptural portrayal of “the natural man” does not seem to conflict with the way human nature is depicted in many of the major theories in psychology, which often view humans as determined by biology or history (Slife & Williams, 1995). Rather, the selfish natural person is assumed in what some critics call the “bounded, masterful . . . self,” the working model of human nature utilized by psychology (Cushman, 1990, p. 604; Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999). Such a perspective assumes that humans ideally function autonomously (are masterful) and in isolation (are bounded).<sup>1</sup>

The self-focus and self-reliance emphasized by mainstream psychological theories seems to capture the very essence of the natural man. In fact, one cannot readily imagine a better definition of the id’s pleasure principle—each person looking out for his or her own survival, following selfish interests, and ultimately disregarding the needs of others except where one’s own needs interconnect (Rychlak, 1981)—than what the scriptures teach us about our fallen state. Similarly, one cannot readily imagine a better description of fallen man’s tendencies than “stimulus-response, stimulus-response.” Thus, without the light of the other doctrines of the

1. This perspective that psychology perpetuates of the “bounded, masterful self” may actually (and ironically) damage far more than ameliorate the human condition because it assumes that the self can look only to itself for love and soothing, thus perpetuating a sense of emptiness and fragility. Such an inward and selfish focus leaves individuals fluctuating between “feelings of worthlessness and grandiosity that are often said to be the hallmarks of neurotic psychopathology in our day” (Richardson, Fowers, & Guignon, 1999, p. 5; Kohut, 1977).

gospel, extensive study of the natural man could very well lead one to believe that agency is illusory, truth is relative, and meaning is contextual when not entirely irrelevant. As students of the natural man, psychologists have often reached such conclusions (Slife & Williams, 1995).

Anyone limited by an exclusive trust in the accuracy of physical (carnal) senses would probably reach similar conclusions. Physical evidence reveals and supports physical principles. And if our natural tendency is to avoid pain and seek pleasure, it is no wonder that psychotherapists seek to assuage clients' discomforts and generally improve their emotional and social condition. Clearly these efforts benefit the client. However, they may not *bless* the client. That is, they may not enlarge the human capacity to deal with suffering, to focus on others, or to rise above the natural, fallen state to exercise divine potential and power.

Thus, although psychotherapy largely succeeds in reducing pain and enhancing pleasure, its limited perspective of human nature restricts its capacity to nourish the soul. It is as if a one-dimensional perspective of our physical nature has been imposed upon a multidimensional reality. Although much of the multidimensional world can be broken down into one-dimensional units, sometimes even consistently and with empirical precision, a physical (carnal) perspective cannot ever capture a multifaceted spiritual reality. For "what natural man is there that knoweth these things?" (Alma 26:21).

God knows the whole of reality, and his works are always in line with all aspects of our nature. Therefore, his "commandments are spiritual; they are not natural nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual" (D&C 29:35). In contrast, psychology often mistakenly accepts as ultimate reality what Christ would ultimately change within each of us, "for the natural man is an enemy to God" (Mosiah 3:19).

In sum, this perspective explains why many theories in psychology conflict with the gospel. *Psychology is the study of the natural man*. It has not yet considered our divine origin and potential.

**Divine Potential.** Despite the multiple scriptural references to our fallen nature, there are many more references to our divine potential (e.g., Ps. 8:5; Matt. 5:48; D&C 132:20). The good news of the gospel—and the perspective missing from a one-dimensional psychology—is that we can "put off" the natural man and take on a

different nature altogether (Mosiah 3:19). The good news is that we can change.

In fact, we can do more than simply change behaviors or reduce symptoms. The Lord desires a complete reversal of the natural man: “The Lord said unto me: ‘Marvel not that all mankind . . . *must* be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state” (Mosiah 27:25; italics added). Or, as President David O. McKay has quoted, “Human nature must be changed on an enormous scale. . . . And only Christ can change it” (see Nichols, 1971, as quoted in Benson, 1985, 6).

Only Christ can transform the soul. By implication, only Christ’s therapy is permanent. This recognition gives us a renewed sense of humility about our work as counselors and about our success if we partner with the Savior. Using Christ as our role model, we can attempt to serve our clients as he serves others. He is not concerned merely with behavioral change or symptom remission but rather with the eternal blessing of those he serves. Even when his meetings with people have been brief, they have always been intended to *bless* the recipients. Christ’s work enlarges the human capacity to deal with suffering, to focus on others, and to rise above the natural, fallen state by exercising agency proactively in building his kingdom. Although his work during his mortal ministry did remove temporal barriers of pain and disability, his form of healing was focused on confirming faith. Changing the very nature of those he touched was his greatest work. His work lifted their faith and hope, so that they could in turn lift themselves and others. Emulation of Christ’s charity is often the greatest healing influence of all.

Recognition of how Christ practiced can lift our vision of what we can do in therapy. Rather than assuming, as many mainstream theories do, that we as “experts” direct clients’ healing processes through our insights and interventions, we can interact with clients in the spirit of humble compassion (Taylor, 1989, pp. 451–453) and true charity (1 Cor. 13:1–13). With charity we see others for who they really are and focus on their divine potential (Moro. 7:48). As we see beyond our clients’ natural (fallen) condition, they will be more likely to see beyond their immediate problems and concerns: “Recognizing the other’s capacity for change, one provokes or

invites him [or her] to reveal and outgrow himself [or herself]" (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 242). God works this way. When we feel his love, we also begin to realize our divine worth. And when we realize our divine worth, we begin to act accordingly. As President Ezra Taft Benson (1985) reminded us, it is not psychology but charity that transforms the natural man: "The Lord works from the inside out. The world [read *traditional psychotherapy*] works from the outside in. . . . The world would shape human behavior, but Christ can change *human nature*" (6, italics added).

Again, psychology often works "from the outside in" because psychology often assumes that external forces determine our actions (Slife & Williams, 1995). But if people have no internal control over external influences, they can have no hope or potential for anything better or different. By robbing people of the very core of their being, their potential, this form of psychotherapy theory renders all humankind mere "pretenders" at the task of living a moral life (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 31).

A deterministic psychological approach contrasts with the moral embeddedness and ethical understanding people have of each other through their lived experience, which assumes a moral context and agency (Bakhtin, 1984; Taylor, 1985). More to the point, this approach directly conflicts with the gospel, which teaches that we are not natural objects responding to external forces (2 Ne. 2:26) but rather *beings* in the ongoing process of *becoming*. The gospel teaches that we are both fallen and divine. Thus human nature, at its very core, is *potential*. We choose for ourselves the degree to which we realize our divinity (Alma 41:7).

The transformation of our carnal nature to a divine nature is possible because we have been given two precious gifts that are essential to a Christian psychology. The first is the gift of agency and the ability to distinguish good from evil (Moses 6:56). Without agency and moral meaning, we would be unable to transcend environmental or subconscious determinants. The second is the gift of God's Son, whose atonement is available for us if we submit our wills to his (John 3:16). Without the Redeemer, we would be unable to be anything but human.

## Gospel Perspectives on the Transformation from Natural Man to Child of God

*Turning  
Freud  
Upside  
Down*

Given the contrast of our fallen versus divine nature, along with the doctrinal necessity of transforming our nature from the one to the other, principles of a Christian psychology will be in opposition to much of what we have been taught in our profession. It is therefore our responsibility to use the foundation of the gospel to reeducate ourselves and change our profession (Williams, 1998). To explore this process, in the following section we will distill four principles, ways of “transforming our nature” (many others, however, are present among the doctrines of the gospel).

**Becoming Agents of Christ.** As stated above, we have been given two essential gifts: agency and the Atonement. In order to receive the fullness of the second gift, we must use the first to become Christ’s agents. The gift of agency must be made sacred by using it in partnership with God. Only then can our nature return to him who would free us from the shackles of our fallen state, including the lowly and selfish vision of who we think we are.

Thus it is our role as children, as counselors, to match our desires with those of the Father and not struggle against his purposes, which are higher than our own (Isa. 55:8–9). Although it is our fallen nature to struggle against the unknown, we can be still and know Him, that he is God (Psalm 46:10). Our agency will be best suited to our nature as we let go of our own pride and insecurities to rely on the Lord in quiet faith, even amid apparent turmoil.

A story is told of an old man who was walking with his friends along a river, lost his balance, and fell into swirling rapids that carried him swiftly toward a waterfall. His friends lost hope, certain that no one could survive the horrible course. They raced downstream expecting to recover his broken body, but to their amazement, the old man stood calmly on the shoreline, wringing out his clothes. “How did you live?” they asked in wonder. The old man smiled and said, “I just stopped struggling and went with the flow of the water.”

Once we change our thoughts to flow consistent with God’s thoughts, his ways become easy and his burden becomes light (Matt. 11:28–30). No matter how deadly or baffling our course may



appear to others, our divine nature can adapt itself to its environment, despite the pain that may be involved. It is not the buffeting of the rocks in the stream that destroys the Christian soul, for these turn and polish as they knock off the rough edges of our fallen nature (Smith, 1938, p. 304).

As others in this volume have asserted, pain itself is not evil. Nor is it necessarily good. But pain will usually accompany or precede the adaptation of our desires to God's will. To let go of the natural man requires sacrifice: our relinquished will and the accompanying sense of loss or pain as our egotism abates. This principle was taught by Elder Neal A. Maxwell in a discussion of the symbolism inherent in the ritual sacrifices of the Old Testament temple rites. The Mosaic Law, he observed, symbolized not only the ultimate sacrifice of the Lamb of God but also the personal offering each of us must bring: "The real act of personal sacrifice is not now nor ever has been placing an animal on the altar. Instead, it is a willingness to put the animal that is in us upon the altar—then willingly watching it be consumed!" (Maxwell, 1987, p. 94).

The transformation of the natural man apparently requires some cutting as well as a purifying flame. Returning the gift of agency to God truly makes us "as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, *willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us]*, even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19; italics added).

**Becoming as a Child.** To become the man or woman that God would have us be, we must come to feel the intimate nature of our relationship with him. We are his children (Rom. 8:16). Assuming this familial relationship to be literal, we may perhaps apply some principles of developing a quality human relationship in attempting to improve our relationship with the Divine. First, as with all human relationships, we cannot achieve intimacy unless we truly understand the other person. As taught in the Lectures on Faith, once we believe in God, we must develop "a correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes" (Lectures on Faith, 3:4). As we come unto God, we will know who he is and what attributes are best suited to our interactions.

Second, any relationship is only as close as we allow it to be. Fear of God is often learned from childhood experiences that

caused fear of parents (e.g., Rizzuto, 1993), and defenses learned to protect ourselves from others often prevent us from achieving intimacy with God. As we work with our clients, we can keep in mind that the best route to undoing this harmful cycle is to take the reverse approach. By first learning to trust in God as a child trusts a perfect parent, clients can more easily learn to live with the threats presented by their fellow humans.

Third, increasing the amount and quality of interaction strengthens any relationship. Although we have often associated prayer with the habit, learned in childhood, of kneeling at the bedside, communication with God entails much more. We can assist our clients to reach out in new ways to their Father in Heaven—in their thoughts, in their hearts, in their tears. A self-critical, cognitive monologue can be replaced by a supplicant's dialogue.

Fourth, the quality of a relationship usually depends on the degree to which one recognizes the other as being essential to his or her own well-being. In children, this perspective is nowhere more present than when one is suddenly lost in a public crowd and does not have the comforting presence of the parent. In the gospel, this perspective is nowhere more present than when guilt is replaced with the peace of forgiveness. Gratitude to God can replace both self-condemnation and self-importance. Indebtedness in a relationship is a strong motivator. The more indebted to God our clients feel, the more they will be motivated to learn of him and follow his ways.

Fifth, God would have us not only learn of him but also follow his example—the only true standard of action that can serve as a guidepost to clients who sometimes feel alone, even completely lost. There seems to be no greater tendency among children than to carefully observe their environment and then imitate the actions they see in others. Following the actions of others is often the best form of permanent learning.

Some time ago, as one of us, along with his wife, was trying to make it to church on time, we were getting the kids dressed, telling them to brush their teeth, and get ready to go. To our amazement, we found our two-year-old daughter with several white threads in her mouth and, in her lap, a pile of white thread that a few minutes before had been her tights. When asked what she was doing, she replied sweetly, "I'm flossing my teeth!"

No doubt God must sometimes chuckle at our attempts to follow in his footsteps. But by stumbling and each time shaking off the dust, we follow him nonetheless. Seeing ourselves and our clients as children making some errors, stumbling in the path of life, we can replace any tendency to prejudice our clients or to lose hope of their recovery with a sense of perseverance and even some sense of humor.

**Losing Ourselves to Find Him.** By “feeling after” God (Acts 17:27), we inevitably must lose ourselves: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matt. 16:25). And that is a secret that psychology has not yet found. Happiness and well-being do not reside in the “self” at all.

Terms such as *self-esteem* or *self-appreciation* appear nowhere in sacred texts. In fact, references to the self are quite sparse, perhaps because such terms do not accurately reflect the true nature of our existence. Indeed, we are not placed as individuals upon this earth to run through a test, much as a rat through a maze. Rather, we are placed in family units, each a representation of the fact that we are members of God’s family unit. As brothers and sisters, we are linked in a family web not always visible on this side of the veil, but we can occasionally see how each of our individual actions can affect those around us. Hence, any focus of psychotherapy that minimizes our extended familial context by focusing exclusively on the concerns of the individual cannot yield a maximally beneficial outcome. A Christian therapy is essentially a relational therapy, regardless of the symptom.

All the teachings of the gospel connect us with others and with God (Matt. 22:37–40). Therefore, any practice of psychology will be healing and helpful to the degree that it promotes love of God and love of others. Conversely, any focus in therapy that centers on the self as the locus, or even the cause, of happiness will not yield the desired permanent effect. By emphasizing self-esteem, self-appreciation, and self-acceptance, we fail to provide for our clients the larger perspective. An old Japanese saying is relevant: “At times I go about pitying myself, while all the while, I am being carried by great winds across the sky.” A client who can catch that vision will lift his or her sight from the dust to the heavens.

**Receiving God's Vision of Our Divine Nature.** Admittedly, not all clients will be capable of seeing the world outside their immediate suffering, let alone the "great winds that carry them across the sky." In those cases, our role in therapy may be to facilitate a change in perspective by helping them to see the stains and smudges on the glass through which they see darkly. In fact, many Latter-day Saint counselors and psychotherapists already do this. In a 1993 survey of American Mormon Counselors and Psychologists (AMCAP) members, many described situations in which the principles of repentance and forgiveness had facilitated therapeutic gains (Richards & Potts, 1995). Many also described the powerful shifts in clients' perspectives once their actions began to match their values.

Even for the client whose actions seem fairly consistent with his or her values, therapy can facilitate a clearer and more useful perspective. Too often the Spirit of God is lost through the tendency of the natural man to rely exclusively on the physical senses to perceive and interpret experience. Specifically, too often we fail to recognize as spiritual the consistent but seemingly insignificant acts that raise our nature from one that is selfish and carnal to one patterned after Deity. We do not see the spiritual reality that surrounds us because we fail to see the spiritual in the commonplace. Consider the following exchange between two people talking about their spiritual role models. The first person says that his mentor is one of the most spiritual men he knows. In fact, he is so spiritual that he raised a person from the dead. The second person replies that her mentor is also spiritual, so much so that when her children are sick she stays up with them all night and in the morning feels like *she* needs to be raised from the dead.

Can we assist our clients to recognize the difference in these perspectives? Spirituality is not something "out there," a power or sudden event; it is simply *being*—being true to our divine nature, leaving the natural man to die upon the altar of our sacrifice, even one moment or one sleepless night at a time.

This principle is illustrated by the story of a monk and a scorpion: Two monks were washing their clothes near a small stream when they happened to see a scorpion struggling in the pool nearby. The creature would have drowned had not one of the monks reached in and pulled it out. As he did so, the scorpion stung him on

the hand and fell back into the water. Again the monk reached in, pulled out the scorpion, and placed him on the shore but not before receiving another painful sting. Seeing his friend's action, the other monk exclaimed, "Why do you continue to save the scorpion when you know that it is his nature to sting?" "Because," replied the monk, "it is my nature to save."

We as therapists have sometimes been stung. But our tears cannot compare with Christ's experience of the sting of the scourging, the nails, or the drops of blood welling from every pore. To the degree that Christ is our model, it is in our nature to save. For is he not called "Wonderful, *Counselor*" (Isa. 9:6; italics added)?

### **Ways to Build upon the Foundation of Christ**

At times, we may wonder exactly how it is that we might emulate Christ and lift the vision of our clients from the natural world to the reality of their life-changing relationship with him. Although there are many ways to assist clients to do so, a relational, dialectic perspective of therapy emphasizes the notion of *openness*. In being open to our clients' experiences, we assume that they are full of potential, living and growing as they engage meaningfully with others (Morson & Emerson, 1990). However, sometimes people restrict their meaningful interactions with others and hold ideas that are not open to dialogue and that are perhaps difficult to express in language. These thoughts or expressions can be called *monological* and are the root of many potential problems facing our clients (Morson & Emerson, 1990). For example, clients may hold the monologic belief that they are alone, sinful, and unworthy of our attention or the love of Christ; they become closed, trapped without potential, and sunk in misery.

As counselors, we may engage with our clients openly and begin the work of uncovering where they are closed, to bring a dialogical light to their dark and painful monologues. Similar to the way psychotherapists use cognitive therapy to expose irrational beliefs, the counselor can uncover monologic ideas and question them with the client, and then together they can explore new and better ways of relating with others and with God. For example, if clients see themselves as too imperfect to be worthy of the love of others, the counselor may begin to gently question that harshly self-critical

monologue and offer alternatives after the consequences of such a monologue are explored. By assisting clients in examining painful ideas that have remained unquestioned for so long, we can open up hope and possibility. And as we break down these monologues through our own openness to alternative perspectives, we can assist clients as they begin engaging with the ultimate dialogic partner, Christ himself (Bakhtin, 1984).

We believe that it is the emotional nature of meaningful interactions that facilitates client change (Morson & Emerson, 1990). At the root of all meaningful interactions is that ultimate power to heal, the love of Christ. People are transformed profoundly through the love of God and the love they accept and give to others in meaningful and value-grounded engagement (Taylor, 1989, p. 452). Whether or not spiritual principles are ever articulated verbally, they are at the core of any therapeutic relationship. Taylor related, "What will transform us is an ability to love the world and ourselves, to see it as good in spite of the wrong. But this will only come to us if we can accept being part of it, and that means accepting responsibility." It is our role as counselors to model perfect love to the best of our abilities, assisting clients to expand their responsibility and their sense of interconnectedness with others. By doing so, our clients will recognize that they are worthy of love and connection, a realization that transforms their ability to love others and, by implication, love Christ (Matt. 25:40).

### **A Case Example**

If we are serious about following a divine role model in our therapy and research, then perhaps we could learn best directly from divine interventions found in the scriptures. Let us consider the following clinical case: Picture what it would be like to work with someone who was abandoned by his family and deceived by those who raised him. He is a man unsure of his heritage but spoiled in the most luxurious of circumstances. The client is referred to you because he recently lost his temper and killed another man. How would you respond?

In the first chapter of the Pearl of Great Price, we see exactly how the Lord worked with such a man. First, the Lord established very quickly the nature of their relationship, declaring himself as

God and Moses as his son. He then expanded Moses's vision of the nature of that relationship. In a developmentally appropriate way, the Lord explained his expectations for Moses; then he allowed Moses to watch him work, modeling for Moses the divine traits and attributes that he expected Moses to emulate. He shared with Moses a love and acceptance that were so powerful that Moses keenly felt their absence the moment God departed, leaving Moses to ponder the experiences of their meeting. God then allowed Moses to pass through temptations and to face Satan without interference. When Moses succeeded (by calling upon God), God strengthened him and gave him even greater knowledge and insight, line upon line, until Moses understood his own role clearly as the deliverer of Israel.

A simple model for therapy could follow similar principles. First, we work to establish and clarify the nature of the therapy relationship. In ways that are appropriate to the client's emotional readiness and understanding, we can then focus our work on clarifying expectations, both our own and those of the client. Specifically, we should convey expectations that our clients can and will benefit others, and we should work on minimizing any self-centered expectations we or they hold. While showing forth a pure love, we can then model ways in which the expectations may be realized. When clients have captured a strong perspective of who they are and how their individual actions fit into the scheme of their relationships, they need independent practice of the skills learned and subsequent tutoring through natural consequences. With each success, increased insight can motivate further gains.

### **Conclusion: Creation and God's Image**

Although seemingly rudimentary, these small and simple actions should be recognized and approached as spiritual. After all, psychology is literally *psyche* and *ology*, or the study of the psyche, the soul. We are not as interested in the natural man as in what he can become, in what we must become. In working with Moses, the Lord changed Moses's image by changing the prophet's perception of who he was—and what his relationship with the Divine was.

In a rough paraphrasing of what it must have been like for Moses to see all the works of God, "even numberless as the sand upon the sea shore" (Moses 1:28), we can imagine the following:

As if under a microscope, you see a grain of sand, with its many contours and textures reflecting a myriad of details. Then you examine another, then another, each one unique and varied. Each one is unlike any other. And then you try to count the number of grains of sand in a teaspoon, numbering in the thousands. You ponder the amazing intricacy of creation and the value of each unique human soul. As your vision extends from the sand sifting through your fingers to the endless beach stretching out before you, with each grain numbered and known to God, you perhaps gain a new perspective of creation. And as the sands of every beach on every seashore across the world flash before you and you recognize that each grain of sand upon that incomprehensibly vast panorama represents a human life, you may be led to exclaim with Moses, “Now, for this cause I know that man is nothing” (Moses 1:10). Thankfully, the vision closes with a gentle correction, as the Father explains otherwise: “For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39).

To conclude where we began, perhaps none of us—like Moses before the experience of his vision or like the young Buddhist priest searching for an answer—knows very much at all about human nature. Of ourselves, we can safely say that we are nothing, even “less than the dust [sand] of the earth” (Hel. 12:7). We are fallen, natural man. But the gospel reveals that we are much more. We are divine. We are the children of God, the Creator of all. As with Moses, only when we have seen the nature of him who created us can we know the true nature of our being and apply that understanding to our practice of psychology. And then can we see in God’s image the embodiment of the name “Wonderful, *Counselor!*”

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