

OBEDIENCE INTEGRITY AND THE PARADOX OF SELFHOOD

THE TENSION SHOULD NOT BE RESOLVED IN FAVOR OF EITHER CONFLICTING VALUE

IN his presidential address for the Association of Mormon Letters in 1979, Richard Cummings spoke of "a creeping identity crisis which is gnawing at the very heart of Mormondom," what he called "the clash between institutional authority and individual integrity and between the imperative of blind obedience and the claims of reasoned belief." He spoke of a problem which is for many the most anguishing in Mormon experience—that is, the struggle to be true to self despite pressures to obey, to conform, or to overlook what seem to be "clear fallacies or even tyrannies in the strictly authoritarian pattern" and then to maintain our integrity in the face of misunderstanding, hostility, even ostracism from our brothers and sisters and disciplinary action from those in authority over us in the Church.

That issue is indeed central to Mormon experience and literature but in ways that are in my view less troubling and at the same time more challenging than Cummings suggested. He saw the problem, at least in terms of our own *decisions*, as essentially a simple one, though the consequences might be difficult and complex: Clearly we are to choose individually reasoned belief over blind obedience, the honor of self over the demands of the group.²

I sometimes wish the problem were that simple, with the enemies clearly identified and all lined up together and the main challenge being to attack or at least survive them. At other times I am grateful that, in fact, the issue is a genuine paradox, a difficult but fruitful condition of existence, a source of the struggle but also of the supreme joy of growth in this universe in which "there must needs be opposition in all things."

I believe the tension should not be resolved in favor of one or the other of those conflicting values. Rather, what Cummings called the Mormon identity crisis will, I hope, continue—successfully transcended, of course, by each of us in our own way but in ways which maintain both obedience and integrity as we work out our salvation in fear and trembling and as we try to write and appreciate Mormon literature. The following examples provide enduring images in the Mormon imagination, metaphors if you will, which may help us preserve the paradox as redemptive, rather than merely polarizing it

in favor of one limited value or the other.

In the early 1890s Elder B.H. Roberts, a member of the First Council of Seventy, and Apostle Moses Thatcher engaged in various political activities; they did so despite being counseled by the First Presidency that they should not (apparently because of concern about them neglecting their Church duties). As Truman Madsert tells us in his biography of B.H. Roberts, at one time the conflict was reported in the press, and as a result the two outspoken political activists and the First Presidency asked forgiveness of each other and were reconciled.³ But when Elder Roberts was given Church encouragement in 1895 to serve as a delegate from Davis county to the Democratic state convention, he assumed he thus had permission to run for political office and accepted nomination as the Democrats' candidate for Congress. He then was surprised and offended when, at the October General Conference, Elder Joseph F. Smith, a senior Apostle and member of the First Presidency—and a Republican—publicly censured both him and Elder Thatcher, who was running for the U.S. Senate. The two Democrats saw the censure as politically motivated and stumped the state, openly decrying such "ecclesiastical interference." Much partisan feeling developed, and when Roberts lost the election by 900 votes, he was convinced (for the rest of his life) that the defeat was due solely to the criticism of himself and Elder Thatcher.⁴

After the election members of the Twelve discussed whether Elder Roberts should be disciplined because of some of his public statements, but action first was postponed until after statehood was conferred in January and then until February, when Roberts finally agreed to meet with the First Presidency and the Twelve. Heber J. Grant reports that that meeting was the most painful of his life. Elder Roberts was immovable in his position, feeling he had acted honestly and fairly, and was thus willing to be removed rather than recant. A meeting in early March produced the same result, and Roberts was suspended from his office

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and from acting in the priesthood. At this meeting, Elder Grant records with great admiration that Roberts "held all the brethren at bay"⁵—responding to each of the Apostles in turn, speaking without notes but with perfect memory and composure, thinking brilliantly on his feet. But despite his admiration Elder Grant was appalled at Elder Roberts's adamant position. Grant and Francis Lyman were appointed to call on Roberts, and after they had talked briefly, Elder Grant noticed tears in Elder Roberts's eyes and insisted on franker discussion. Until then Roberts had been unwilling to talk about three specific situations where he thought he had been intentionally maligned or slighted. With Grant's prodding, he now brought these forward, and in each case Elder Grant had relevant personal knowledge which convinced Roberts that he had jumped to false conclusions.⁶ He promised to think the matter over again and write the two Apostles in the morning, which he did. In the letter he submitted to "the authority of God in the brethren," confessed that, though he had acted all along in good conscience, after this struggle he felt much better, and thanked them for their goodness. Not only Elder Roberts was changed by this experience. Elder Grant recorded in his journal his great joy at receiving Elder Roberts's letter and how much he had learned himself, especially about the importance of a private talk versus a public arraignment before a council of the priesthood.

The story does not end there, however. Elder Roberts continued to resist the so-called "political manifesto," a prohibition against General Authorities engaging in non-Church-related work, including political activity, without First Presidency approval. He and Elder Thatcher had previously refused to sign the document because they feared it could be used to discriminate against one party. Under a deadline at which Elder Roberts's suspension was to become permanent, the First Presidency met with Elder Roberts late into the evening of March 25. He then walked the streets all night, thinking and praying. He returned in the morning ready to sign and found the First Presidency had also stayed all night in tears and prayer. In Conference the next week he confessed publicly that he had been wrong in his opposition. This action alienated him permanently from many political friends and backers. Elder Thatcher never signed the political manifesto, despite Elder Roberts's long pleading with him, and he was removed from the Twelve and became estranged from the Church. Late in his life Elder Roberts described the paradox as he saw it *after* he had successfully transcended it: "Will I give up my pride or will I be taken out of this glorious work?"⁸

Earlier in Church history there was a similar case of such heroic though painful transcendence of the paradox. It is fairly easy now to know something of the differences, the apparent long-standing feud, between Brigham Young and Orson Pratt.⁹ Brigham respected Elder Pratt's intelligence, literary power, and vigorous faith, and hence called on him for such things as the first public defense of polygamy in 1852. But by early 1860 President Young felt their differences were serious enough to require formal action; he called the Apostles together on 27 January 1869 "to consider the doctrines

that Orson Pratt had advanced in his last Sermon." They unanimously decided Orson was wrong and signed a unique bill of particulars.¹⁰

Elder Pratt called on the President the next day and "admitted he was excited; and for the future would omit such points of doctrine in his discourses that related to the Plurality of Gods, etc., but would confine himself to the first principles of the Gospel."¹¹ A few days later he again called at the President's office and confessed "he had a self-willed determination in him." According to the office journal, kept by President Young's secretary:

The President said he had never differed with him only on points of doctrine, and he never had any personal feelings, but he was anxious that correct doctrines should be taught for the benefit of the Church and the Nations of the earth. . . . President observed the brethren would have made it a matter of fellowship [but] he did not have it in his heart to disfellowship but merely to correct men in their views.

Pres. also remarked to Orson he had been willing to go on a Mission to any place at the drop of the Hat, and observed you might as well question my authority to send you on a Mission as to dispute my views in doctrine. Bro. Orson said he had never felt unwillingness in the discharge of his practical duties.¹²

Later that week President Young directed the *Deseret News* not to print Orson's sermon, which he found too evasive and defensive in its retractions. By April there was some cause—whether because of continuing uncertainty in the Saints or in Orson or both—to again call the leaders together "to consider the Doctrines of Orson Pratt as taught in the *Seer* and other works." The Apostles concluded that Elder Pratt ought to retract in very specific terms in a published sermon. As President Young expressed it, the earlier sermon of apology "represents me to the world as a tyrant trammelling them to believe as I do right or wrong; it is my calling . . . to see that right doctrines are taught."¹³ Orson, a man of fierce integrity, said he believed Brother Brigham was called by God to preside but, like other Prophets and leaders, could be in error on some points. According to the office journal, "[Elder Pratt] hardly felt he was competent to be an apostle and he left himself entirely in their hands, but he could not be hypocrite enough to retract his doctrines when he believed them, neither could he say he could receive doctrines that he could not believe; and if he was disfellowshipped he could not help it." However Elder Pratt apparently decided that his truest integrity lay in his commitment to the Lord's kingdom rather than to the speculations of his own philosophy. He came to a meeting of the Apostles the next night with a sermon of recantation prepared. President Young added a few remarks and accepted it.¹⁴ The minutes from that April 5 meeting give perhaps the best glimpse of Brigham's feelings and his understanding of the paradox:

This day I have seen the best spirit manifested. I have heard 15 or 16 men all running in the same stream. I was delighted. Tomorrow the Church will be 30 years old, about the age that Jesus was when he commenced his mission. We are improving and I just know it, my path is like the noon day sun, and I would cry out hallelujah Hallelujah Praise to God who has been merciful to us and conferred on us his Holy Spirit. . . . Bro. Orson I want you

to do just as you have done in your Apostleship, but when you want to teach new doctrine, to write those ideas, and submit them to me, and if they are correct, I will tell you—there is not a man's sermons that I [more] like to read, when you understand your subject—but you are not perfect, neither am I.¹⁵

Six months after that meeting, when it was reported to Brigham Young that Orson was still apparently being twitted by some for his public humiliation but bearing it well, a clerk reported, "The President remarked . . . if Bro. Orson was chopped up in inch pieces each piece would cry out Mormonism was true."¹⁶

But the story does not end so simply. After a while Orson again published views that Brigham felt undermined his authority as Prophet and his responsibility to preserve certain ideas taught by Joseph Smith. He was particularly concerned to keep the options open on matters such as the nature of God. These seemed threatened by Orson Pratt's biblical literalism and his absolutism about deity. On 23 August 1865 the General Authorities published in the *Deseret News* a summary of Orson Pratt's errors and the main reasons for opposing them, along with a reprint of Elder Pratt's earlier recantation. Elder Pratt followed up with another public confession and apology. But in the summer of 1868 he *again* found himself opposing President Young in discussions in the School of the Prophets about Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible. Old doctrinal differences were also discussed. But then a surprising thing happened. Right after these discussions, with no apparent coercion or pressure, Orson Pratt wrote a letter of abject apology to President Young saying, among other things:

I am deeply sensible that I have greatly sinned against you, and against my brethren of the school, and against God, in foolishly trying to justify myself in advocating ideas, opposed to those which have been introduced by the highest authorities of the Church, and adopted by the Saints. I humbly ask you and the school to forgive me. Hereafter, through the grace of God assisting me, I am determined to be one with you, and never be found opposing anything that comes through the legitimate order of the Priesthood, knowing that it is perfectly right for me to humbly submit, in all matters of doctrine and principle, my judgment to those whose right it is, by divine appointment, to receive revelation and guide the Church.¹⁷

Here we find none of the stubborn defensiveness and evasiveness of the earlier so-called recantations. The confession seems to come from Elder Pratt's deepest convictions. A few days later he spoke before the School of Prophets, apologizing for "opposing doctrine revealed" and confessing that "whenever he had done so and excused himself because of what was written [that is, by literally interpreting the scriptures] his mind became darkened and he felt bad."¹⁸ We find no further examples of him opposing Brigham on doctrine.

My third example is not, as I believe the first two were, transcendent. It is more tragic than heroic, but it is thus a reminder of the truly tragic dimensions of the paradox of selfhood. Just as John D. Lee's participation in the Mountain Meadows Massacre is an apparent example of a clearly *wrong* choice for blind obedience, but one which,

I believe, on examination turns out to be somewhat more complex,¹⁹ so Levi Savage's role in the Willie handcart disaster of 1856 is an apparent example of a clearly *right* choice for individual integrity, but one which, I believe, is also somewhat more complex. Elder Savage was captain of the second hundred, one of only four among that company of 400 emigrants who had been West before. He was also the only person who opposed going on to Utah that late in the season. According to John Chislett, a member of the company who left the Church after barely surviving the ordeal (and before writing his account), the other leaders, as well as G.D. Grant and William Kimball, Church agents at Florence, felt the company should proceed, prophesying in the name of God they would get through in safety, even that the weather would be arranged for their good:

But Levi Savage used his common sense and his knowledge of the country. He declared positively that to his certain knowledge we could not cross the mountains with a mixed company of aged people, women, and little children, so late in the season without much suffering, sickness, and death . . . but he was rebuked by the other elders for want of faith, one elder even declaring that he would guarantee to eat all the snow that fell on us between Florence and Salt Lake City.²⁰

Brother Savage's counsel was ignored, and, indeed, a few weeks later, when the Apostle Franklin Richards, who had optimistically advocated the handcart plan in England, passed the Willie Company on his way to Salt Lake, he stopped for a night. Being advised of Brother Savage's earlier opposition, he "rebuked him very severely in open meeting for his lack of faith in God." According to Chislett, Elder Richards

gave us plenty of counsel to be faithful, prayerful, obedient to our leaders, etc., and wound up by prophesying in the name of Israel's God that "though it might storm on our right and on our left, the Lord would keep open our way before us and we should get to Zion in safety."²¹

Over 50 (1 in 8) of the Willie Company died in the storms that overtook them in Wyoming, over 150 (1 in 4) of the Martin Company that was two weeks behind them. Chislett points up the painful irony that, according to all the old settlers in Utah, "the fall storms of 1856 were earlier and more severe than were ever known before or since. Instead of the Mormons' prophecies being fulfilled and their prayers answered, it would almost seem that the elements were unusually severe that season, as a rebuke to their presumption."²²

According to Chislett, "It was the stout hearts and strong hands of the noble fellows who came to our relief, the good teams, the flour, beef, potatoes, the warm clothing and bedding, and not prayers nor prophecies, that saved us from death." He, of course, had forgotten that it was the love and conviction built on prayers and prophecies that moved these "noble fellows." For example, G.D. Grant and William Kimball, the Church agents who had been partially responsible for the plight of the handcart pioneers, had traveled to Salt Lake with Elder Richards and then immediately volunteered for the dangerous rescue mission: "May God ever bless them for their generous, unselfish kindness and their

manly fortitude. . . . How noble, how faithfully, how bravely they worked to bring us safely to the Valley—to the Zion of our hopes,” wrote Chislett.²³ Indeed, William Kimball, who spent an entire day carrying women and children through floating ice on a crossing of the Sweetwater “staid so long in the water,” according to the journal of one of the survivors, “that he had to be taken out and packed to camp and he was a long time before he recovered as he was chil[le]d through and in after life he was always afflicted with rheumatism.”²⁴

These originally over-zealous and now bravely self-sacrificing rescuers, I believe, understood the paradox of integrity and obedience better than the apostate Chislett did, and Brigham Young understood it better than Chislett or Elder Richards: He severely and publicly chastised the Apostle for not having had the common sense to stop the rear companies in Florence and for encouraging the emigrants to rely on miraculous intervention to protect them from needless folly—something Brother Brigham would never do.²⁵

But perhaps Levi Savage understood best, from his own heroic experience, what it costs to be true both to self and to one’s community. According to Chislett’s narrative, after Savage was defeated in his lone opposition at the Florence meeting, he said to his fellow Saints;

Brethren and sisters, what I have said I know to be true; but, seeing you are to go forward, I will go with you, will help you all I can, will work with you, will rest with you, will suffer with you, and if necessary, I will die with you. May God in His mercy bless and preserve us. Amen.

[Chislett continues,] Brother Savage was true to his word; no man worked harder than he to alleviate the suffering which he had foreseen, when he had to endure it.²⁶

Let me remind you of one more historical example of the struggle with the paradox—in some ways the most appalling. I will quote from Stanley Kimball’s biography of Heber C. Kimball:

During the summer of 1841, shortly after Heber’s return from England, he was introduced to the doctrine of plural marriage directly through a startling test—a sacrifice which shook his very being and challenged his faith to the ultimate. He had already sacrificed homes, possessions, friends, relatives, all worldly rewards, peace, and tranquility for the Restoration. Nothing was left to place on the altar save his life, his children, and his wife. Then came the Abrahamic test. Joseph demanded for himself what to Heber was unthinkable, his Vilate. Totally crushed spiritually and emotionally, Heber touched neither food nor water for three days and three nights and continually sought confirmation and comfort from God. On the evening of the third day, some kind of assurance came, and Heber took Vilate to the upper room of Joseph’s store on Water Street. The Prophet wept at this act of faith, devotion, and obedience. Joseph had never intended to take Vilate. It was all a test. Heber had passed the ordeal, as had Vilate. . . . Then and there Joseph sealed their marriage for time and eternity, perhaps the first sealing of this kind among the Mormons.²⁷

This was indeed an “Abrahamic” test, and just as that biblical story offends me—the story of Abraham, who, also after three days struggle, agreed to obey God’s

command that he sacrifice his only son as a burnt offering—so the story of Heber and Vilate offends me. I can find no way to be at peace with either story, yet I believe that both are true and sacred stories and terribly important. It will not do, at least for me, to rationalize, to say that Abraham and Isaac were merely acting out a symbol, a type of God’s sacrifice of his only son, who would (in fact, through the lineage of Abraham and Isaac) come as a blessing to all the world. Nor will it do to merely repeat the cliché that a true witness comes only after a trial of faith. These particular trials are radically different from the daily ones that require that we give up our sins, our weaknesses, our pleasures, the *things* most dear to us or our mere *preferences*, for the Kingdom. Abraham and Heber were asked in the name of God to turn against, to in some sense deny, the very *ideas* that had brought them to God in the first place and to the higher ethical and spiritual vision to which God had called them—asked to prove loyalty to God (or his servant) by obeying the direction of God or his servant to *transgress* the very things God had taught them. It is a supreme trial, a paradox, a cross, a mystery. But it is, I believe, a cross that must be borne, not merely dismissed as blind obedience.

It will not do to say that Joseph or the author of Genesis—or God—made mistakes or that such tests are *unfair*. Unfair or not, the universe, I believe, reveals something crucial about itself in these stories. The images of Abraham and Isaac, of Heber and Vilate, must remain before us, not forgotten or rationalized away. Those images, if they had been remembered and imaginatively perceived, may have helped us deal better than we did with the modern Abrahamic test for Mormons, the denial of priesthood to the blacks. In that test God, through his servants, asked us not only to sacrifice our political and social ideals and the understanding and the good will of our colleagues and friends, but he seemed to ask us to sacrifice the very essence of his own teachings to us. To many it appeared necessary to deny our Mormon understanding of the divine potential of every human being and to compromise our higher ethical vision of possible exaltation for all people through unrestricted progression—concepts that are among the most attractive and vital features of our Mormon faith.

There were two groups who failed the test, I believe: There were those who thoughtlessly accepted the practice or rationalized the mystery away by finding some way to blame the *blacks* because of their supposed lineage or invented pre-existent mistakes. On the other hand, there were those who emotionally opted for their own personal vision, rejected the authority of the Church and loyalty to their community, and blamed Brigham Young or the current prophet or other supposedly racist Mormons, never themselves. My personal hero from that time is President Hugh B. Brown, who wrote the First Presidency message of 1969 that urged all Mormons to pray (and thus prepare) “that all of the blessings of the Gospel . . . become available to men of faith everywhere,”²⁸ which could only mean when blacks would be given the priesthood. Neither of the groups I mentioned that failed the test—whether conservatives or liberals—followed that suggestion to

pray for a change, and thus they did not find a resolution of the paradox of obedience and integrity through their personal preparation nor did they help God prepare us to live the higher law of priesthood for all.

If in our consideration of these examples of a central paradox from our heritage, we suppose there were simple solutions, if we imagine that *we* would have chosen easily and more wisely, I think we dishonor the great men and women who took part in these dramas and the full anguish with which they touched, and we must touch, the tragic heart of human experience. And, if we thus suppose there are easy solutions to the dilemma of personal integrity and social responsibility, we diminish drastically the potential of Mormon literature and, I think, ultimately endanger our own salvation.

Mormon literature, it seems to me, has achieved its greatest heights when it has been able to preserve and transcend the paradox rather than creating a battlefield and choosing sides. Our first generation writers, from 1830 to 1880, tended to exalt obedience and group values, but their best work asserted their individualism in tension against or beyond those values—as in Parley P. Pratt's *Autobiography* or Eliza R. Snow's "Trail Diary." Our second literary generation of writers, beginning in 1930, tended to exalt individualism against the values of what they saw as a declining culture and a deficient religion, but in their best work, such as Virginia Sorensen's *The Evening and the Morning* and Maurine Whipple's *The Giant Joshua*, those traditional group values and covenants pronounced a judgment on the excesses of individualism. In our own generation our best writers, in their best work, struggle with the same paradox, with no simple compromises or side choosing: Clinton Larson's "Homestead in Idaho" and "Advent,"²⁹ Douglas Thayer's "Under the Cottonwoods" and "Red Tail Hawk,"³⁰ Eileen Kump's "The Willows" and "Sayso or Sense,"³¹ Don Marshall's "A Sound of Drums" and "Fugues and Improvisations."³² Dian Saderup's story published in the May-June 1979 *Sunstone* captures the painful paradox and its transcendence, without irony I believe, even in her title, "A Blessing of Duty," and Levi Peterson, whose *The Canyons of Grace*, a collection of excellent Mormon stories, was recently published by the University of Illinois press, makes the struggle central to all his work.³³

Cummings's essay serves as an effective reminder of the constant danger individual integrity faces in any kind of powerful group—family, church, political party, or academic community. I only worry about the tendency to *simplify* that danger into a polarity. Cummings described "the theological and ecclesiastical dichotomy which has produced the identity crisis" in Mormons he knows as one between those who *lose* themselves in the Church and those who seek to *find* themselves there. The former are those who "refer their problems and worries to the 'sure voice of authority,'" who renounce "their autonomous identity through blind obedience and mindless activism," and the latter are those who "think for ourselves in working out our own individual salvation as we each separately see fit and according to our own lights." Notice the pronouns: *they* and *we*. Perhaps it would be well for us who are

tempted to "find" ourselves in the Church (and to separate ourselves from those who appear unthinkingly to "lose" themselves there) to remember Christ's ultimate statement of the paradox: He who would find his life, who *seeks* it, shall lose it, but he who will lose it shall find it. We all are startled and defeated a bit by the mystery in that, but I think we can respond to the imaginative and imaginable resolution there—one that will prevent us from being gored on either horn of the dilemma of loyalty to self or community.

The general resolution of the paradox of individual versus group, of integrity to conscience as opposed to obedience to law or commandment, is, I believe, found in covenants, of which literal eternal marriage is one form. A covenant is not, contrary to popular cliché, merely a *contract* between individuals—or God and the individual—with mutual benefits. It is, in the words of the fine Bible scholar, George Mendenhall, "[a] free, voluntary acceptance of ethical obligation on the basis of and as response to the past experience."³⁴ A covenant is a free, conscientious binding of the individual will to God, to an eternal partner, to a community and its land and history and sacred texts. It is not made blindly but out of gratitude and hope based in real experience. It turns neither the individual will nor the community into an idol that holds ultimate authority but rather reserves that ultimate authority to God, who is known and served both through the self and the community. One remains perfectly free to break the covenant but is bound in conscience to the reality of his experience with the divine, both as an individual and through the experiences made possible to him only in the community. And paradoxically this *binding* brings greater *freedom* than does individual autonomy.

This is how Michael Novak, speaking specifically of the covenant of marriage, describes that paradox of freedom found through binding oneself in meaningful promises:

Marriage is an assault upon the lonely, atomic ego. Marriage is a threat to the solitary individual. Marriage does impose grueling, humbling, baffling, and frustrating responsibilities. Yet if one supposes that precisely such things are the preconditions for all true liberation, marriage is not the enemy of moral development in adults. Quite the opposite³⁵

Being married and having children has impressed on my mind certain lessons, for whose learning I cannot help being grateful. Most are lessons of difficulty and duress. Most of what I am forced to learn about myself is not pleasant. . . .

Seeing myself through the unblinking eyes of an intimate, intelligent other, an honest spouse, is humiliating beyond anticipation. Maintaining a familial steadiness whatever the state of my own emotions is a standard by which I stand daily condemned. A rational man, acting as I act? . . .

My dignity as a human being depends perhaps more on what sort of husband and parent I am, than on any professional work I am called upon to do. My bonds to them hold me back (and my wife even more) from many sorts of opportunities. And yet these do not feel like bonds. They are, I know, my liberation. They force me to be a *different* sort of human being, in a way in which I want and need to be forced.³⁶

As Martin Luther put it, "Marriage is the school of love." I would add that, for many of the same reasons which Novak articulates, that is, those liberating confrontations with self and others which a covenant demands, "The Church also is the school of love."

B.F. Cummings, Richard Cummings's uncle, in his fine book, *The Eternal Individual Self*, gives a unique Mormon view of the paradox of selfhood and how it is best resolved: "The self is insubordinate, wandering, imperially aloof, solitary, lonely, withdrawn, unvisited, impenetrable"; it "cannot escape from existence nor can it escape from the awareness of its existence" nor from the "inevitable sense of solitude" that is "born of the very fact of individuality," of "being an eternally identical one."³⁷

Ultimately exaltation rests in [the individual's] hands and depends upon his decisions and actions. [But] one of the conditions of his progress is his affiliation with others whose goal is the same as his own. Nothing that he can do is of avail to him without these affiliations. Through all eternity he remains an individual but through eternity he will remain a social individual. . . . This aspect of the doctrine . . . marks the fact of individuality and also that of association. These very affiliations augment the individual's stature as an individual. The whole concept of progress becomes one of associative progress, but this doctrine of affiliation opens up the way for each individual to develop to the fullest his individual powers. . . .³⁸

The Church can provide a context for the resolution of the Mormon identity crisis if more of its members perceive that crisis not as a battle but as a paradox—and a potentially fruitful one for Mormon life and Mormon letters. Mormon literature of all kinds (and the growing community of those who read it, think about it, and respond to it) can and *does*, I think, provide what Cummings called "an appropriate setting in which to maintain one's integrity as an individual in a Mormon context."³⁹ I would suggest that it will achieve its full potential only if it can find ways not only to help individual members maintain, explore, and express their individuality but also by imaginatively challenging and helping them to endure in the struggle required to find their true selves in relationships, in the challenge of covenant making, in the true marriage of obedience and integrity.

Editors' Note: A version of this paper was delivered as the Presidential Address at the AML meetings in October 1980.

Notes

1. Richard J. Cummings, "Some Reflections on the Mormon Identity Crisis," Presidential Address to the Association for Mormon Letters, given 13 October 1979, printed in *Sunstone* (December 1979). The quotation is from page 27. The essay printed here in condensed form was originally given by Eugene England as the Presidential Address to the AML in October 1980 and appears in full in *Proceedings of the Association of Mormon Letters, 1980-82*.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 29

3. Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1980), pp. 221-229.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 226.

8. Madsen, p. 229.

9. See the short discussion in Eugene England, *Brother Brigham* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1980), p. 87, and the extended analysis in Gary James Bergera, "The Orson Pratt-Brigham Young Controversy," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Summer 1980):7-49.

10. Minutes, 27 January 1860, MS, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.

11. Secretary's Journal, 28 January 1860, LDS Church Archives.

12. *Ibid.*, 31 January 1860.

13. *Ibid.*, 4 April 1860.

14. *Ibid.*, 5 April 1860.

15. Miscellaneous Papers, 5 April 1860, MS, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church Archives.

16. Secretary's Journal, 1 October 1860, LDS Church Archives.

17. Letter Book of Brigham Young, 1867-68, pp. 920-921, LDS Church Archives.

18. Church Historical Office Journal, 4 July 1868, LDS Church Archives.

19. See Juanita Brooks, *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1950), and John Doyle Lee, *Zealot-Pioneer Builder-Scapegoat* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co, 1963 and [corrected new edition] 1972); Levi Peterson, "Juanita Brooks: Historian as Tragedian," *Journal of Mormon History* 3(1976):47-54; and especially John D. Lee, *Mormonism Unveiled* (St. Louis, Bryan, Brand and Co.; New York: W.H. Stelle and Co., 1878), pp. 228-240.

20. The Chislett narrative is quoted in Thomas B. Stenhouse, *The Rocky Mountain Saints* (New York: D. Appleton, 1873), p. 317.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 319.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 332.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 326.

24. The Journal of Patience Loader Archer, typescript of original, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, p. 87.

25. See President Young's sermon, 2 November 1856, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints; Book Depot, 1854-86), 4:69.

26. In Stenhouse, p. 317.

27. Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), p. 93.

28. Issued 15 December 1969 and published in *The Church News* (10 January 1970):12, and in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Winter 1969):102-103.

29. *The Lord of Experience* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1967).

30. *Under the Cottonwoods and other Mormon Stories* (Provo: Frankson Books, 1977); "The Red Tail Hawk" in *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Autumn 1969).

31. *Bread and Milk and Other Stories* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1979).

32. *The Rummage Sale* (Provo: Heirloom Publications, 1972; reprinted by Peregrine Smith, 1975), and *Frost in the Orchard* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1977).

33. See my review of Peterson's book in *Brigham Young University Studies* (Winter 1983). For a comprehensive review of Mormon literature and the encouraging new directions it is taking, see my essay, "The Dawning of a Brighter Day: Mormon Literature After 150 Years," *BYU Studies* (Spring 1982).

34. George E. Mendenhall, in "Covenant," an article in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1979), 5:230.

35. Michael Novak, "The Family Out of Favor," *Harper's* (April 1976):39.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 42

37. B.F. Cummings, *The Eternal Individual Self* (Salt Lake City: Utah Printing Co, 1968), pp. 7, 69, 70.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

39. Richard Cummings, p. 32.