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The Way to Character and Unity

Gordon L. Timothy

ABSTRACT
The need for unity is described.

Character is defined as internal unity.

Basic units of character are described and the definition justified.

Basic areas of unity with others are described and justified with particular stress on the counselor-client relationship.

The model of unity found in the relationship of the Father and the Son is analyzed and used to describe the way to internal and external unity.

CHARACTER AND UNITY
Throughout the history of the earth, one great goal of the prophets of God has been to create a Zion people acceptable to the Lord. One major concern of the Saints should be that of becoming Zion people. To establish Zion in our time, the members of the Church must build into their way of life two major qualities: Character and Unity. Note the following commandments:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 

Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. . . . And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; . . .

. . . I say unto you, be one: and if ye are not one ye are not mine.

It is plain that unity is essential to all who seek to be Zion people, and to the existence of Zion itself. Character is just as surely necessary for unity and therefore for Zion. Mental, physical, social, and spiritual health and well-being, and therefore capacity for unity, depend on character.

Character development can be understood better by a reference to dramatics. A character actor is different from a regular actor in that the character actor is required to present an accurate portrayal of the part, not just an interpretation. That is, he must be TRUE to the part. His INTEGRITY, his having the part TOGETHER, his eye being SINGLE, his being PURE, and UNITED, WHOLE, or ONE with the part is the important aspect of character.

The opposite of character in this context, is DIVISION, SEPARATION, being SPLIT, FALSE, serving TWO masters, OPPOSITION, DISSONANCE, DISHARMONY, CONTENTION, HYPOCRISY, POLLUTION, and being INCOMPLETE.

The building of character, then, is the building of unity within. Such internal unity is prerequisite to unity with others. At the same time, however, internal unity follows and develops from external unity: by example, encouragement and by power received from the glory, faith, and love of others.

What needs to be made one in us and between us? Examine the following dyads that need unification. These lists are not inclusive, but instructive. The first group must be unified for character and the latter two for unity in relationships.

I. action = want = real = doing = abstract = patience
   purpose = should = ideal = saying = concrete = diligence
   faith = now = body = mortality = obedience = mercy
   works = then = spirit = immortality = creativity = justice
   
II. child = wife = Church = friend = Church = friend = dead = God
    parent = husband = member = friend = living = man
    
III. client = student = helper = friend = helper = teacher

The calculus integration sign used here may be inaccurate in the strict sense, but is used with the idea that the two parts must become integrated or unified. In group I above a oneness must become established before character is fully realized. One member without the other will eventually destroy itself, or at least be damned, or blocked in its progress. There must likewise be developed a unity between and among the different dyads, for they are interdependent.

Only when purpose and action are unified can the potential of either one be reached.

Only when we want what we should can we be truly happy.

Only when purpose and action are both "wants" and "shoulds" is their power for good released.

Only when the real and ideal are becoming the same is progress being made.
Only when saying and doing are one can we avoid hypocrisy and condemnation.\(^7\)

Only when the abstract and the concrete are together is application and usefulness possible.\(^6\)

Unless patience and diligence are united, we tend to be either idle and getting nowhere as we wait, or we become over-anxious and "burn out" early, letting discouragement take over as perfection seems so slow in coming. President Kimball has said that flashy, short-lived programs are not desired, but a quiet resolve to do better today than ever before.\(^9\) With unity of patience and diligence, continual progress and improvement are assured.

When faith and works are separated, neither really exists.\(^10\)

The present or now has no meaning except in context with the then of the past and future. Depression is often accompanied, if not caused, by a perspective that emphasizes the wrong part of this dyad. When one focuses on the past with the present and the future in the background, as with guilt, regret, or vainglory, depression results. When one focuses on the future with the past and the present as background, as with worry or with overanticipation, the result is unhappiness, lack of application, and broken dreams. When one focuses on the present with no regard to past or future, as living "for the moment" or in doing "for the thrill" without consideration of causes or consequences, the result is boredom, lack of enthusiasm, and often, sin. With the proper perspective of focus on the present with past and future as background to give meaning and direction, happiness can exist, when the past and future are hopeful. With the Eternal perspective, existence in the now is greatly emphasized because our past, being children of God and co-eternal with Him, is the reason we are here. Our faithfulness in our first estate made our having this existence possible. Our future possibility of becoming "joint heirs with Christ," becoming as God is, depends\(^11\) on how we handle the now. Right now we really have a chance to make the moment matter—to make a difference.\(^12\)

The body and Spirit inseparably connected bring a fullness of joy.\(^13\) Mortality is so important to immortality that the devils are eternally miserable, being cut off from the experience.\(^14\)

Creativity without obedience leads to sin, but obedience without creativity leads to misinterpretation of counsel and misapplication of authority.\(^15\) Their unity is faithfulness.

Justice without mercy would forever cut us off from God. Mercy without justice would attempt to save us in sin, thereby destroying us eternally. But unified, justice and mercy require progress and repentance, along with saving power through the redemption of Christ, permitting us to gain exaltation as well as salvation.

In group II above, unity is needed to establish eternal relationships with those who are important in our lives, i.e. ancestors, parents, children, descendants, friends, neighbors, leaders, followers. In these relationships, Oneness is necessary for happiness in this life and in the Eternal realm. "... They without us could not be made perfect."\(^16\) "The man is not without the woman..."\(^17\) Zion cannot exist without this unity.

Only when the members of the Church are one with the Church will the Zion community be established.\(^18\) Until we become one within and as a people, Zion must wait and the destruction of the world must grow more terrible as the depth of sin progressed with time.

The group III relationship requires unity to provide needed help.\(^19\) The counselor, teacher, helper must model unity; the relationship must model unity and the client, student, helpee, must be aided in gaining unity by the example and precepts received in the relationship.

How can unity come into being? Obviously such unity does not just happen. It takes much energy, work and even miracles. What then is the way to character and unity?

The answer is clearly described and exemplified in the worthy and glorious relationship between the Father and the Son, and in the personal example and teachings of the Savior. The Father and the Son follow definite laws in their relationship. These laws are plainly taught through gospel ordinances and in the scriptures. In each of the dyads above, each member of the dyad has laws to follow before unity can be realized.

First, there is a preeminence of the Father in the relationship. The Son worked to glorify the Father, not himself. The Son was willing to sacrifice all and even die and suffer worse than death to keep the commandments of the Father. An eye single to His glory is a requirement of all who would become one.

In each of the above dyads, the preeminence of one member is necessary before oneness can be realized. It is important to ensure that the correct member be the preeminent one. If the wrong member is made supreme, the result is either degradation of unity, or unity in degradation. In either case, self-destruction results. In total, the Glory of God must be the number one concern of all.

As the preeminent member of the Godhead, the Father is the perfect leader. He controls with the principles of righteousness by which only the powers of heaven can be controlled. These principles as the Lord has given them to us are "... by persuasion, by longsuffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness and pure knowledge; ... reproving betimes with sharpness when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards
an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved ...''20 He rules with perfect love, understanding, justice and judgement.

All things are known to the Father from the beginning to the end.21 Prophecy is fulfilled in all of His creations.22 All things are created to testify of the Son.23 The Father desires to magnify and glorify the Son in every requirement until He receives a fullness. Though preeminent, the Father loves so greatly as to desire to have the Son as an equal.

In each of the dyads the preeminent member must do likewise.

It should be noted that in group II and III above the concept of preeminence is not always applicable. In such cases, where line authority is lacking, the preeminent one might be either member. “‘Let every man esteem bis brother as himself,’’24 or ‘‘If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.’’25 So that in interpersonal relationships, we esteem others as being equal to or greater than ourselves. This attitude is particularly important in counselors, teachers and other helpers.

Second, agency is kept inviolate. By his own choice, the Son is ‘‘ submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him.’’26 ‘‘I seek not my own will, but His that sent me.’’27 He is obedient, but it is important to note that He does not just wait for a commandment nor does he receive one with reluctance. He seeks, asks, knocks, and works for the commandments of the Father and keeps them with exactness and in the correct spirit.

The Son is allowed to ‘‘learn obedience by the things which He suffered.’’28 The suffering is purposeful, necessary, and appropriate. No pride, no vindictiveness, no giving up, no spite is involved. The suffering is received by consent of the Son, though it is not always His will. ‘‘He hid not his face from spitting.’’29

Before unity can occur, the subservient member of the dyad must choose to be obedient, be sacrificed, and to be brought under subjection. We can only be worthy of the Eternal when we are able to sacrifice all things for the Lord.30 Each member of the dyad must fulfill the requirements for unity independently and by choice.

Third, the Father and the Son do all things together. One is not without the other, except in the final moments of the unfathomable suffering in accomplishing the Atonement; and then only to allow the Son to ‘‘descend below all things’’31 and fulfill the requirements for our redemption, which he had to do alone. Even then, great preliminary encouragement and assurance were given.

Each member assumes a particular role with the full support, confidence, encouragement and communication of the other, always in appropriate, faithful, perfect ways.

Fourth, there is a unifying bond or sealing power that connects the two in an irrevocable manner. ‘‘I am in the Father and the Father in me.’’32 This bond is composed of agreement, promise, commitment or covenant with priesthood sealing power and witnesses present.33 A bond without the Priesthood is no better than a weld without the flux, which bonds metals together. Eternal covenants require faithfulness in the face of all trials. Costs are counted, and preparations made to assure their payment.

Such proper agreement, promise and faithfulness is also necessary in each of the above dyads.

Fifth, and perhaps most importantly to us, the purpose of the Savior’s mission is to make available to those who have been less than perfect—in short, everyone—a way to become One. Elder James E. Talmage analyzed the Savior’s mission in syllables: AT-ONE-MENT.34 The Father sent His Son and the work has been done so that our acceptance and following of the Gospel and of Christ can develop in us that perfect unity. The study of and obedience to the principles of the Gospel, along with practicing unity with those leaders chosen by the Savior to lead us in our time, can build the character and unity necessary.

Faith in Jesus Christ is primary. He has that perfect unity within Himself and with the Father. His Atonement makes that unity available to us. He is the perfect example and instructor, as well as life-giver or Father to all who are literally dead to that unity without His work.

Repentance is essential, for we have not that unity yet.

Baptism gives power, teaches and builds the desired oneness, unless done only by the letter of the law, or improperly. The sacrament and other ordinances give power and teach the necessary elements and laws of becoming One. As we grow in the gospel and search and seek for more commandments, they are made known unto us, that our unity can become perfected.

The Gift of the Holy Ghost is also a gift of power to accomplish that which would be impossible. The Holy Ghost burns out the dross, refines the pure, teaches the true, witnesses of the Father and the Son, and helps make us one with them.

Truly unity will be obtained by all the pure in heart who come unto Christ. Zion will become established and enlarged as we follow His laws and example. ‘‘... that they may become the Sons of God, even one in me as I am one in the Father, as the Father is one in me, that we may be one.’’35
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32Nephi 11:27.
33D&C 132:7-14.
34James E. Talmage, Articles of Faith, Pg. 75.