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Letter from the Editor

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Letter from the Editor

KRISTIN LANG HANSEN
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As Properzi (this issue) notes, our society is increasingly swinging from a rationalist culture to an emotivist one. As psychological professionals teach individuals how to become more authentic and “in touch” with their feelings, new concerns arise when individuals become overidentified with emotion rather than seeking to find truth outside their own feelings and ground their identity in Christ. Grounding our identity in Christ allows Him to remake our emotions (see Properzi; Reber; and Givens, in this issue). On the other hand, Latter-day Saint culture seems to emphasize a “schooling of the emotions” that we often see interpreted by clients as a need to suppress emotion. We know, however, that suppressing emotion is not healthy (see Darowski, Hansen, Jackson, Flint, & Lindford, this issue) and can lead to many problematic and unhealthy ways of relating. Some of the unhealthy misuses of emotion, such as flattery, which uses emotion to deceive others, and shaming, which silences rather than opens up dialogue, can commonly be found in Church and family cultures.

Given the potential for abuse and mental health concerns that can arise out of unhealthy emotion regulation, it is important for Latter-day Saint mental health counselors to more explicitly and reflectively address the relational dynamics that lead to healthy interpersonal emotion regulation (see both Reber’s discussion of the relationality of emotional life and Morris’s discussion of the use of defenses and containment in interpersonal dynamics in this issue). Latter-day Saint mental health counselors should also strive to equip themselves to faithfully address what constitutes true Christlike emotion (see in this issue Darowski et al.; Givens; and Properzi), how the attribute of patience facilitates emotion regulation (see Worthen, this issue), the role perfectionism plays in emotion (see Adams, this issue), and how scripture addresses emotional experiences such as anger (see in this issue Darowski et al.; and Properzi).

I am personally grateful for the therapeutic knowledge that has been developed over the past several decades that helps therapists explore how to work with emotion. However, concerning emotion-focused therapies, as mental health professionals, Latter-day Saint counselors and psychotherapists must make a greater effort to place important clinical, theoretical, and research knowledge on a gospel foundation. Ed and I hope this special issue—with its focus on Christianity, mental health, and emotion—prompts readers to seek ways to delve deeper into these important concerns.

Over the past three years, I have had the privilege of serving first as associate editor with Lane Fischer’s excellent example and then as editor with Ed Gantt’s invaluable assistance. I will now pass the reins on to Jeffrey Reber starting in 2019. I am grateful to leave the journal in Jeff’s capable hands with Ed Gantt’s continued assistance. I have learned how important this journal is to provide a place for Latter-day Saint mental health professionals to dialogue about our professional knowledge, ministering skills, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We do and can continue to make valuable contributions to our understanding as we build bridges between scholarship and clinical knowledge, something that was an important project of this current issue. We hope IRP readers will continue to both contribute to and use this scholarly journal as a resource and springboard to inform Christ-centered clinical practice, thought, and research.

Kristin Lang Hansen
 Editor, *Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy*