Annealing and Healing or New Wine in Old Bottles

Presented at the 2006 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium
12 August 2006

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[Includes comments from respondents Bryon Martin and the audience, plus post script.]

Central Question

How can we tell our existential truth and why is it important?

Preface

In his book On Becoming a Person, Carl Rogers has said: "Experience is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience. No other person's ideas, and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my experience. It is to experience that I must return again and again, to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me. Neither the Bible nor the prophets -- neither Freud nor research -- neither the revelations of God nor man -- can take precedence over my own direct experience. My experience is not authoritative because it is infallible. It is the basis of authority because it can always be checked in new primary ways. In this way its frequent error or fallibility is always open to correction."

Carl Rogers’ statement is the theme for my paper today.

There have been times in my life I thought I had a lot of important things to say to a Sunstone audience. This isn’t one of them. This past year has been such a banner year in terms of personal developmental learning, such as from the Integral Institute in Boulder, Colorado and New Dimensions in Ukiah, California and the many interesting and enlightened people connected to these developmental centers, that I often feel like a pigmy among spiritual giants (at age 72!). This includes Sunstone.

After having my present topic accepted by this year’s symposium, I seriously considered withdrawing it. But I couldn’t do it; because I believe that we Mormons need to add our personal stories to The New Mormon History as Michael Quinn did in his book by that title. To my mind, referring to oneself as being Mormon (versus “a Mormon”) no longer means just a member of a particular society or corporate ecclesiastical institution. It refers to a culture, which for me goes well beyond what church leaders often refer to as a “covenant people.” And, in terms clarified by Ken Wilber in his consciousness mapping terminology, a culture, in contrast to a society, is primarily concerned with the development of a collective interior, which is where collective visions and values first appear and then evolve into what a society is built upon. The challenge as I see it is for us in our culture to tell each other our individual stories accurately with dignity and without the need of external hierarchical or societal approval.
I pray I can meet this challenge this morning.

Introduction

I invite you to join me on a personal journey, because I want to know how many and who of you have a similar story. This is because I suspect that by comparing notes we are in for some major cultural—if not societal—surprises in the near future. *Synchronicity* plays a significant on-going role in this story and I invite you to check facts, dates and circumstances.

Because our time is limited this will be a relatively short trip with some fast forwards and flashbacks. On the way we will stop at a blacksmith shop and talk about how metals behave. I want to suggest that the hard science of metallurgy can be a useful metaphor for discussing some aspects of social science and applications to healing. This metaphor was for me the most useful thing to come out of my professional hard science (ceramic engineering and metallurgy) career.

Our shared journey is a part of the New Mormon History. That is why it is important. Again, the challenge is to tell our respective existential stories with accuracy and good will. My own journey now feels like a never ending “non-dual” experience of “soul development” or “spiritual evolution.”

To begin this shared journey today, allow me to refer to the Editor’s Preface to a solicited, but unpublished article for *Dialogue* from 1967 entitled “Journal of an excommunicant”. That was almost 40 years ago.

The story you are about to read is true; only the names have been omitted to protect the participants in their innocence or in their guilt. It is a story pieced together from journals, poems, letters, and notes describing a man and an organization moving toward the conflict that we call excommunication. The items excerpted here do not make a pretty story, but they do make a powerful one. It is powerful because it explores a significant human dilemma in concrete terms: a seeking man who fails to understand his church and a seeking church that fails to understand a man. The result of the conflict is a crushed soul.

Admittedly, the events revealed here are unusual ones; but then every such clash is unusual. No excommunication is typical of any other, since a single soul with its temperament and experience is in crisis in its own individual way. Yet the tale told here—told sometimes with bizarre melancholy and sometimes with fury—invites questions: Does all this happen over and over again in the Church in various quarters and to varying degrees? Is it in the nature of religious institutions that such a conflict should develop? Is a testimony of necessity apocalyptic?

If one may be allowed an interpretation, it appears that in this “case history” a sensitive man learned an idea from his church: the idea that intense dogma and intense mysticism are the same thing and when combined are the ultimate reality, an idea that when put into intense practice, the church could not tolerate. There are perhaps two villains here, if any at all: an organization not equipped to understand an individual and an individual not equipped to understand himself. Prejudice and pride make impossible brethren. After all, the God-possessed individual and the God-possessed church, while both laying just and proved claim to truth, run the risk of sometimes being merely self-possessed, though also perversely beautiful in their wild integrity.

The Present Journey
Two years ago, after a 14-year absence from Sunstone, I began a long solo drive from New Mexico to Salt Lake City to attend the 2004 symposium and to renew old acquaintances. On the way from Los Alamos, I began listening to a series of six cassette tapes that had been recorded 13 years earlier, but which I had not listened to since they had been recorded. I’d completely forgotten about them, but had inadvertently come across them buried in an old box full of miscellaneous tapes in my closet while looking for something else. The name on these tapes didn’t mean anything to me at first, which is why I fished them out of the box. I even had to do a Google search to jog my memory. The name on the tapes was David Cheek, and boy, was my memory jogged!

Theses tapes had been recorded during the months of March and April 1991 by the late Dr. David Cheek, an obstetrician and consulting hypnotherapist to the US Postal Service and FBI. I had met Dr. Cheek in Kansas City at the invitation-only TREAT III conference, the third of seven such annual conferences. [“TREAT” is an acronym for “Treatment and Research on Experienced Anomalous Trauma.”] These conferences were founded by psychiatrist Rima Laibow to address unusual traumatic issues that the psychological healing professions had been generally unable to address. I had been invited by Dr. Laibow to present my CREEI Process dream work techniques to those assembled. (Incidentally, I learned only months ago that our own Dr. Jess Groesbeck, an LDS Jungian psychiatrist, received training in hypnosis from Dr. Cheek).

Cheek had developed a technique for freeing patients from what he called “spiritual attachments” or uninvited energetic entities. He would occasionally find these energetic obstructions hidden in the psyche of his patients, which were generally expectant mothers. After I heard his conference presentation (the recording of which was included as the first tape), I asked if he would give me a private session in case I had the kind of problem he spoke about. He consented. What he found in my first session prompted other sessions over the next few weeks. What unfolded as I played each tape in sequence during my long drive was that Cheek found two spiritual attachments. Hearing them both speak in my voice while under hypnosis in response to Cheek’s interviews fascinated and astounded me.

When asked to identify itself, the first entity gave the name of “Nicholas,” which was the name of my Ukrainian-born father. My interest focused. When asked when and why he was attached to me Nicholas explained that it was at the time of his death. This was a great surprise and I remember exploding with a loud AHA! of recognition as I was driving. That disclosure suddenly explained something that had puzzled me for years. It explained why, during the night of my father’s death in May 1964 and before I had been informed of it, I had snapped out of a deep post doctoral depression in which I had been suffering for five and half months. As Cheek pressed for details “Nicholas” explained that as he left his body he noticed me, his son, under some kind of trouble and decided to stay to protect me. This made amazing, if bizarre, sense. Wow! The time boundaries of my awful, suicidal depression back then had been quite precise: January 2 through May 14, 1964.

David Cheek negotiated with “Nicholas” to leave his attached place in me and move on into the “Light,” to which “Nicholas” agreed when he understood that his protective work had done its job and that I was now stable enough not to be vulnerable to attack as I once was. On the other hand the second attachment was reluctant to leave. It insisted that I needed to finish his work and ignored the notion that I, Eugene, had my own work to do and a right to live my own life. That was why Dr. Cheek had me come back for more sessions. I still do not know if this other “attachment” has ever actually left me, which is why I am talking to you now.
Let me repeat that: I still do not know if this other “attachment” has ever left me, which is why I am talking to you now. We will come back to this later.

I want now to head for the blacksmith shop, which is the principle place we will stop on our journey together. Please note my emphasis on the words “the principle”. These two words have gotten our culture into a lot of trouble over the last 170-odd years and yours truly over the last 40. The stress on our culture and on us personally, which has been caused by those two seemingly innocuous words and our collective struggle to understand them, simply will not go away. It is part of our uniqueness—our peculiarity as we proudly used to say—and I hope to offer a way to relax and manage that seemingly perpetual stress. Perhaps together we can find the true value of those two words.

Before stopping at the blacksmith shop I want to tell you a transformative dream that occurred to me on the night of the Autumnal Equinox (September 21) during a visit to Salt Lake City in 1965. At the time I was in a personal and professional crisis and had come to Salt Lake seeking help and counsel from friends, professional colleagues and higher level church leaders. Something transcendent and transpersonal had broken into my life the previous summer so powerfully that I could not communicate effectively about it to anyone locally.

The first person I attempted to tell was my new bishop of only a week, a young man my own age. He became distressed with what I presented him and simply dismissed it without even asking questions. He seemed absolutely confident in the “divinely authorized” spiritual discernment of his new priesthood office. However, had this local leader been my former bishop, a seasoned school teacher in his second stint as bishop, he would have had a completely different understanding. Only weeks earlier this former bishop had given me a powerful priesthood blessing promising the very things I was attempting to disclose to the new bishop.

In the blessing the old bishop warned me to be careful with whom I would share the coming events. Duly warned and despite the sudden ecclesiastical change, I naively reasoned that if I couldn’t go to my new bishop about these things, then who? The synchronicity of this abrupt administrative change impressed me greatly, since I had dreamed a week or so earlier about a young visiting general authority speaking to my ward. In that dream I approach the young GA at the speaker’s stand and without a word thrust my hand in his direction through a group of well-wishers. He sees and grabs my hand in a warm firm clasp, our eyes make contact, and recognition comes into his eyes. That is the dream. The external reality at that time (July 25, 1965) was obviously considerably different.

The next person I told was my mother. She too became frightened and rejected my report without a second thought. I could not help but marvel at the similarities and differences of these two responses compared to Joseph’s experience as a young teen when he approached those he trusted most, including his own parents, to speak of strange things.

I could no longer share anything about what was happening to me with those closest to me. My experiences were inexpressible. Some thought I had become mentally ill. Others feared I had become dangerous. Eventually I was put under house arrest under the direction of the medical director at the laboratory where I worked as a nuclear materials research scientist and, under pressure, volunteered to enter a psycho ward for observation. I was assured by the Mormon psychiatrist whom I had insisted on seeing that such an observation period would put people’s
fears to rest. Others at the laboratory were taking bets I would never be released. Here is a poem I wrote during the three day mandatory observation period:

Inversion

Walls and windows
Friends and faith
Fail
To change the scene
From mirror irony.

At first when low
Was disbelief,
And now when high
It is again—
The record
Shows the purpose.

Mysterious ways
Are hid from view
Except to one who knows.
The work demands
A strict review.
Mercy cannot rob it.

Others’ faith
Is quit this time
To prove
This one himself.
At last will come
The final meaning
When lowness
Claims its own.

San Diego
County Psychiatric Ward
1 Sep 65
(Op 9)

However you want to explain it, I had undergone a series of enormous and traumatic emotional and spiritual encounters. In any case, it was in this state three weeks later that I was the overnight guest of my old stake mission president to whom three years earlier I had been a counselor while in graduate school at the University of Utah. This is when I had the dream mentioned above:

I am with my wife and a few other people at an outside gathering. Standing alone at some distance from us, I see a woman (whom I do not recognize in outer life). She is large, attractive, well shaped with long blond hair. I go over to her and give her a friendly kiss after which I turn to face those gathered and remark, “This is to celebrate the beginning of the recrystallization of the Church.” I then return to my wife who gives me a knowing and approving smile.
Before we go any further, let me say you may think you understand this dream, but hold on to your horses! This dream was not something I felt I could share with my host at the time, even though I had confided in him on many other personal and professional things in previous years. Nevertheless, I felt comforted by the dream. It gave me a profound sense of peace and hope in the midst of extraordinarily stressful circumstances. I was in trouble with my marriage as well as with the church, but believed the dream gave me insight into how that trouble might be resolved. Note the key word “recrystallization” and the key phrase: “This is to celebrate the beginning of the recrystallization of the church.” Also, please refrain from leaping to conclusions. We will come back to this later and have now arrived at the blacksmith shop.

The Blacksmith Shop

To set the stage for today’s visit permit me to ask how many of you know the meaning of the metallurgical word “annealing”? It is akin to the technical term “recrystallization.” It is a special type of heat treatment.

Since the science of metallurgy is fairly well known, let us see if we can apply this knowledge in any useful way to human behavior.

I will use these two words “annealing” and “recrystallization” as a single metaphor in a few minutes, but first consider a solid piece of metal, say steel or copper as applied to you personally. You might think of yourselves in terms of a tool or a vessel or even a weapon.

Second, consider a person. Perhaps it is someone you like or maybe someone you don’t like. It might even be you, yourself.

Lastly, consider an institution—religious, political, or academic--an institution that you personally value. It might even be a personal relationship. Ask yourself if you respect this institution and if it respects you. Perhaps you are dependant on it to some extent, but would like it to change in some way.

Do examples come to mind? If so, please note them as we work with the metaphor.

I’m going to talk for a few minutes about the behavior of metals under applied heat or annealing conditions. As I do, see if you can imagine how your examples might be affected by the conditions I describe. Pretend you are a poet and that you can do this. Imagine also that there are unseen creative forces at work around and within us that can guide and shape our true intentions. You might call them angels.

Regarding the behavior of metals, how many of you have had the experience of bending a piece of wire back and forth many times? What eventually happens? Yes, of course, it breaks—more precisely, it fractures. Have you ever touched the breaking point just at the time it fractured and felt the heat? Do you know why?

The wire broke due to an excess of what metallurgists call “work hardening”. What was once flexible became less flexible as it was stressed (or worked) until eventually it became inflexible. In working with metals or on ourselves or in our institutions, we need to be mindful of the kinds of
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stresses we are working with and whether there is more strain or work hardening than the objects under stress can absorb without breaking.

Most metals in their relaxed (non-stressed) state are malleable. They don’t fracture. Rather, they flow and can be pushed into predetermined shapes. The blacksmith, for example, forges a horseshoe from a piece of steel bar by putting that bar into the fire until it glows red—that is the “annealing” temperature for steel--then taking it out and banging it with a hammer on an anvil until the bar begins to move toward the shape he has in mind. [Incidentally, I love it that my name, Kovalenko, literally means “smith”, blacksmith, and shoer of horses.]

The smithy doesn’t achieve the intended final shape all at once. He bangs on that piece of metal only so much. Knowing how much is a skill! After a few calculated blows he puts the partially shaped piece back into the fire until it again glows red. Furthermore, the smithy doesn’t allow the piece to get hotter than red, such that it melts. If that happens--if the part melts--he has lost all his shaping work and must begin all over again with another malleable bar. So, we’re not talking about the temperature of a “refiner’s fire.” This is typically white-hot heat and where the chemical composition of the metal is purified or changed. We are talking about an “annealing fire”—a temperature somewhat lower than the melting temperature where only the physical properties of the metal are changed. The smithy must keep the part he is working on in the solid state and well enough below the melting point in order to retain changes in shape.

At this annealing temperature all stresses eventually relax. The stress energy absorbed and captured by the forging process is allowed to dissipate and the metal once again achieves a malleable condition, while at the same time KEEPING the shape caused by the last hammer blow. After several cycles of forging, annealing and forging again, such that the final shape has been achieved, the blacksmith “quenches” the part by plunging it into water until it reaches room temperature WITHOUT annealing it again. This process freezes the final shape AND also retains the last amount of work hardening. This final calculated amount of work hardening produces a conditioned part that is tough enough to function as intended under pre-determined operating conditions.

Are you with me so far?

We now return to the term “recrystallization”. As already said, this is another word for annealing, but recrystallization implies a little more information. It infers something about how this stress relaxation occurs on a microscopic level.

Imagine looking at your metal piece in a stressed state under a microscope. Let’s say it is close to the breaking point. You will not see any regular structure such as you would by looking at the original unstressed crystalline specimen. Yes, metals are crystalline and as such are malleable. But your metal specimen has been beat up and distorted so much that it cannot tolerate any more stress. All regular crystalline structures have been dislocated. The microstructure is irregular—it appears chaotic.

Recrystallization

However, as you continue to watch the metal under the microscope at the annealing temperature, you will notice something happening amid the chaos. Tiny spots of crystals in random locations have formed and are beginning to grow at the expense of the chaos. Metallurgists call these tiny
crystals “grains.” How many grains develop in a particular metal depends on how many growth sites there are. And here is a key point: these growth sites are generally associated with “impurities” scattered throughout the metal, which sites are of higher activity or energy. They are the places where the relaxations of stress first occur. But these impurity sites are not just any kind of impurity. They are carefully selected elements that act as seed crystals. The size and structure of the impurity must be close enough to the size and structure of the host metal atoms in order for those host atoms to gather round the impurities and begin forming a regular crystalline pattern. This is the process of “recrystallization.”

The process is complete when all these new crystalline grains grow throughout the metal matrix until the chaos is completely replaced by new crystalline order. Once the chaos has been subsumed and all grains have grown up against other grains, the piece is considered fully annealed. It is ready again to absorb new stress.

Have you been thinking about how such a process might apply to the examples in your mind that I suggested earlier in this presentation? Is your personal example a tool, a vessel or a weapon? Is it yourself or a relationship? Is it an institution?

Allow me to return to my dream and to the term “church.” Can you tell me how I might have understood my dream back then?—assuming, of course, that it has meaning.

In those days—well before I understood much about dreams—I had projected my interior reality onto exterior reality. I want to repeat that. In those days—well before I understood much about dreams—I had projected my interior reality onto exterior reality. I did not differentiate between The Church as represented by the ecclesiastical structure at 47 E. South Temple in Salt Lake City and the inner church of my personal interior reality. My inability to make the differentiation was due to a rigid and stressful childhood conditioning, which I have had to overcome by metaphorical annealing.

These days, thanks to the Kosmic mapping work of modern pioneers in human development like Ken Wilber, I can speak with clearer, more understandable language about interior and exterior realities in both personal and collective terms, giving each quadrant (of his four quadrants map of consciousness) its due. I can also speak of inner and outer realities in terms of archetypes and personality types, thanks to the insightful and enduring work of psychiatrist Carl Jung. More recently, I can speak of Robert Fuller’s “Rankism” or the abuse of power described in his new book SOMEBODIES and NOBODIES, Overcoming the Abuse of Rank. According to Fuller, Rankism is the mother of all “isms” and is the root cause of terrorism. He argues that since the prime purpose of a democracy is to protect the dignity of its citizens, when that dignity is not protected those unprotected citizens can become indignant. Consequently, if this indignity is ignored and the abuse continues, it can escalate into terrorism.

Back in the fall of 1965, after having had that transformative dream about the recrystallization of the church, I thought it addressed the outer dilemma of my first marriage as well as my outer relationship with the LDS Church. The inner dream figure of my wife looked like the mother of my first five children. I made no distinction between her and my inner (dream) wife.

While in Salt Lake that fall, my primary objective was to reach President David O. McKay about the previous summer’s events. I had been in contact with him the previous January about an urgent national security issue and I believed these summer events were a continuation of that same issue.
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I had interviews with several general authorities in the process, including Joseph Fielding Smith and Harold B. Lee, both of whom would eventually become church president. But, I didn’t make it to Pres. McKay. What I did manage to do was to write him a poem a week after the dream, since I knew he loved poetry. The poem spoke of the frustration of failing to reach him and I called it Nathan’s Cry. (Incidentally, it was gratifying to learn only a few months ago from the Church Archives people that they found this hand-written poem among President McKay’s personal papers.) Here is:

Nathan’s Cry

Must there be strife
Before the Truth
Is known?
That which came before
Would clear the eye
For Light.

But who believes?
Or who can share?
Why can this one
Not speak?

The song burns bright
Within my breast,
But locked inside—
By Blindness.

Salt Lake City
26 Sep 65
(Op 11)

Can you see my conflict in failing to distinguish between personal interior and collective exterior realities? And, can you see the beginning of the emotional energy required to generate heat for my interior recrystallization process? It was my inner church structure—not the outer ecclesiastical institution—that would soon be ready for recrystallization and reforming.

But I was not then conscious of these distinctions. Little did I know what challenges lay immediately ahead of me in the exterior world. When I returned home to San Diego from Salt Lake, expecting my marriage crisis to have resolved (believing the dream to be prophetic), I was surprised to encounter fear and silence. My wife asked for divorce and for me to leave at once. Whatever had happened behind my back during the two weeks I had been away didn’t save my marriage. I went into a state of shock and dissociation. I won’t bore you with details except to say that although on the surface I pretended all was well, in actuality I felt suddenly emasculated and powerless. And, of course, I became angry.

What creates emotional fire? Such energy can come from many sources: betrayal, passion, fury, desire, infatuation, love, hate, indignation, terror, frustration, etc. I was about to cross a chasm in personal consciousness. I was about to begin to comprehend the distinction between interior and exterior realities, but not all at once. I felt blind-sided by rejection, humiliation and frustration and was soon to learn that I had never experienced the healing power of unconditional love—whether
in the form of Eros, Agape or some other. Yes, I had experienced infatuation, possessiveness and lust, but the experience of the genuine love of Christ? No. I was soon to experience such transformative power under the hands of other loving human beings.

Allow me to leap ahead into the recent past for a few minutes. Ken Wilber, founder of the Integral Institute and Robert Kegan, Professor of Adult Learning and Professional Development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, recently published a dialogue called *The Evolving Self: Why the Hierarchy Within Can Heal the Hierarchy Without*. To quote from their synopsis, they note that for many, to have a developmental view is to be hierarchical—and to be hierarchical is to be oppressive, regressive, patriarchal, and a direct contributor to the suffering of untold millions. They also note that there are at least two significantly different ways that “hierarchy” can be understood: 1.) as it exists in the exterior structure of a society and 2) as it exists in the interior structure of an individual. Historically, enormous abuses of power have occurred by those at the top of a societal hierarchy—but those who would do so are by definition not at the higher stages of the interior, developmental hierarchy. These abuses are the results of lower levels of development or a pathological exterior hierarchy. Nevertheless, there are healthy and essential hierarchies. They are the ones whose members are at a higher developmental interior stage. In other words, healthy exterior hierarchies cannot exist with leaders whose personal interior hierarchies are at a lower level or are pathological. Rankism is another way of describing pathological exterior hierarchies.

The best example that I know, of the power of an individual with a healthy interior hierarchy affecting for good an ailing external hierarchy, can be seen in the recent film *Karol: a man who became Pope*. I have been moved to tears both times I’ve seen it.

To return to my journey more than 40 years ago, after leaving home following my abortive trip to Salt Lake, I was about to step deliberately across a tabooed boundary. Shortly before this I wrote to Pres. McKay announcing my intent to withdraw from the Church, since I had been unable to reach him in Salt Lake. I received a reply from one of his assistants telling me to take my concerns to the local authorities. That did it! I’d had enough, since that was exactly what I’d been doing in the first place in encountering that new young bishop, which had gotten me in trouble. So, I wrote an angry letter withdrawing my life-long commitment to the LDS priesthood and stepped across the boundary, beyond which there was no return and which would be intolerable to the existing external hierarchy.

(Incidentally, some twenty years later I met an old friend, Birch Holt, for whom I had worked as a graduate research assistant at the Livermore National Laboratory in Livermore, California in the summer of 1962. Birch and I met by chance at UC Berkeley, my undergraduate alma mater. As we discussed old times, he told me that back in those 1965 days after I had sent that letter to President McKay, McKay had contacted him through his local stake president or stake mission president to find and help me, since Birch lived in the same ecclesiastical region from which I had written. But by the time Birch reached my last known address, I had moved on. Of course, I knew nothing about this until this “chance” meeting now 20 years later. I had not seen Birch since 1962.)

Having gone into the forest in the Santa Cruz Mountains, the change in my awareness came about in a totally unexpected and astounding way at a place called *The Ranch of the Way* in Ben Loman, presided over by an Episcopal priest named John David Arnold. Metaphorically speaking, experiences at this place became a first stage annealing (and healing) for me. The physical, mental and spiritual stresses I had been under began to relax within the confines of that miraculous and
holy place. My inner church could now take new stresses and begin the process of reform. Also, I was about to become acquainted with my inner personal church hierarchy. The second stage occurred at a place not far south from Ben Loman called “Big Sur Hot Springs.” This place would eventually be called the Esalen Institute, another well-known human development center founded by Michael Murphy.

Suffice it to say that I was excommunicated a few months later. It was the first of two excommunications and it happened in absentia. This first one was a terrible trauma for me. Not that it happened, but because of the way it happened. I even dreamed about this event the very night it was occurring, although I was hundreds of miles away. It took ten years to recover, rebuild and return to the outer church, because I felt prompted that there was unfinished work for me to be done within it. The second excommunication took place 27 years after the first, but this time the trial process was clarifying and liberating. I finally gained the opportunity to stand before that ecclesiastical judgment council in my own behalf to test the results of the metaphorical forging process that had been at work on my inner reality during all those intervening years. My interior hierarchy had developed enough strength and toughness to aid me when confronted by the new stresses of an exterior intimidating, reactionary hierarchy. It was an effective reality check of the differences between interior and exterior reality. I am grateful for the experience.

If I may suggest ways to develop a healthier interior reality, one of them can be done through meditation. Our Sunstone colleague, Phil McLemore, has presented a paper and given a workshop on this process at this symposium. Another Sunstone presenter, John Kesler, has given a workshop called Integral Life and Spiritual Practice for Mormons, based on the work of master teachers associated with the Integral Institute. David O. McKay frequently emphasized the practice of meditation. As Ken Wilber and Robert Kegan observed in their above mentioned dialogue, a healthy interior hierarchy can positively affect an ailing exterior hierarchy. We are not talking about developing an oppressive or controlling inner structure. We are talking about developing one that is protecting, nurturing, caring, flexible and creative in a worldcentric (versus an egocentric or ethnocentric) view. By so doing we can contribute to the healing of any ailing societal hierarchy.

I believe we can also develop and share this healing process individually when we tell our stories. This is the opportunity and challenge for The New Mormon History. We nobodies—we who are seed crystals among the many stressed matrices within our culture--can have a significant effect on the somebodies in our society as our numbers grow to significance.

Returning to David Cheek’s discovery of two spiritual attachments, when Cheek asked the second attachment to identify itself, it gave the name of “Joseph.” Wow, again! This was getting freaky. When Cheek asked how long it had been attached to me, it answered “since birth”—my birth! Suddenly, all kinds of other bizarre synchronicities in my life relative to Joseph made new sense to me. And I began to wonder how many others in our culture have had such experiences or known of such attachments in others.

Again, this inquiry is the primary purpose of this paper.

When Cheek negotiated with “Joseph” to leave and go into the Light, unlike with “Nicholas,” “Joseph” was reluctant. He insisted that I needed to finish his work and ignored the notion that I had my own work independent of his and a right to live my own life. Thus, I do not know if this
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“Joseph” has ever actually left. I sense that he is still with me, and that is another reason I am presenting this paper.

Allow me to give you two examples of these bizarre synchronicities:

The first came as a dream on the morning of Joseph Smith’s birth date in 1964—December 23. I was 31 years old, a recently graduated Ph.D. research scientist in materials science, but had just been invited to join the staff of Dr. J. B. Rhine of Duke University, the foremost authority on paranormal phenomena. Rhine is generally considered to be the father of the field of parapsychology. The term extra-sensory perception or ESP was his invention. Rhine had taken an interest in an idea that I had brought to him regarding an unorthodox psychological warfare offensive. This idea had occurred to me a week or two after my father died. I believed then (and still do) that it came from my father as a warning.

In the dream:

I am a beautiful girl with bad reputation. Always being taken advantage of (no specific instance that I can remember) but am a kind of fugitive. Some wives are jealous; some hypocrite husbands would have me put away. I run. Hide. Sleep under a house. They pass me by.

I return to my locker (in the temple) to get my things. I can’t find my briefcase. A conference of seminary administrators is meeting. They look wholesome. They do not notice me though my locker is nearby. I am in Levis and T- shirt, mussed from having struggled the day before and slept under the house. A woman friend with locker next to mine says “[so and so] is not going to say anything when you tell your side of the story. She’s just going to remain silent and pretend she doesn’t know what you’re talking about.”

This dream puzzled me a great deal until a couple of weeks later, while reading in the Book of Mormon, I read a passage in 3 Nephi 22, the same wording you’ll find in the KJV of Isaiah 54, that moved me like I’d never been moved before. It was the first time in my life that the scriptures ever spoke to me personally. When I read verse 6 in the KJ language:

“The Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit when thou wast refused,” I was unexplainably moved to tears. Upon reflection, I recalled the above dream and it began to make sense. That was in January 1965.

The second example of these two synchronicities is described in a letter to John Howard, then president of Lewis & Clark College in June 1978, just days before the announcement of the change in Church policy on priesthood. At the encouragement of Howard, I had written a story called “The Reincarnation of Joseph Smith: an outrageous autobiography” with a subtitle of “Prodigal Prophet,” a tongue-in-cheek attempt to make overall sense of these bizarre synchronicities. I had not at that time known of the spiritual attachment explanation. Only the idea of reincarnation made sense to me then. Howard had become friend, mentor and confidant since we first met in January 1972 and I had shared many of these strange existential events with him. Although he was marvelously supportive and open to new ideas, this one may have been too much for him. Nonetheless, he was gracious enough not to express a quenching opinion.

Here are the relevant parts of the letter:

It feels fitting that Lewis and Clark College, a pioneering institution with Presbyterian and Methodist beginnings, should be the setting for his “Return”. Joseph Smith was born into a Presbyterian family, some of
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whom were also Methodist, during the Revival fervor of the early 1800’s. When he, yet a boy, began to have strange experiences with God and angels, he was rejected by local ministers and eventually founded his own corporate church. Joseph died defending it, but especially his friends, his family and also himself. He sealed his convictions with his blood at the height of his virility at the age of 38 years, 6 months and 4 days.

But, what if, on his way to heaven, the Prophet learned he’d blundered!—that in his traumatic, but triumphant exit he’d missed, incredibly, the whole point of Christ’s Atonement? And what if it was decided he must return to make amends? Consider Joseph’s Return in light of some pre-programmed facts of time and circumstances.

When yours truly first stepped into a Mormon Church after 7 years of exile it was at a curious time. It was just after leaving your [Portland] home six weeks out of the forest and just before, thanks to you, my first real job back in the establishment [which was] at Lewis & Clark College. At the initiative of my 16 year old daughter, I had been invited to sing at the same place [Newport Beach Second Ward] where I’d been excommunicated years before (unknown to her) and on a date (May 21, 1972) that corresponded precisely to Joseph Smith’s age at his Martyrdom. [Add Joseph’s age at his death to my birth date: November 17, 1933.] It was also at a Ward Conference and so many of my old protagonists were there. [I came in looking like a hippie—long hair and purple clothes—into a super conservative Newport Beach ward.] I sang a Negro Spiritual, “Steal Away to Jesus”. And the bishop who got up to speak after the singing couldn’t speak for a very long time. He was crying. When I subsequently learned about the synchronicity of the dates, it felt like a harbinger of things to come.

Now, my friends, let us fast forward to the present. I have recently (April 2006) talked to many people about this “spiritual attachment”, including the local stake president, who had earlier dismissed me as being too full of pride. In response to this man’s judgment I reached out--it was at Easter time--to family and friends (him included) as I had for the first and last time 41 years ago in the summer of 1965 to my closest LDS family and friends. But this time my request included many non-LDS friends and family, such as members of the local Christian Church and relatives abroad in Ukraine and Sweden. I began a prayerful fast to purge my pride so that this “attachment” could be removed in obedience to Jesus’ Biblical injunction about removing uninvited spirits. At the end of a 7-day period, I met with the local Christian Church elders to discuss the situation. But they were unable to deal with the attachment, because they were inexperienced with that sort of thing. They did pray with me and advised me to cut all ties with things Mormon to which I still had loyalty attached. They wanted me to destroy the bridge I had built between the Christian community and the Mormon community—like destroying The Bridge over the River Kwai, as one good brother put it. But this I could not do. In describing my experiences to these sincere Christian men, all of whom gave freely of their time as caring servants, they dismissed what I had to say as not legitimate because it was without Biblical precedent.

Again, how do I deal with this Joseph attachment? I accept it as existential personal truth. It doesn’t have to be anybody else’s truth. But if it is, if this attachment is within any of you, I’d very much like to know whose. In any case, I’ll tell you what I did in 1988 employing a Jungian style “active imagination” (well before meeting David Cheek in 1991). I convened an inner round table and invited several essential figures to be present. These included my dad Nicholas, my son Steve, my brother Virgil, my friend John Howard and of course, Joseph Smith. I’ve updated it slightly.

We come into the dialogue where my son Steve asks:

SEK: Dad, are you saying you want to quit the Church?

ENK: No, son. The Church represents part of my people—my family. Up to now it has been just about the only family I’ve known and has taught me much. But now there is my Slavic family that
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I’ve been trying to find and integrate within me. This has driven me for as long as I can remember. It was a yearning implanted in me by my dad. That’s what I want now. That is my work, to work with my dad in the inner world as he works with his people in the inner world. However that manifests in the outer world is not for me to say. [August 2006 Note: in 1995 my brother discovered our father’s family alive and well in Melitopol, Ukraine after 75 years of not knowing! The following year I spent three weeks with these fine folks, including Evgenia, Dad’s oldest niece and my namesake. They had always wondered what had become of their Uncle Kolya (my dad).]

SEK: But what if the Church doesn’t go along with you?

ENK: It doesn’t have to, but it would be nice. We could have such a good time together. There are so many good things about it that can bless the world. But there is much garbage—pathological stuff—that it is holding onto that is counterproductive and limiting. Somehow Joseph Smith has got to make himself felt in new ways among the present power structure. I don’t know if he has the will or the capability these days. He had lots of problems doing this toward the end of his earthly life. Brother Joseph, you have anything to say about this?

JS: Seems like you know where you are going, Brother Eugene. I’m not so sure but what the Lord hasn’t got this pretty much worked out for you. You don’t need me. You’ve got your own connection. Just let me be about my own business. Why can’t you just let go trying to redeem me. It ain’t your job.

EK: You have a point. Consider yourself let go. You know I’ve really had mixed feelings about you, don’t you?

JS: You aren’t alone.

EK: Tell me, Joseph. Why didn’t you stand up to that angel with the drawn sword? You know—the one you mentioned every time you were challenged on the polygamy thing? You buckled under with that threat and behaved like a wimp. Why?

JS: You are right. I was a wimp. Would you have behaved differently under the same circumstances?

EK: Sorry. Probably not. But now is now, and we see things and understand things differently. Surely we are more conscious of the grander design?

JS: Not necessarily. We need to work together to see it. You know this. That is the purpose of the family round table isn’t it?

EK: Yes, yes, yes! Thanks for that observation. And thank you for some great ideas that have given my life an interesting ride over the years. I won’t mention some of the other stuff that has complicated it.

JS: Why not mention the complications stuff? Isn’t that the purpose of your dream work process? Reworking inner things until the conflicts and knots are worked out?
EK: Right on! Yes. Well, there are two things, my brother, that go right to the heart of the mind set of those that claim to follow you. And I’m talking about all kinds of folks. Not just Salt Lake ecclesiastics. Do you want me to go into it now?

JS: Why not?

EK: OK. One I’ve already mentioned. You knuckled under to the angel and what we’ve got to show for it is the most horrendous marriage morass anybody can imagine: polygamy, polyandry, homosexuality, temple marriage, civil marriage, etc., etc. It’s still a horribly complicated issue that has all kinds of people at each other’s throats in and out of many ecclesiastical and civil institutions, local and national. And there seems no end in sight. That’s one.

JS: And the other?

EK: The other has to do with the report of your first vision. You changed your story a lot of times, depending on who you talked to. But the canonized account has locked in some images that cause more problems than they solve, I believe. I think you ought to come clean on that experience and quit trying to accommodate other people’s belief systems. Just tell it straight as it happened without embellishment or embarrassment.

JS: And if I can’t?

EK: If you can’t, then say so. Tell it straight. That will allow others who key off your experience to make up their own minds. It will free them to see their own experience. There are so many out there who believe in your belief. Let them see your vulnerability and uncertainty. Tell it like it is without all the posturing. There are so many people out there trying to ape your posturing and it does no one any good.

JS: Gulp! Tall order. Don’t know what I can do about it at this late date. You know what the implications are, don’t you?

EK: I can see some. Like all the modern LDS scriptures are open for reexamination and review. New conclusions will inevitably be required. Foundation stones may need replacing. Lot’s of work.

JS: Maybe too much.

EK: Maybe so, but it’s worth a try.

JS: That’s not up to me.

EK: Why not? You claimed rights for eternity--the so-called eternal keys. You set up a legalistic system with all that priesthood stuff. You can bring in new light. Can you get into the heads of those guys in Salt Lake City? Like Gordon B? Can you get into his and others’ dreams?

JS: Don’t know.

EK: Will you try?
JS: I’ll think on it.

That was 1988, three years before I met Dr. David Cheek. It was therapeutic at the time. Then, when I met David Cheek and learned about the attachments, he did the best he could to negotiate with this “Joseph” entity while I was under hypnosis. But the taped record is unclear about Joseph’s departure. In the event he is still attached, here is what I have to say today:

Listen to me carefully Joseph! You and your theology have made my life miserable. It has never truly been peaceful and happy and loving—except for those few times when you haven’t been its preoccupation—its obsession.

From the beginning of my boyhood memory my life has been full of shame, fear, sadness, guilt and pretence in the name of Jesus, the God of Love. But my experience has been less about the God of Love than about you. You have been more concerned with power and control and posturing than loving and laughing and blessing others. You haven’t behaved anything like Jesus! I have both loved and hated you. When you are grandiose and full of yourself, it is abhorrent and embarrassing to me! When I behave in a similar way, I embarrass myself as well as others. You have boasted about your righteousness in God’s Kingdom and conned a lot of people into believing that you have established the only true, authorized Church recognized by God on the earth. What rubbish! What you have created instead is a cult around your own personality and installed a self-righteous priesthood that worships its own power to maintain it. It reminds me of that guy in the temple ceremony who boasts about his own priesthood and threatens everybody sitting around silent and entranced with condemnation if they don’t behave in some exact way. It is absolutely amazing to me that you have gotten others to agree to your visions. So many others! What they don’t realize is that so long as they listen to your voice, rather than to the voice within their own soul that has its own divine connection—so long as they listen to your voice, they struggle. I can see these strugglers now straining against the impulse that pulls them inevitably towards a bright and wondrous future. But they cannot appreciate this unseen impulse; because they are all bent over, facing backwards and fighting the eternal North-bound presence within.

Joseph, I believe that in your early life you had some extraordinary experiences, before you got to the point where your ego took over. I love your account of Moroni. He had interesting things to say. And you had some good ideas later on. But I just don’t buy your account of Jesus. You made that up, didn’t you? That’s not the way it was at all and you can’t get out of that story. It’s too well established. Well, you can tell it now, if you dare to tell it straight to your people, and if you are attached to more than just yours truly. If, indeed, you are attached to those leaders in and around Salt Lake City, you can speak to them in the personal language of their own dreams. They will listen to you and perhaps understand—if you are who you say you are.

And then, do you know what would happen? What would happen is that you and they would set an example that this tired old world sorely needs. You and they would set an example that has never before happened in its history. You would set an example of repentance in the style of Russia’s perestroika that would so affect our culture and our society and our country and the rest of the world that it could not help but get the attention of those passionately self-righteous religious zealots from all over—Muslims, Christians and Jews, as well as other egocentric and ethnocentric isms that are tearing up the place. Perhaps this is too grandiose without divine intervention.

But you would win the hearts and minds of those who truly seek a life with God.
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That’s what I believe would happen. So, you do that *now*. You get their attention and then I will stop trying to cast you out of my soul. You can stick around if you want, but don’t expect much more attention from me. I’m sure you’d be far happier in leaving me and kneeling before the Christ to ask his forgiveness for your pride and disrespect for the experiences of others. He will welcome you with open arms just as He has me and my family and my friends. And, when you do that I’ll know you’ve left me and done your final duty. Then I’ll smile… Actually, I’m already smiling!

Thank you.

[Silence, followed by very light—polite—applause]

Responses from Bryon Martin

Like you, I wish we had some more time – but according to my clock I think we have three and a half minutes. [Chuckle] …six minutes? OK. But before I start, if you think you have a question for Eugene and you want to share it, can you raise your hands? So I can kind of measure my comments….OK….All right.

Well, I’m going to skip my introductory comments. Let’s just assume I’m a charming, intelligent fellow who is anxious to be a part of the Sunstone community and, like you, I’m eagerly pursuing the truth. I admire Eugene’s courage for sharing his story so courageously, in contrast, perhaps, to another who didn’t. I like what Eugene said at the beginning about his being “Mormon” rather than being “*a* Mormon,” and he clarified that as being part of a culture, rather than being part of a “covenant people.” Like Eugene, I asked to have my name taken off the rolls of the Church. I think it happened about ’81, and that was after wrestling with the big issues for a long time. And, frankly it was at the threat of an excommunication court. I thought I’d better pull out on my own before things just got too weird. But I worked my way back into the Sunstone community about three or four years ago. My children would probably say I’ve never fully left Mormonism; we have too many books at home about it. But there are things about being a Mormon that are more than having a temple recommend; I think a good analog would be a person who is a cultural Jew. We read all the time of people in the Jewish culture who are Jews by heritage, but who are miles from being orthodox, conservative, or of a more liberal branch. But they are still Jewish because there is something about how they were raised that informed them so. I believe that being Mormon – being raised Mormon – informs us with a certain set of values, cultural expectations, and, with the lingering specter of Joseph Smith, perhaps demons that we deal with for the rest of our lives. It’s just the playground that we’re in.

I think that perhaps the most important thing we learn from being a part of the Mormon culture is the dictum, “Do what is right, let the consequence follow.” That’s obviously Eugene’s tale. And that’s why we are here at the symposium: We’re trying to do what is right, let the consequence follow. And in trying to emulate that, some of us look to the revelatory model of Joseph Smith – which the hierarchy at the headquarters is trying to stamp out – about being able to go inside our own closets or to our own sacred groves for our own revelations. And sometimes what we find will confound our friends and family in the church we belong to.

Personally, I can’t imagine that if Joseph Smith were alive today that he’d be a member of this church for even a month. It just wouldn’t be his cup of tea. He’d be confounded, seeing that what he thought he’d imparted to us – the right and means of personal revelation to a whole new
generation of people – is now blocked. Revelation now only comes from downtown. But, on the other side of Joseph Smith is that pride issue.

When I read Eugene’s paper I remembered being given the Aaronic priesthood when I was twelve years old. My bishop looked me in the eyes and told me I now had more power to act in the name of God than the Pope had. That was a weighty thing and, of course, I didn’t really believe it. I come from Sacramento and there were times I saw my stake president – he was a state worker – walking about the mall at lunch, sometimes a little uncertain about where he’d eat. He didn’t seem to have as much power as the Pope. What was this about?

But we’re also saddled with darker stuff about Joseph – “The Principle” and the women thing: unforgivable things like Joseph’s sending a man on a church mission so that Joseph could marry the man’s wife in his absence. I admire the response of the former RLDS, now the Community of Christ, and the diminishing role that Joseph plays in their story. I think that is a useful model and already, in some ways, I see wisps of it here. My children and I were at the North Visitors Center at Temple Square last night – the one with the rotunda and the giant Christ – and the art panels on the wall of the bottom floor are now all Biblical, showing us the story of Jesus. But 35 years ago, when I came through on my way to BYU for my freshman year, they were all Joseph Smith. If you want another indicator, gather your Ensign magazines from 30 years ago – any 12 consecutive ones – and see how many of them have Joseph Smith appearing on the cover with the golden plates or Moroni. Then gather any consecutive 12 from the last few years. There’s been a reversal. The Church seems now much more Jesus oriented than Joseph oriented.

Part of that is because we haven’t heard Joseph’s whole story; he didn’t tell his story, as Eugene says, with accuracy and good will. It was done with pride. For example, he boasted that he was more prominent than even Jesus because he (Joseph) had held a church together longer than Christ had. But to what end? What kind of confusion did he sew into the fabric of his church?

If you have any questions, please come to the microphone.

[First respondent from audience (man)]: Both of you are very interesting. I’d like to hear more from both of you. But, it’s too bad we didn’t have enough time. I would—I noticed you had to leave most of your speech out—and if you had a copy of what you were going to give, or if we could get a copy, it sure would be nice, because I am very interested in that. But there is not enough time for you to do it..

ENK: I could send you a copy via email with an attachment.

[First respondent]: OK

ENK: Speaking of attachments.

[Laughter]

[First respondent]: And, have you gone through any psychotherapy or anything like that?

ENK: (faint volume) Oh, lots. I’ve been through a Jungian analysis and lots of … I have certainly been interested in finding out what in the world has been happening to my psyche? So, yes, that’s
…I’m always interested in new insights. [closer to mike] You asked about psychotherapy. Yes, I’ve been through a Jungian analysis years ago and that was a wonderful eye-opener. It gave me new tools to understand the sorts of things that were happening—the archetypal encounters—the spiritual...amazing things that were occurring—were not anything unique with me. And that was comforting. My particular interest in presenting such here [was] with regard to this special attachment and concern with Joseph Smith. And I just am confident that there are lots of folks that have had this same kind of experience, but who are afraid to speak [about] it or bring it forth.

[First respondent]: So, it’s not like you were possessed, but just that you grew up in the Church and you had this indoctrination your whole life…

ENK: No, I’m talking about a literal possession. …It’s not just an obsession. It’s more than that. And that’s what I want to know about.

[First…] So, it would be just a part of Joseph’s spirit and not the entire spirit….

ENK: Who knows? That’s a good question. That’s why we need to come together with people who have had a similar experience to compare notes. And then maybe we could find the greater truth. Thank you for the question.

Postscript:

Before this paper was presented to the 2006 Salt Lake Sunstone Symposium, I had begun a series of “Dialogues with Joseph”, but it was too late to include them in the symposium presentation. The dialogues include an introduction followed by Parts 1 through 6. They then evolve into Dream Yoga interviews. The subsequent “Dialogues with Joseph” are posted on my blog link at http://www.kovalenko.org/eugene_n/ENK_frames.html.