

SPECIAL FIRESIDE
FOR
DISAFFECTED
LATTER-DAY SAINTS
IN SWEDEN

GUEST SPEAKERS

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LDS CHURCH HISTORIAN

AND

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NOVEMBER 28, 2010

Västerhaninge Chapel

Stockholm, Sweden

Created from Transcript updated: July 17, 2013

(Previous reformatted pdf version: July 22, 2013)

Last Update: December 30, 2013

(Last update has added titles to the named participants and made minor spelling/formatting corrections.)

(The textual content on this pdf version matches the pages on previous versions.)

Transcript

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RT – **Richard E. Turley Jr.**, *Assistant Church Historian*

EK – **Erich W. Kopischke**, *Area President, 1st Quorum of the Seventy*

[Headings to particular questions were added]

[0:00:00-0:00:47] *Swedish: As we said in the invitation to this meeting, we will first give the time to our guests, and then there will be time for questions. But first we would like to say our names and how long we have been members. We can do this in Swedish. My name is Ingvar Olsson [Area Seventy R. Ingvar Olsson] and I have been a member for an astonishing 40 years soon.*

EK: I'm Elder Kopischke, I'm from Germany, and I'm 54 years old of age. I was born in the hospital but raised in the Church.

MJ: Good evening brothers and sisters. I'm Marlin Jensen, I'm nearly 70, and previously between, 2001 and 2004, I worked here in Europe. I worked in the area presidency like President Kopitscke. During that time I had a chance to meet very many of you, to be here in Sweden several times. I'm of Danish origin, so [0:01:23-0:01:26] and I are cousins, I'm sure. I'm very grateful to be here tonight. I look forward to know who each of you is.

RT: I'm Richard Turley. I'm the assistant church historian and recorder. I've worked at Church headquarters now for about 25 years.

MJ: Thank you for introducing yourselves, brothers and sisters, and thank you for being such good English speakers. Brother Hafen told me that when he visited your conference, President Mattsson over in Göteborg, the last time he did that, in 2005 or something, he decided to have no translation. And so when the conference was

over Elder Hafen said to President Mattsson, “What percent of your people do you think understood me?” and you said, “97-98%.” And Elder Hafen said, “That’s better than I do in America” [laughter]. So I appreciate that you have all in your lives learned English.

And I want to say how grateful Brother Turley and I are to be invited here — to be sent here, actually. As you know, Seventies don’t hold keys, so we do what people who hold keys tell us to do. And you may remember that Elder Nelson was here on a recent visit, and with him was Elder Rasband. And as a result of that visit and some other things they asked Brother Turley and me if we had a trip that would take us close to Europe if we would stop by and hold a meeting like this. And so, we are on a trip, we’re going to New Zealand, and – and somehow, Stockholm is on the way [laughter]. It just takes an extra 36 hours. We left on Saturday morning and we’ll fly back, actually, to Los Angeles tomorrow and then go on down to the Pacific for a couple of weeks.

But I’m glad to be here. I want to thank President [0:03:44] for being here tonight as your area president and I want to invite him to say anything he wants to say at any point during the meeting, but he mentioned that he’ll at least say something at the end if not before. And I’m grateful to get to know Elder [0:03:59] tonight, who is the local area seventy here. He’s such a fine man.

I feel like we’re among friends, brothers and sisters. I don’t feel like this is a meeting of adversaries, of us against you, of you against us. We’re all Latter-day Saints. We have so many things in common. We have all done certain things the same way in our lives, made certain decisions, made certain promises. And life is long, as we’re finding out. And in the course of life, often it turns out different than we might have imagined. I think of this often, as I marry a young couple in the temple, and think back forty-five years ago when my wife and I were married about our view of life and our vision of life how differently it’s turned out. Some of it so much better than we could have hoped, some of it not as good as we had hoped. So I hope at least tonight you’ll feel comfortable, feel loved. I want you to understand that we’re not here because your local leaders need our help. One thing I learned in coming to Europe, in fact I learned it from President Kopitscke I went on a long drive with him when I first got here and I said, “could you tell me something that will help me be a good leader — a good American leader in Europe?” And he said, “Yes, I can tell you something. Listen to the European leaders.” Do you remember that conversation? It

was the most important thing he could have told me because, what tremendous leaders you had and have. And one of the [0:05:52] I love during my time here was this handsome Viking, Hans Mattsson.

I just wanted to begin in the spirit of love and common understanding with you and say that we're here because brother Turley and I right now have charge of the Church's history department. And it seems like many of the questions that have been raised here – and I want to say to you they're being raised in other places. This situation in Sweden is a little bit unique because it seems to involve a group of you who are loosely networked everywhere across the world because of the internet and the explosion of information that has come. There are people who have questions they've never thought of before, and there's information that's never been available before. And in many ways, it's a – it's a tremendous opportunity, in most ways, actually, it's a tremendous opportunity. And one of our hopes that I think we're bring[ing] to pass is that everything the Church has in the way of historical information will one day become available to the whole world. We're doing our very best to internationalize Church history. And, one of the ways we'll do that is by putting on the Internet our Church history catalogue that lists everything that we have. And then over time, we'll make digital copies of all of our documents and make those available to people all across the world.

It is a day of information, but with that comes the challenge of deciding what information is reliable, what information is true, what information is worthy of basing our life on it. And hopefully tonight we can at least offer some information in a reliable and loving way that will be responsive to some of the questions that you have. So that we don't start as big as the universe, I'd like to just create a little framework for our discussion tonight and then when I'm finished with that, we're going to invite you to share with us your most pressing questions. And we'll put them up on the board, here, and we'll try to prioritize them, and then we'll give our very best responses to your questions in, hopefully, a very productive discussion format. And we'll go until you get tired or we get tired, but not too long tonight.

Let's just see if we can agree that this is the world that we live in. Maybe I could even call this, just to give it a little more framework, the conversion process. How is it that someone ever becomes converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? Well, after years of experience with this, brothers and sisters, it typically begins with a person who is a seeker. Three hundred thousand people a year join our

Church through the missionary effort and most of those people receive a letter from their mission president once they're baptized that asks them to talk about their conversion. I would wager that 90% of those people say that they were seeking, they were looking for a different life. Often, you notice in Sweden, we baptize people who have moved all over the country, who have divorce or a death or are down on their luck in some way. That led President Hinckley once to say, "I don't know how the missionaries find some of the people they find." He said, "The FBI can't find them, the police can't find them, but our missionaries find them" [laughter]. Why is that? They're looking. They're looking. And it is the poor, often, that are looking.

What is there in our universe, brothers and sisters, that drives or impels or motivates people to come toward truth. Can you think of something doctrinally? Maybe I'll just say it – we won't take time to make this a discussion. But we know there is a light or a Spirit of Christ that is at work in our universe. It's spoken of in Section 84. It's spoken of in Moroni 7. It is a spirit that is born into the heart of every person who ever comes to earth and it says in Moroni that it invites and entices and persuades people to do good and come unto Christ. Some have called this the universal conscience. It's something that brings a seeker toward truth, and I think we've all felt that in our lives. It's nothing unique to the Church. It's just out there for everybody, and it does create in the world, I think, a sort of universal morality.

On the other hand, there is another spirit. It's the spirit of the devil, and – a couple scriptures here – I would like to read a scripture on this one. It is spoken of in Moroni 7. If you've got your scriptures, you might want to turn to the seventh chapter of Moroni. It says in verse 16,

"For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God."

That's the mind of Christ, the Spirit of Christ bringing us toward truth, bringing us toward God, bringing us toward Christ. Verse 17, however, says,

"But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a

perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves to him.”

We have a counter spirit, the spirit of the devil and his angels, and these forces are working on every one of us, brothers and sisters, who come into this life. This is really what creates agency. Look just for a moment, if you have your scriptures, in 2 Nephi 2, where Lehi is explaining this. In 2 Nephi 2:16 he says,

“Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself.”

So we have the capacity to act, which in the Church we call agency – the ability to make choice. And it says,

“Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed.”

That word ‘enticed’ – I don’t know what – what is that word in Swedish?

[0:14:45] *In Swedish (enticed) lockad*

MJ: OK. So Lehi is teaching his son that man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or by the other.

Now, this may look very simple to you and you may be wondering why I have begun with this. But I’ve begun with this because this is the common circumstance of all mankind. I think parents have to understand this to be able to deal well with their children. I think Church members have to understand this to know what’s going on in the world and in their lives. That there will always be two forces working on us: the light of Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the devil. And within that tension that’s produced by those opposing forces – that enticement that occurs – we have a wonderful gift from God: we get to choose. We get to choose. Good or evil. Right or wrong. Let’s just look here and see – I think I’ve said enough, maybe, about that.

Back to this thought. When a seeker, motivated by the light of Christ, comes in contact with the truth, and that truth is often preached by two missionaries, there’s another spirit that enters in to this process – it’s the Holy Ghost, which is in addition

to the light or Spirit of Christ. And one of its chief functions as the third member of the Godhead, is to testify of God, and to testify of truth and to testify of Christ. So everyone here who at some point has encountered truth and been a seeker has felt the spiritual prompting which we would call a manifestation of the Holy Ghost. And that can be manifest in different ways in our lives. Some describe that manifestation as a feeling of peace, some describe it as a feeling of warmth, some describe it as a feeling of certainty, some describe it as a burning in the bosom. There are lots of scriptural stories and lots of historical stories that deal with this, but really you won't know much about it unless you've experienced it yourself. And sometimes it can happen, as it did for Paul and for Alma, in a – in an instant, but for most people, this can be a gradual process of coming to know, coming to feel.

We're taught in Doctrine and Covenants Section 88 verse 118 that we are to seek learning by study and by faith, which indicates that in this process of coming to be a convert, we don't rely necessarily just on our faith. There is an element of study, of learning about things, of thinking about them in our minds, talking about them. And Doctrine and Covenants section 8 verses I think two and three talk about the Holy Ghost speaking truth to our minds and to our hearts, which again indicates that within each of us there are two centers, really, of knowing.

There's the more thoughtful or rational part, our minds, and the more feeling part, which the Lord describes as our hearts. The process of becoming converted can involve both study and faith and the Holy Ghost can speak both to our minds and to our hearts. Gospel truth can be very logical, can be very compelling, but it can also induce great feeling. Usually, it's some combination of this. And as each of these work together, they're a wonderful check on each other.

So again, I'm saying that in most of our experiences, brothers and sisters, we've had some experience like this were we've encountered truth. I'll just take the circumstances of the day of the Pentecost, which is a very good example of people being preached to, hearing the truth, saying to the apostles "what shall we do?" and they were told to repent, to be baptized. At that point, they had felt the Holy Ghost, and they had what might be called a testimony, which is a conviction of the truth. But it's not a conversion at that point. It's just a testimony.

A conversion is a longer process of coming across this continuum here and then you now being born again or having to change your heart or be healed, as the

scriptures sometimes describe it. There is a difference between having a testimony and being completely converted. That's why the Lord did say to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen they brethren." Peter had a testimony, but he hadn't yet experienced a change of heart.

Now this is important background in my view, before we turn to your concerns tonight, because all of us are somewhere on this continuum. We're hopefully seekers, we hopefully have some experience with the Holy Ghost, and in response to the question, "What shall we do?" the answer was, "repent and be baptized." And hopefully we're moving across this continuum working to be born again, working to have our hearts changed, working to be completely converted. But while that's going on, we still have these two powers to deal with, and every day as we're in the midst of this, brothers and sisters, we have to make a decision, and the central decision we have to make is whether we're going to believe or whether we're going to doubt. That's a decision.

Now everyone who's decided to believe, not everyone, but most of us who have decided to believe are as aware of the questions that you have as you are and maybe even a lot more questions that you haven't thought about yet. I just want you to understand that everyone's experiencing kind of a similar situation.

Question: *When you say – sorry – when you say, "we are aware of the questions that you have," it sounds like you and many more of you, I don't know. Is it the Apostles you're talking about?*

MJ: No, I'm just talking about brother Turley and me who have received questions from some you in preparation for this meeting.

Question: *And you're aware of a lot more things that we might not be aware of yet? But still you stand and you think, "I can – I can stand for this?"*

MJ: Right.

Question: *OK. So you and Brother Turley, not anybody else?*

MJ: Well, I'm hoping there'll be others [laughter]. I know about me. I don't have any doubts about Brother Turley.

EK: That's a very good question. We have been given, in advance, some indication of what your questions have been. So I'm just saying they're very good questions, they're questions that are being asked by others, and there are a lot more questions that could be asked.

Question: *Will you have very good answers?*

MJ: You'll see in a moment. We'll have what answers we have. But now to stop on this point, we need to go to the Bible just for a moment. To 2 Corinthians 2. How many of you have ever had a philosophy class? So you know what the word epistemology means? Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that has to do with how we come to know. It's the science of knowing. And obviously in science, there's the scientific method as a way of knowing. You postulate a theory and you try to produce proof and if that works out the way you hope it will, then you may have something that is truthful. This is what the Lord says about knowing in the spiritual realm because our truth here can only be truthful if we keep our answers the realm of spiritual knowledge. We're not dealing with a science. And so when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, who were the intellectuals of his day, he said in 2 Corinthians 2 and 9 He said,

"As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear hear, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

So there are some tremendous things reserved for those who love God. And then he talks about how we come to know what those things are. This is what he says about learning spiritual things:

"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

And then this very important verse, 11:

“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”

Second Corinthians – excuse me – 1 Corinthians 2 starting with verse 9. 1 Corinthians 2, starting with verses 9, 10, 11, and now verse 12. Paul says,

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teach; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”

And then this is important,

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of god: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” or evaluated. *“But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”*

So as we take your questions now and do our best to respond to the issues that you see in our history or in our doctrine, I just want to have you bear in mind that no matter how smart Brother Turley might be, no matter how good his answers might be, the only way that these answers can help any of us is if they’re spiritually discerned – if they’re given by the spirit and received by the spirit – if they somehow get deep into our hearts.

There’s nothing that I know about Mormonism that bothers me. Are there contradictions, are there inconsistencies, are there paradoxes? Yes. It’s been a Church full of people. Is there any of you that doesn’t have an inconsistency, a paradox or a contradiction in your life? Come see me after, please [laughter].

Question: *D&C first chapter says if it will be my mouth or my servants mouth, it will be the same. So we – none of us here are apostles or seers or revelators, but I think we have a first presidency have that title and the*

twelve apostles have it. So if they talk with the spirit of the Lord I think that we should trust them?

MJ: We can trust them.

Question: *As far as they is true. But sometimes it change. That's a little – does that bother you at all?*

MJ: Not at all.

Question: *[0:28:55]? Not at all? They have a chance to say something in the name of the Lord and it does not bother you?*

MJ: Well, you'll need to give me some for instances, some for examples, and then we'll deal with those. But let me just say this. I've worked at Church headquarters for 22 years and I've seen our leaders at very close range. Brother Turley and I twice or three times in the last few weeks have met with the first presidency – issues and decisions. And I know of no dishonesty, no motive that isn't pure with the leaders of the Church.

Question: *Is it OK to ask question now?*

MJ: Yes. Can I just finish this?

Question: *Sure, of course.*

MJ: I need to stress this point. We have to have the spirit of the Lord, because eventually, brothers and sisters, as a result of our meeting tonight, each of you is going to be left to make your own decisions. And we're not going to have enough time, nor do we have the knowledge, if you're looking at it as a scale. You remember a parable of a donkey that stood between two equally attractive stacks of hay and couldn't decide which stack to eat? And starved to death eventually? Is called the ass of Buridan? You could be like that. We could all be like that in our lives. What you have to do is evaluate what is there that tips the scale in favor of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. What tips the scale away from the Church. And tonight we're hoping to bring to your attention some things that we feel that tip the scale toward belief. But nevertheless, you're going to have to decide. It's a choice, it's an

act, it's your agency and we're not here to force you in any way. I want you to know that I made that choice. It's been a fantastic choice for me. I have great happiness, great peace, great hopes and anticipations because of this choice. I know that the Church is true and my prayer tonight is that those of you who may be in doubt may have some of your doubt removed, may be inclined more toward believing. Alma taught that a man has to have a desire to believe and I'm very prayerful tonight that all of us will leave here with a greater desire and I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Now, Let's Take Your Questions

MJ: Now, let's take your questions. I'll ask Brother Turley to write them on the board. Let's just get a representative group of your questions up here. Let's see what it is that concerns you. Brother Hans, since you had a question do you want to just give us one we can work on? We'd like to have 8 or 10 questions and then we talk about them.

Question: *I think I'll give [get?] the words.*

MJ: OK. You're a wise man.

[0:32:15-0:32:18] *In Swedish: Speak loud, otherwise it will be hard to hear. And please stand.*

Question: *Alright, one of my questions is regarding the process of how the Book of Mormon came about. Growing up in the Church I remember hearing when I was taught about how the Book of Mormon came about, especially the pictures shown to me in primary which had Joseph Smith sitting on one side of the curtain and his scribe on the other and Joseph Smith had the plates in front of him, translating from them.*

And also as a missionary and a Sunday School teacher, we taught and are taught, you know, the importance of the original plates and them coming about and how Nephi had to make the choice of killing Laban in

order to get the plates, and how to pass them forward from father to son for a thousand years, and Moroni almost died trying to preserve them and finally they were buried in the hill Cumorah.

And then finding out by recognized historians, even members of the Church, how the process isn't really corresponding with that picture.

And the fact that how the Book of Mormon came about was actually by Joseph Smith looking into the hat in the seer stone, the stone that he found in a well, and the stone that he used both before and after becoming a prophet in seeking for treasure.

And this – and the question to me that I don't expect you to answer, but, you know, there's a lot of efforts being made in order to make these plate come about and they weren't even part of the process, they were hidden away most of the time, sometimes not even in the same room where the writing was being done. That's one question obviously that I don't expect you to answer.

But the second question is why? Why don't we present this [0:33:55]?

Why, why do we still keep to this version that the plates were used in an actual translation process which my understanding is using a document and moving over to another document? Why [0:34:09] some sort of revelation, more or less, that may [0:34:12]? So that's my question. Cause, I don't see that the Church that they really correspond with what really happened.

MJ: Those are both very good questions. Others? Please?

Question: *I have a difficult question. I have a question about, you know, there's all this talk in the Church about certain times, the time of Abraham, God reveals that there [00:34:47-00:34:48] not my language, but, you know it's OK to have more than one wife. That is not my question, but my question is, how – is it a teach – does the Church believe that it was a teaching from God that he married women who had other men that were still alive, and even some apostles wives when they*

were away on missions? You know all the stories, probably. And I have a question, is that a teaching from the Church or is that, you know, something he did that he did wrong?

MJ: So the question of Polyandry. Polygamy is when a man has multiple wives. Polyandry is when a man marries another man's wife. Joseph did both. So your question is about polyandry?

Question: *Especially, I think, in the time when he actually married women who actually were married to righteous men, like apostles, missionaries, and so forth.*

Question: *I have another example. One woman said the child that she bore she didn't know if it was the child of Joseph or the child of, in this case, Orson Hyde, I think, an apostle. So that indicates that it was definitely not a spiritual marriage, it was all the way marriage. So, I have a question, what do you feel about that?*

MJ: So why don't you put in parenthesis, spiritual versus conjugal marriages? I have six daughters, you won't even think of a question that they haven't already asked [laughter].

Question: *Thank you. I just like to add a question in the area. According to information I have read a number of times which has been published in books, etc., and which I think seem to be very firm and correct, how the wives were forced into marriage. It wasn't so that they fell in love with Joseph and say, now I would like to be a wife. It was so that they were put under tremendous pressure to accept the marriage and they were told that the Church will go under and their family will go under, you have only until, let's say, tomorrow to decide and to marry me but it will have terrible consequences if you don't accept the marriage. And I think there are so many reports and books, etc., w[h]ere these women have written so I don't think we have to doubt that this was actually a real marriage. I would like to say he had mistresses rather than wives, actually.*

MJ: Are you speaking just of Joseph Smith bringing this pressure to bear?

Question: *Yes. My real – my other question was about the Book of Abraham if you please can tell us a little bit about your view of this? We all believe or the Church members believed that this was actually a translation of the information Joseph got before as you know?*

MJ: Papyri?

Question: *Yes exactly. And we also know through the Rosetta Stone that it actually is possible to translate it to English or any other language. And we know now that it has actually nothing to do with translation. This was something written 1500 years after Abraham, about 500 before Christ, and has no connection to Abraham whatsoever.*

And this is such a fundamental thing in Church, I mean this is what we're told in the temple, and this is what we have as a holy scripture. So, I've seen a number of explanations from the Church of how this could be. I would like to hear what kind of version you have today.

[laughter] [00:38:36-00:38:39] [laughter]

Question: *I have a question that's really related to polygamy. When I was on my mission in London in the seventies, we were taught a very important principle called lying for the Lord. I mean, we were taught that. And it's supposed to have been coined – this phrase – by I think John Taylor, and I wonder do you think that there are circumstances where it's OK to withhold or manipulate truths just to defend or uphold the reputation of the Church?*

Is lying for the Lord still alive? That's my question.

MJ: I have a question for you? Who taught you this?

Question: *I can tell you afterwards. Because no one has ever asked before. Thank you.*

Question: *Perhaps someone can help me. On my mission, serving in Scotland, I came across something, and it was the first time I really*

stopped and pondered. Somebody smart enough to write documents that were false, the Church buying them from this man –

Others: *Mark Hofmann*

Question: *OK. That's just my question surrounding why the Church acted the way they did.*

And the other one is blood atonement. It's just a strange thing altogether in my view.

[00:40:17-00:40:46]

Question: *Could I just add something to my first question? My first question was about the portrayal of the translation. [00:40:56-00:40:59] I also have the same feeling when reading about the first vision and Joseph Smith [00:41:04-00:41:07] in fact after the first vision he claims that he was persecuted because of the vision, there was a lot of happenings around. And he said, "me an obscure boy, why are they giving me so much attention?"*

Whereas the history, I find and I don't think it's disputed, is that nobody really, not many at least, found out about the first vision until it was written in 1838. There was one account in 1832. No, sorry, yeah, 1832. It came about much later and the question is why, why does it really – you know the members of the Church in 1830, most of them hadn't even hear?

So why they join the Church mainly because of the Book of Mormon and the issue of the new Israel and all that?

The first vision as we teach today is not the foundation of the Church originally. So that's the question. Why doesn't these two pictures correspond in the way [00:42:03-00:42:04]?

Question: *I've been a member of the Church since 1962 and I've been a master of science in engineering and physics since 1970. Despite my*

critical and truth-seeking nature and education, the Church succeeded in making me a happy and truly-believing member for 43 years. Five years ago, I discovered that the Church as an organization had systematically deceived me by only telling a carefully selected, one-sided version of Church history. The discovery was extremely painful to me and my wife who kept it – we didn't tell the children or grandchildren. Do the leaders of the Church really believe that they are actually inspired by God to act in such a way?

Just to tell a selected, nice version of the Church – the history of the Church – in order to get more converts?

Do they believe they are inspired to do this?

MJ: You're making the assumption that that's what they've done, so [0:43:28] Church to sanitized Church history.

Question: *Can I also fill in a little bit? In the PBS television on the Mormons, five years ago or something, I actually was in Florida, so I had time to see it. Elder Packer says there, it is not good for the members to know all the truth. I have the DVD with me if you'd like to see it. He used to say things, like last conference, as well, that changed afterwards. He says that it's not good for a member to know all the truth. He said as a watchman on the tower he might stop things that could hurt. Even the truth can hurt. Yeah. Just to fill in what you're saying. Elder Packer's not the whole Church, but he's very known about in the Church and outside the Church.*

MJ: The question is really, is all truth useful? We'll come deal with that. One more, please?

Question: *I already asked, so . . . I have two more questions, actually.*

Question: *One thing that really bothers me is the lack of contemporary sources for the angelic visitations. I understand from both Michael Quinn and Bushman, they say, as I understand, there are sources from 1820-1830 – affidavits, letters, minutes – but none of them ever mentions any*

angelic visitations or a priesthood restoration, Quinn says, and Bushman records 1838.

As a historian of the Church you should be worrying about the credibility of the written sources are not [00:45:36-00:45:37]. So I wonder, why are there not any contemporary testimonies? Or are there?

MJ: [00:45:43-00:45:51]

Question: *Can I have a question now, not just after question? The process a little, when I read about the priesthood and the blacks. And then I read about David O. McKay when he was an apostle and so on and he really had it up on the board of decision of Twelve, and the had [00:46:16-46:22] he had made OK that they should have the priesthood. But three of the apostles were not there and when they come back, they said no. So they had to cancel and then had to wait some years [00:46:33-00:46:37] and then he talks about or listen to his son – it was Kimball’s youngest son who said yeah it take a lot of years the Twelve and they told him this just what would happen with the Church it belonged this and [00:46:54-00:46:56] like how many would we lose, like a company or business. Is this true that there were some apostles that went against the question to give the priesthood to the Blacks?*

And then, see that, I was on my mission in the seventies, you know, and we loved Mark E Peterson, no, Peterson? He talks a lot about the blacks and the pre-existence and they are damned and so on because they were black. For me he was an apostle. For me he was Doctrine and Covenants section 1, my mouth or my servant’s mouth and I thought he was a servant. But then he comes out and he was teaching false doctrines if they look at it now at least if I start to preach it I would think it be called false doctrines.

And many people felt a great spirit, they would convert if the spirit testified that it was true. And it was not. To this I have a personal experience. I love the way you put out the devil there and Christ there. I’m glad I’m not a Muslim because I would have a problem with Christ there.

Anyway, when I went to the temple the first time, it was 1970 in Switzerland. And after being in there the first day, I was terrified. I couldn't sleep at night. I thought, what is this, you know? There was a black hole in my heart and I had nightmares the whole week. I thought, what is this? Have I been deceived? But then I thought, OK, I see my father there, I see my branch president and I said, maybe wrong on me.

So if I look at the Holy Ghost, it seems to be peaceful, it's a testifier, I would have a burning feeling, I would be happy. If I follow that description I would say the devil talk to me and said this is not right. But you know, it's hard to say, but it really hurts me and I feel sad about it, you know? And I know a lot of people have the same experience. I'm not alone. I even had it with my brother. I won't tell who it is, but, is good to know [laughter]? I wonder was, what did I do wrong?

MJ: OK, so the blacks and the priesthood. I don't know if you want us to address your temple question that's something we can . . .

Question: *I just wanted to see if this is a alongside of what you started to do – if you'd like to answer it – I don't know, but it disturbs me.*

MJ: We've got 13 questions, so I think we've got enough question unless you have one that's burning in your bosom.

Question: *I have one.*

MJ: Alright.

Question: *We had some Vikings visit North America about 1000 years ago, and today we know exactly where they lived actually, there are archeological evidence that they leave [lived] there, etc. So what about all the millions of people who have been Lamanites or Nephites? What kind of evidence can you show that actually exist?*

Every single small Indian tribe in the whole of America we know about today because they all leave buildings and tombs and anything which we can prove that they are there, have been there. And as far as I know

there is nothing prove there have been Lamanites or Nephites in America.

If we have time also could you comment on the American Indians and the DNA, and the connection to Lamanites, Nephites, and then back to the Jewish people? Interesting to hear.

[00:51:22-00:51:43]

Question: *Could I please ask you a short question? Cause I'm just really happy that you're here so I'm taking the chance now, it might be a bit risky, so I see this [0:51:55] It's about the Adam-God theory. And my question is not so much about – I've heard answers to how Brigham might have thought about it, but my question is, how come it divided the Church at the time?*

There was a lot of Apostles and leaders that didn't agree to what Brigham had to say so if – I don't know – what is Church opinion on Adam-God out there in Utah and why didn't they clear it up if it is the way I think they – that he actually thought that Adam in[is] not Heavenly Father, but why couldn't he make other apostles understand that?

MJ: These are questions I think that Rick has dealt with before. You're going to see, he has a very concise way of speaking. [00:52:47-00:53:03]

RT: The biggest challenge of course is time. I think we want to get to these questions in detail we're going to be here four hours, maybe days, or weeks. So I imagine I'm going to give you very concise answers, but there's a lot behind those answers. So let's take the first one, how does the book of Mormon came about why is our . . .

Question: *If you don't give us, can you give us a reference like later, go in and check?*

MJ: We've brought a handout for you. These are the five very best websites for authentic answers to those questions. Let me just say if you spend as much time on these five websites as you spent on other websites cause I have visited as has Brother Turley some of these anti-Mormon websites. And they're very dark to me. And

Brother Turley and I know many of the people who maintain these websites, and I can say to you they're not the people whose teachings I'm going to follow.

Question: *But if I go to those websites . . .*

MJ: You'll get authentic . . .

Question: *Accurate information?*

MJ: By and large and I'd like you to know that as a Church history department we have at President Packer's direction put together a committee to create answers to difficult gospel questions. We are working on these answers now and we're also giving thought to how we will disseminate these answers to the world. We don't want a website where people come to Mormon problems, obviously. But you'll find, if you go to these websites, answers that you can rely on to almost all of your questions, including Adam-God. But we'll give you our best answers. We wanted you to know tonight there are answers.

Question: *Do the Church stand behind these websites?*

MJ: Well they're all Church institutions. They're either BYU or private institutions that are handled by very reliable and good Latter-day Saints.

RT: So they're not official Church websites. We do have some official Church things that are being developed for example . . .

Question: *I tried to find the Church own versions about these things.*

RT: They don't exist.

Question: *That's my problem. I don't care – what do the Church say about this? Not what some . . .*

RT: Listen, we hope you'll find more in the future to be helpful, one of the most helpful things I think you may find in time is that we're taking our Church history library catalog and we're putting it on the Internet next year. And then we're going to make digital images of many of the records and connect those to the catalogue, so

that you can do – you don't have to just listen to somebody's summary, you can actually look at the original documents yourself and make your own conclusions.

Question: *I have a question. We have fifteen issues as of right now and I just wanted to make sure because I think it's important that we get all together that we really bring up the issues that are on the top of our minds and let everybody here feel that they get things answered and helped. Because there might be some people that this evening have other questions and I think it's important the we bring up the questions now so that we have the chance to get the answers.*

RT: So is there a question you have that's more important than these fifteen, anybody? Are these fifteen – yes?

Question: *Well, it seems like these are our main issues. The only new one is Proposition 8.*

[00:56:59-00:57:02]

RT: So what you're saying is these are issues that have been around for a very long time. They're not new. So recognizing the limitations of time, let's kind of march through and give some very quick, concise answers for these. Recognizing that a thorough answer is going to take more time than we have. At some point we may go a little bit deeper just because – because it's hard to make a concise answer. So let's just start with the first one.

Translation Process of the Book of Mormon

RT: As I understand this question, you're asking about why is there a difference between the way you first learned about the translation of the Book of Mormon, with Church art showing you how it's done, Joseph Smith and the plates the blanket and another scribe, and so on. Basically, the account that we have is that over the course of the generations people develop in their minds an idea about something happening. It's particularly true in the second generation, third generation, fourth generation, and so on.

If you look at Christian art, for example, a lot of Christian art dresses people from the Holy Land in clothing and in environments that are not the holy land. They're Europe. And that's because that's their conception, this must be how it was done. So what we have in Church art very often is artists giving their idea of what it must have been like. But if you go back to the original documents and if you get back to the original documents that were sometimes difficult for people to find originally, what you see is a different picture.

So the bottom line is we're trying to make our art conform with the sources so that people when they see images of the way things are done, they'll understand it based not just on the artist's conception but on what the basic statements are. Let me just give you an example.

Question: *But it's not so much the picture, it's more the teaching I'm after. [00:59:01-00:59:03] – it's more the teaching and even today, you know, the Urim and Thummim, for instance.*

RT: Let me just restate what you're saying. You're basically saying that the way the story is told, the way you've heard it traditionally, differs from what you see in the historical sources. And that is – that kind of thing does happen. And what we're trying to do as a department – the Church's department – is to bring the curriculum in conformity with the sources. Let me just give you an example that Elder Jensen mentioned.

Last week or the week before – last week we went to the Church leaders and we said to them, our historical research about the restoration of the priesthood and where it was restored is different from what our curriculum teaches. For example, the curriculum says that John the Baptist, if you look at the headnote to section 13 of the Doctrine and Covenants, Section 13, the headnote at the beginning says, “Ordination of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery to the Aaronic priesthood on the bank of the Susquehanna river.” Bank. Do you understand the meaning of the term “bank”?

We went back to the original sources, and Joseph Smith says the restoration occurred in the woods, and Oliver Cowdery said it occurred in the bush, meaning, we think, a sugar maple grove. They used to call sugar maple groves the sugar bush. And if you look at the Susquehanna River, here, and Joseph Smith’s home, here, the grove is probably up here, not here on the banks. So, our historical research shows that the restoration doesn’t occur here, it occurs here, so we’re going to change information to make it conform with the Church history.

So you’ve identified a genuine problem. Often the way stories have been told over time don’t conform with the history. And so our goal is to try to make them conform more closely.

Question: *But how did it actually happen?*

RT: How did it actually happen? OK. Again, very concisely, here. Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, but translation as a term is not the type of translation you and I might think about. I worked as a professional translator in Japan. I translated electronics and engineering documents from Japanese characters into English. I did that, you know, one character, one word, very, very slowly. Joseph Smith didn’t translate that way. Joseph Smith didn’t understand the language that he was reading. He needed the Lord’s help in doing it.

Now some of you probably have computers or phones that have translator software on them. Is that right? So we understand the idea that there are other ways to translate besides going word for word in translation. Joseph Smith’s translation was by revelation. And so that’s how he translated, he translated by revelation. So why were the plates needed? That’s your question, right? Why were the plates needed?

Question: *Why the Urim and Thummim?*

RT: And why the Urim and Thummim?

Question: *And why a hat?*

RT: And why a hat? OK. We can take those three in order. First of all, why were the plates needed? The plates were needed because the plates were real and they were preserved and they were passed down from generation to generation. Once Joseph Smith got them, then the method of translation was up to the Lord and the Lord chose to use a method of translation that was far more efficient, far better, and far more accurate than anything Joseph Smith could have done letter by letter. Because it would have taken him – he didn't know the language. How else was he going to translate it if God didn't help him?

What were the other questions?

Why the Urim and Thummim and why the hat?

The Urim and Thummim – maybe I should answer the hat first.

The hat was apparently to block light out so that Joseph – so that Joseph could see what he was doing with the record. Sometimes the light, you know, affects your spirit. We don't know exactly how it works, Joseph Smith said he wasn't meant to know how it works, but he did say this: in the early days of his translation, he was relying on revelatory tools of some sort or another – Urim and Thummim, seer stones, whatever the case may be. And that's been the case throughout religious history.

Think about the Old Testament, remember the brass serpent on the rod? People could look at the brass serpent and be healed. Right? You had the Ark of the Covenant. You have consecrated oil. There are all these sort of tangible manifestations that are used to focus faith.

After the translation of the book of Mormon, Orson Pratt, new convert, walked into a room where Joseph Smith was working on his translation of the Bible. And he thought in his mind, but didn't speak, he thought, Joseph's not using a seer stone, why is that?

And Joseph as though he read Orson's mind, turned to him and said, "Orson, when I was young and inexperienced in spiritual things, I needed that. I don't need it anymore."

Question: *Can you see that we've feel deceived? When you say translated, you had the record and you translated. Like with the papyrus, you know [01:04:56-01:04:58] because he was translating them. But he wasn't. It would be much better if you said he was sitting and praying and got the revelation. But it's kind of deceiving to say it that way. Do you understand what I'm saying?*

RT: I think that's a difference in perception rather than in reality. When Joseph used the term "translate," he meant revelation. OK. And revelation comes in various forms. You yourselves who have received revelation recognize that it comes to you in various ways. Sometimes it's a feelings, sometimes an impression, sometimes maybe a thought. In Joseph's Smith's case, when he translated the Book of Mormon, it wasn't just a matter of kneeling and praying and getting words. There was, as Section 9 in the Doctrine and Covenants points out, this effort associated with it. And we could go through that, but we're running out of time.

Question: *Exactly. And I would really appreciate it, not to be awkward in any way, I really want to know what you have to say about all these things. Because if we're going to continue asking questions about this, maximum three questions, perhaps. Can we do that? That's why I wanted ourselves then later to go dig deeper. Is that OK?*

Question: *It's OK, but we also need to get answers.*

Question: *But the thing is, we won't get answers. They already said that. Then we need to choose one question and get all their answers.*

[01:06:28-01:06:30]

RT: She asked how much did the plates weigh, there are different estimates. Forty pounds, fifty pounds, something like that.

MJ: I love that fact that you're asking these questions. Thank you. Thank you for feeling that you can do this. I really feel our desire to give you all the answers we have . But when all the answers are given and all the questions are asked . . .

Question: *It's decision time.*

MJ: That, too. There is a book. There is a book. And when you read the book, when you read Benjamin's discourses in the book of Mosiah, when you read young Alma in Alma 36 talking about his sins and coming to believe in Christ. When you read Moroni saying that he'll meet us at the bar of god there's something there that I stake my life on based on a feeling. Sure I know all of this and yes there are some things that we can't explain, in fact. But there is the book and there is the spirit of the Lord that we can anchor ourselves in so you might want to add that. I wanted to add that. And I could do that at the end of every question or answer. But I won't do it again.

[laughter]

RT: And there's something historically very remarkable about this book. I write books. I've written several and I'm in the process of writing several more. And I have a lot of help and I have a lot of education and it still takes me maybe a hundred drafts sometimes to write a book. Joseph Smith sat down and in roughly 60-90 working days he dictates this book.

Question: *That is amazing. But those are not the questions we want.*

RT: OK. We'll move on. I think I answered one and two here pretty concisely. Joseph Smith and his wives. Polyandry.

Question: *You didn't say why you present this view?*

Why does the Church present this view?

Why doesn't the Church present about the seer stone more efficiently?

RT: In the early days of the Church, they talked about it often. In the second generation, they presented it the way they tell the story, or subsequent generations. Each generation retells the story according to their own circumstances . . .

Question: *But we are led by revelation, the Church, so I mean, shouldn't, then, the leaders correct so that not people every generation change the story?*

Or can we say this for every subject in the Church?

RT: Much of what you get about history comes from historians from the people like me who do the best they can under the circumstances of their time. And then somebody else comes along, later, with new discoveries, new documents, and they rewrite it. OK?

So it's – don't put the responsibility on the prophet, put it on ordinary people like me who do the best we know how to do it. But somebody will come along later and do it better. Those of you who do anything, science, you do the very best you can and the next generation will do it better. Isn't that true?

I know there are a lot of questions but let's continue forward with discipline getting through these.

Joseph Smith's Wives – Polyandry

RT: Joseph Smith's wives – polyandry. This is a very complex subject. This is one we could spend a lot of time on.

Question: *OK do that.*

RT: Let me just answer some basic questions. Did Joseph Smith practice plural marriage? Yes. Many Church members don't know it but the answer is yes. Did Joseph Smith practice polyandry? The answer is yes. Joseph Smith did practice polyandry. How many wives did Joseph Smith have? We're in the process, as you know, of preparing the papers of Joseph Smith for publication. We hope to include in the papers of Joseph Smith a list of Joseph Smith's wives based on the best available evidence. So we'll answer that question in the future.

Why did Joseph Smith marry specific people? Which gets to your question about why did he marry the wives of people were already married? That actually boils down to a marriage by marriage statement. And it's fairly complex but it's an excellent question. We just don't have time tonight to answer it, but there are answers.

Question: *Summarize it then. Is it a principle we believe in that it should be, it could be practiced that way? Cause we believe in polygamy, it's a principle we believe in till – so is this a principle we believe in in the Church?*

RT: I'm not a prophet so I can't tell you about the future. I've said to people who have asked me this question, do you think this is going to come back, I say, I think I have a better chance of being hit by a meteorite from space than having this come back.

Question: *But it's not coming back. They're still here now, isn't it? The Church says there is no polygamy, but it is. So what? Why do we talk different languages in the Church? I have a friend, his wife died and he met another wife and [01:12:14-01:12:17] he will have two wives in the next life, so we believe in polygamy.*

RT: We believe in the sealing of people for the afterlife. Of course the question that arises is in the world generally is what do you do if you live through life with more than one person? What do you do if your spouse dies and you remarry? What happens in heaven? And the answer that section 132 gives is that you'll be together. Do we know a lot about how that works? We really don't.

Question: *But do we believe in it?*

RT: Do we believe in the 132nd section? Yes, we do.

Question: *So we believe in polygamy?*

RT: We don't practice polygamy on earth.

Question: *Yes we do, we go to the temple and seal them?*

RT: But you know what I mean.

Question: *No.*

RT: One man, one wife at a time on earth.

Question: *Yeah, but if it was legal today, would we have two wives?
Could I take another one?*

RT: It would not change from the current position until the prophet said so. And as I said, I can't predict the future.

Question: *But you must answer, I think you can answer at least, do we believe in polygamy?*

We don't practice it, but we believe in it because we are sealing more wives to one man.

RT: We believe in the sealing of people. [1:13:43-1:13:46] The reason I hesitate to say we believe in polygamy is if I say that then people will say, well then you have more than one wife, right? You don't, right? Nobody else here does, either, I believe. That's why I say it the way I say it, OK?

Question: *Is that your technical way? [1:14:00-1:14-04]*

RT: No, nobody's telling me anything.

Question: *Do we believe in polygamy?*

RT: We do believe in polygamy; we don't practice polygamy. That's what I'm trying to say.

Question: *Can you please try to convince us how this can be Christ-like, like Joseph Smith?*

To take the wives or have sex with wives that are already married to other men?

Or to force them to marry him I really would like to understand. I mean, if you read the stories of these wives – and I have a whole book, there are a lot of books published about this. If you read the stories about this book, they will believe these women were happy. I like to say they were extremely unhappy because they were forced into a situation which they hated. And they were put into this situation by peer pressure – not by peer pressure – but by pressure, pure pressure. And they didn't do it because of love, they didn't do it because of infatuation, just it was they were forced into situation.

They – if we were to have this situation, let's say, in Sweden King in the 1400s, I would understand. But we have this situation with a person who calls himself the second next to Christ, you know? And the founder of this Church?

I just have a different mindset. I actually can accept polygamy. I can accept that. There are a lot of societies around the world today where it works very well. I mean, a lot of people from Sweden go to Thailand on vacation. Thailand is such a country, for instance. To take other women in a secret way, force them into some kind of marriage, I would like to call it mistresses, or forcing 14-year old girls to marry him against her obvious will, I just don't understand.

Behind his own wife, even the counselors in the Relief Society, Lavina Smith, were his secret wives. The deeper you go on this the worse it becomes. This is true.

RT: Let me just say, if we had more time we could dissect this wife by wife, which is pretty much what you have to do to get to the answers on this matter. We don't have that kind of time.

Question: *Is it true in general? Or is it not true at all?*

RT: It's true that Joseph Smith plural marriage in that he had wives who were not married to anybody else, it's true that he practiced polyandry and he did have wives who were married to somebody else.

Question: *14-years old? 16-years old?*

RT: He had a wife who was 14-years old, but remember, on the frontier in America, women married young, often as young as 12-years of age because the life span of people in those days wasn't what it is today. On the frontier, not as much in the rest of America, but on the frontier, if you look at population studies, if you look at censuses of people across the American frontier at the time, they often married quite young.

So marrying a 14-year old in those days was not the same – it was like marrying a 21-year old today. You cannot compare that. In those days marriage was also their sex debut. You cannot compare that. A 14-year old was like a 10-year old today!

My point is there was a different societal normalized age of marriage in those days. Let's move on. This is a complicated one.

Question: *You think that's the most important question? Does the Church recognize this practice as being OK? Does the Church officially endorse this? Polyandry. Or do they recognize that it might actually have been an error? Do you have an opinion on that from the Church?*

RT: I've never seen a formal statement about that.

Question: *The basic question here is of course then – was this a mistake done by Joseph Smith? And if it was, how could he continue to be a prophet? And if it was not a mistake, it must be endorsed by the Church, I guess.*

RT: What the Church does say on these questions about Joseph Smith in general is this: either Joseph was a prophet of God or he wasn't. Correct? And the way in which you decide that, not just intellectually, but spiritually, is the way that elder Jensen talked about at the beginning. That's the official Church statement on the matter. I've never seen an official Church statement that goes into the details.

Question: *But why does my spirit talks to me and screams wrong, wrong, wrong, even if it's a prophet of God? Do I have the devil in me*

who's talking to me and says I should understand this 14 and 16-year old girls marrying?

I can't – my spirit doesn't – I can't get it through my mind.

Is it the devil speaks to me? That I should accept that because Joseph Smith is a prophet?

So he did that right, it was God told him to do that? Go behind Emma and take these wives? Girls who were working for them in the house?

OK: Brothers and sisters, when I read the scriptures and there are many things in the scriptures, the Old Testament, that I do not understand. For example, I do not understand the Law of Moses and as they handled certain things. They are not understandable to my mind today in the 21st century, I don't know why when someone would touch the temple would be killed immediately. I just don't understand that.

Today, our prophet advises us to go little children and touch to [the] temple, to get a feeling of the temple. Three-thousand years ago they would have killed instantly for this. And I don't even try to understand because they were different times they were different cultures, they understood things completely different. And I understand that there are some doctrines that never change, but there were some procedures, some policies that for whatever reason. One day, I hopefully will get an answer if I need the answer, I don't know.

But there is a lot of things – I don't know why Jesus drank wine. I don't want to go into the discussion and think it was only apple juice or grape juice. I don't know. You know there are certain things even from these scriptures that we cannot explain. So, I don't know why Joseph did what Joseph did. On these things, we have some more insights and then even if you give me an answer I could question every little answer could go again and again. I know. I know.

One thing that I know is Moses was a prophet. I know. I know that Jesus is the son of God. And I know that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. I know that. And so even though I have not all the questions answered, I know that these things are true, and so this is consistent that you have gospel truth and . . . [01:22:57-01:23:13]

The Book of Abraham

Question: *Book of Abraham. Can run through them and then come back?*

RT: Book of Abraham. Very quickly, let me just say a few things about it very simple. Number one – again, it was received by revelation. Number two – we don't have all the papyrus. We have some fragments, but we don't have all of them. Number three – the so called – we've seen a lot of studies on the so-called alphabet and grammar book. There's some excellent research coming out of BYU in the next year that you need to read. That's all I have time to say about that.

Again, this concept of translation if you look at the 7th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, it's a translation of a parchment sent up by the apostle John in the New Testament. There's no evidence it was anywhere around Joseph at the time that he translated it. OK, so again, translation is not character for character translation like you and I think about it, OK?

Question: *The Church they believe the paper – papyrus are the words of Abraham? Or do they think they are as they are translated now?*

RT: There are lots of theories on that. The Church does believe that the book of Abraham is the word of God and if you read the book of Abraham, there are doctrines and principles you will understand that are important to you. That is the Church's position. Exactly how Joseph Smith did it? There are lots of scholarly debates going on about that. But there's excellent work going on at BYU that should be out in the next year.

Question: *Do they believe that they translate the papyrus now that they are death scrolls or do they believe still is Abraham writing them?*

RT: The papyrus that we have we know what books those are from Egyptian

Question: *Do you still believe there are fragments that we don't have that are 1500 years younger? Or older?*

RT: There's a difference between the date of the copy and the date of the text. So the text, yes, we believe is older. The actual copy could be later. [01:25:37-1:26:17]

Question: *And when an expert look at this it's kind of a joke.*

RT: The document you're talking about has been misunderstood by many people, OK? It's the alphabet and grammar that I was talking about. It's actually, people have concluded early that that was the document Joseph Smith used to prepare the Book of Abraham. It's not true. That document was prepared after the Book of Abraham. You need to look at this new research coming out in the next year on this. There's a radical shift in the scholarly thinking on that.

Question: *It's the same thing with Kinderhook Plates where Joseph said yes this is good thing. But it's a fraud.*

RT: Joseph Smith did not say that.

Question: *Well a historian say that he said that*

RT: If you walk through all of the evidence from the time the Kinderhook Plates were discovered, down to the time they take them to Nauvoo, to the time they had the editorial published in the times and seasons, to the time that broadside published in the Nauvoo Neighbor newspaper, to the time that Wilbur Fugate one of the proponents of that fraud, made his statement, there's clear evidence that Joseph wanted to translate them and never did. Why didn't he? I think because they were a fraud. Wilbur Fugate, the man who helped to perpetrate this fraud, said explicitly that they wanted Joseph Smith to translate it. Joseph Smith said he would not translate it until they sent it to the Antiquarian Society in Philadelphia, France, and England. So he never did translate it.

Question: *So he never did say anything about it, really. Someone else said that he said it?*

RT: There are two people who said he said something, but the statements are so contradictory, they're unreliable. OK. Let's continue through very quickly.

Question: *So that's Church view on that issue? That he didn't translate. That's the Church view?*

RT: Again there isn't an official Church – these are scholarly debates, there's no official Church thing on that.

[01:28:18-01:28:40]

Lying for the Lord

RT: Yes, I'm just going to rush through. Let's stop interrupting and just keep going through very, very quickly. Are there circumstances where lying is justified? The Church teaches the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments say, don't bear false witness, right? The book of Mormon says wo be unto the liars.

Question: *Was it practiced?*

RT: Was it practiced? In all societies, there are clashes of moral imperatives, OK? The Ten Commandments say thou shalt not kill. But countries go to war and people kill. If somebody attacks you in your home, you can defend yourself, OK? There are these clashes where sometimes one moral imperative or ethical imperative becomes superior to another. If you're protecting your children and I'm a killer and I come to you and say where are your children, are you going to tell me? Probably not. OK?

When people bring up this topic, what they're usually talking about is during plural marriage time periods when people were asked about plural marriage and, again, it's a complicated subject but basically, people were trying to decide, do I say something, or do I not? Do I tell the truth or do I not? Do we teach as a Church that you should lie? No, we don't. I was brought up on the principle of strict honesty and that's what I try to follow.

Mark Hofmann

RT: Next, Mark Hofmann. I'll just recommend a book, and not because I wrote it, but I did write a book on this. It's called *Victims*. It was published by the University of Illinois Press in 1992. Go to that book for answers on that one.

Blood Atonement

RT: Blood Atonement. This is my personal belief and then I'll tell you the official Church statement after I've stated my personal belief. My personal belief is that during Joseph Smith's time period, based on statements in the bible, Joseph Smith said that when men shed blood, their blood should be shed. He's talking about scripture. And I think that when you got into the Brigham Young times, that scripture was taken literally for a time.

Leaders taught that if people killed, then they deserved capital punishment. That Old Testament-style event. That sort of bounces around in the 1850s in particular when people are talking about, well how do you do this, you know? Is it literal? How do you shed a person's blood in the process of capital punishment? And it gets to the late 1870s when they're basically saying to people, hey look our belief on this is the same belief that other people have who believe in capital punishment. Now that's my very rapid historical summary of it. From a Church standpoint, blood atonement, meaning that it's required for people to have their blood shed when they commit capital crimes, the Church has gone on record saying that's not necessary. So that's the Church position on it.

Question: *How many years was it practiced during this time?*

RT: There's debate among historians about what whether it was ever practiced. There are statements about it from Brigham Young and others speaking in the

tabernacle. But whether it was ever practiced is a matter – is a question of debate. Some say yes it was some say –

Question: *What do journals say?*

RT: According to the journals, we're not sure. The journals aren't that clear.

Question: *According to journals, did anybody die with blood atonement?*

RT: We don't know. I think it's possible. I think it's possible. But I don't have clear evidence where I can prove that it happened.

First Vision and Persecution

RT: First Vision and persecution. Why does Joseph Smith say he was persecuted for talking about the first vision? I believe he was. He immediately went and told his story to a religious leader in his community. That religious leader scoffed at what he had to say. And the result of that was what from his vantage point felt like persecution. From the vantage point of others it may not have seemed like a big deal, but to a young boy, it seemed like a big deal.

Question: *Let me just understand, so the persecution was in fact the response he got on that from that Methodist preacher?*

RT: That and the way his family was treated subsequently.

Question: *From the Methodists Church then?*

RT: No from – from other people in the community who heard about it. OK?

Telling Church History

RT: So now to Church history and their being a watchman on the tower. Let me take up both of those. In terms of Church history, when people tell any kind of an account of history, it's always selective. If I ask you a question, tell me about your years in high school, the story you tell me may be different than the story I get from your high school boyfriend or another student in your class. They'll each tell a different story. And so, Church history, as I said before, is written and rewritten by each subsequent generation according to the things they think are most important at the time.

Watchman on the Tower

RT: Watchmen on the tower. This is something, as you mentioned, President Packer talks about a lot. I think his concern is that providing information to people in a way that's going to destroy their faith carries with it a responsibility. That's all I'm going to say about that.

MJ: Rick and I are in charge of this for the Church, essentially, over at the Church history department. And this has changed a little bit in the course of the Church's history. Where for a long time we were a persecuted minority in America and our hope was to present our best face to the world. And our history was often written in what was called apologetic style. We were defending the faith. And in doing that we were being selective. We were saying the best things about the Church. It was a very natural thing, I think, for us to do in those years. But in many ways, we've come of age in the Church.

In America today, there are Mormon Studies programs being founded at some of our finest universities and the study of Mormon history and the Mormon way of life is something that actually thousands of people now are very interested in. The first volume of the Joseph Smith papers has sold 65,000 copies. That's when the first volume of the papers of Thomas Jefferson may have sold 2500 copies. So, there's

great interest in the Church. And we are at the time, I think, when our history could be told as completely and fully as technology can allow us to tell. What I want you to know is I think there is some hint of this, there's some feeling that somehow the leaders of the Church have manipulated the Church history for some benefit. And I want you to know that is not true. Nor is it true today. There's never been an attempt to suppress the history of the Church or to tell the Church's history in some untrue way to put it into an untrue light to gain some advantage, to gain converts, to gain popularity or acceptance.

I think every generation has done its best within the circumstances of its own time. And that's what we're trying to do now. We have an apostolic [01:37:00] with Elder Nelson and Elder Holland that we meet with every month. We go directly to the first presidency for approval. And there's no feeling at that level of the Church that we have anything to hide, brothers and sisters.

I know that some of you have some sense of being betrayed in some way. Hans, I sense that about you. We haven't betrayed you. These things that you have learned about through the Internet, mainly, have always been known have always been out there in the books. The 19th wife wrote her story years ago. It's just that it's published now, everybody's reading it, they've found something new about the polygamy of President Young. It's been there forever. So I want you to know that there is honesty and good faith and an attempt to let the world see us as we really are. I wouldn't want to be a part if it wasn't that way.

President. President ????: [01:37:57-Last year [...] some of my family in the family history department. [...] seeing some original copies of the [transcript...] of the Church, all Joseph Smith's original handwriting. [...] Church history is really people's history. It's really the history of individual behavior. Now, most of what we have a Church history and other things comes out of official journals. Different people, different backgrounds, different – different perceptions.

Just two days ago, I was in a meeting with building facility people and there was a man that's worked for the Church for 40 years bearing his last testimony of [...] fantastic story that built his testimony one day when he was [...] all exhausted that there were two angels laying their hands on his head and blessing him so that he could carry on his work. And I was sitting there in the meeting just [...] wow, I would find that in some journal. And I thought for a moment should I, in this very meeting

there was something very sacred to him. Very sacred to him. The way he explained it now, if I didn't have to make a record of what he had said there, I'm not sure if my record is really what he said or what he meant [...] And so the thing is that many of these things that we have, but I will – I will decide – I will be selective. I will not decide to use this story as any evidence or of anything. I'm using it here tonight to tell you how quickly Church history [...] history of the Church [...] What is the difference of history of the Church [...] So we have to deal with these journal entries, these personal perceptions, and they are there, and they are real for these people and we have to either say, OK or not.

Question: *But they – Brigham Young and these people hide, like Mountain Meadows, they did everything they could to hide evidence of things about the massacre that happened. If they now wanted to talk about all the truth, I mean, like – and why did the Church excommunicate lots of people, professors at BYU – and – writing books like Fawn Brodie? She writes the same Bushman writes and she did get kicked out of heaven. She can't come there because she wrote the book about the history. And Bushman writes about basically the same thing. I mean, if the Church is – all people should know, why do they even act in a way like that?*

RT: On the Mountain Meadows Massacre, I'm writing a book now, it'll be published by Oxford University on the period after the massacre that will answer that question. On the question of people excommunicated. . .

Question: *So they didn't hide it?*

RT: Pardon?

Question: *They didn't hide it?*

Question: *Did the Church hide it?*

RT: Did the Church hide it? At the time – short answer – you need to read the book for the long answer.

Question: *Yeah, but they did hide it. They did.*

RT: The short answer is that at the time of the mountain meadows massacre, when Brigham Young found out about it, the US Army was on the door of Salt Lake City getting ready to come in and basically massacre his people, that was Brigham Young's feeling, OK? So the Mountain Meadows Massacre was the last thing he wanted to talk about under those circumstances. OK, let's move on.

Lack of Contemporary Sources Saying for Angelic Visitations

RT: Lack of contemporary sources saying for angelic visitations. There are – there are two things I want to say about this. Number one, the Church in its earliest days was essentially a Church of oral tradition. OK? People did not write things. It's probably like you and your childhood. Maybe not. Maybe you wrote through your childhood because you were educated well. But for people who grew up in a society where they didn't get a lot of education they generally didn't write.

Joseph Smith really starts writing around – our first revelation for which we have documentary evidence is in the late 1820s. So the first thing he starts writing is scripture. And then, early revelations do have references to angelic visitations. Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants, article and covenants of the Church, is an example of that. D&C section 20 has references to angelic visitations. And there are other – the 1883 history has references to it as well.

David O. McKay – Blacks and the Priesthood

RT: David O. McKay blacks and the priesthood. The June 1978 revelation has a history to it like all revelations. You have this period of time in which saints are studying it out in the mind and they eventually flower as revelation.

Question: *But my question was – was it three of the apostles that didn't agree with David O. McKay?*

RT: I don't know. That's one thing I'm always—

Question: *If you read Quinn's book about it, you will see.*

RT: I haven't looked at the sources myself. I don't know.

Question: *But it could be?*

RT: But I think it's possible. I think it would be entirely consistent with the way things are done. Does that make sense?

Temple

RT: Temple. What was the question on that one?

Question: *Why do we have such a bad feeling when we come to the temple? If the Holy Ghost was there this would give a testimony, you feel good about it, you like to go there again, you feel uplifted. But this is just [01:44:07] you feel sad, you wonder, what I've been deceived, you really have nightmares, at least for a week.*

RT: Again, short answer, the way people react to the temple experience depends on their culture. There are some people in some cultures who go to the temple and they react very positively and there are others who do not.

Question: *Yeah, but if it's the spirit, it should testify to you if you're African or Indian, whatever.*

Question: *We hope the Holy Ghost could change his mind for an American or Swedish [01:44:41-01:44:46] I mean, that's not the way I feel.*

MJ: I remember sitting with our first daughter, actually, who went on a mission to Germany, after her first temple endowment which I attended with her.

Question: *When was that?*

MJ: Pre-90. And I was her stake president, so I did my best to prepare her. Since then the Church, as you know, has produced "Endowed From on High" which is the seventh lesson course for temple preparation, which I'm sure you must have in Sweden. But the temple, because we have a very practical and utilitarian religion, we don't have the rich liturgy that the Catholics have or the Protestants. So the temple for most people initially is a very different experience, Hans, as it was for you.

Question: *But the Holy Ghost, I mean . . .*

MJ: Well, I know. I think my little daughter was quite worthy, but she was so disturbed, I'll say. So surprised by the nature of what happened there that I'm not sure the Holy Ghost had a chance to really help her that day. I remember sitting with her in the celestial room while she cried and said, dad what's this all about? And I wish I had done a better job. She has persisted and I said to her if you'll keep coming and keep learning and keep praying about it, you'll [01:46:18-01:46:25] and loves what she feels there. But it's taken some time. It isn't a tap we can always turn on.

Question: *I think what you're saying now is your answer to everything. If we keep doing it, we will feel good about it. [01:46:38-1:46:41].*

Question: *My first kill as a deer hunter was terrible, but I learned to love it. You know, I know it's an extreme, but the spirit should testify, I think, about the truth, whenever it is the truth. Do you know what I mean? I mean, I shouldn't need to go there 20 times to feel good. You know what I mean?*

Archeology and the Book of Mormon

RT: Quickly. Archeology and the Book of Mormon. Why isn't there all this specific evidence of Nephites and Lamanites. You know, I'm going to combine it with Indian DNA because the answers are really quite similar. You may be able to find some evidence of Viking culture on the coast, but if Vikings went to the new world many, many times, you probably wouldn't be able to find evidence of all the people who went there.

Question: *I'm sorry, ?? – I mean there were millions of people building cities and creating wagons with wheels, and horses, and had so many things, weapons destroying things [01:48:18], so I guess there should be some traces, somewhere, in the whole of Americas if they ever existed.*

RT: As you know, there are cultural ruins all over the Americas. The question is, were these Book of Mormon peoples or not? Some people have tried to answer that using the DNA to say maybe these were Book of Mormon people, maybe they were not. Are there any DNA experts here? I'm gonna give you my best short answer on DNA.

Question: *Is it the same as FAIR and FARMS?*

RT: Um. It may be. Let me just – if you have a family tree that goes back like this, and so on, you get the idea, it's way out here. DNA cannot tell us about all of our ancestors. I was the president of the genealogical society of Utah, which oversees the [01:49:22] collection of family history records, the Church's family history records. We were very interested in DNA for genealogical purposes to find out what it could tell us. What we learned is that DNA can tell you about this line here. OK? The Y

chromosome. And DNA can tell you about this line here, which is mitochondrial DNA. So through DNA, you can learn about the line that is all males down through here. If there's a female in this line, it's stuck and it can't go any further. Now, here you can tell about the line that is female all the way down. OK? But what's in the middle here you can't discover through DNA with today's technology. OK? Now, if you think this out further, like this, what basically happens is let's say you've got one person here down to maybe 10 million or whatever. How many of those 10 million people have DNA that we can discover this way? If the lines don't intertwine, the answer is just these two. The first one and this one. What actually happens is that as people intermarry and you shift from male to female here or from female to male there you lose the opportunity to trace their strand. So what happens over time is that you lose – you lose DNA identity as you work your way down through time. It's not always possible to be able to identify peoples who were there. But there's a bigger problem. The bigger problem is this: in order to capture DNA, in order to make a comparison, you need two things. One, you need to know, what was the DNA of Lehi's family? And then two, what is the DNA of ancient American peoples? We know some but not all the answers here. We're continuing to learn over time. The body of types of DNA for these people is growing. With this one, we have no way of knowing the answer. We do not know what Lehi's DNA was. The place where they were living at the time was a place that had immigration in and out. The kind of DNA they had is impossible to determine. So that's the basic answer. You can't tell because you don't know both the DNA of Lehi's family history.

Question: *So there are people in the Americas now might have DNA from Lehi? You don't know the original?*

RT: They might be – they could easily be descendants of Lehi for the reason I explained at first with that chart. They might have the DNA of Lehi, we just don't know what DNA Lehi's family had.

Question: *You don't think that he was from the house of Israel?*

RT: Yes, but so is most of the world today.

Question: [01:53:07-01:53:22]

RT: No but if, but if his area is a crossroad, we have immigration coming in, it doesn't take very many generations before that DNA is, as I was showing you here earlier, it only takes one marriage for that to stop.

Question: [01:53:39-01:53:46] *I actually don't think that's correct according to scientific evidence today. I think you actually can trace back to with DNA and tell for instance where the Swedish people are coming from or where the Asian people are coming from. I think you can do that quite well according to reports I have seen. I'm very, very surprised that you're [playing] that there is no evidence at all.*

RT: You can follow this. All I said was if, if these people don't intermarry, it's one. But if they intermarry what happens is this line – let's pose that this person has a child and that child marries here. OK? Then this DNA gets connected here and goes in along the male line all the way through. They have a daughter and that daughter marries and they have a line of daughters that could come in like this. But the original DNA batch from here? They don't replicate down.

Question: *I'm not an expert but that's your opinion and you know much more about this than I do. If you look at the tests they've done now with the DNA they've found with your mind it's, you know, statistically, do you see that it's very probable, the outcome compared to, you know? It would be easier if they found maybe some indication that would be stronger there would be some trace. What's your opinion on it? Do you feel, would I lie to you? It's statistically probable the way we see it?*

RT: I grew up with a PhD father who was a scientist. OK. He was a nuclear engineer and I was taught scientific method and statistics and the importance of recognizing the limitations of the science. What I'm saying about DNA is it's an extremely important tool for finding out where peoples come from. Its limitation is, it can't tell us about all the people who used to exist, it can only tell us about some. Now, maybe someday, the technology will improve. But today, it can't. So, because of these limitations, for anybody who claims one position or another on Lehi's families is inconsistent with the science. That's all I'm saying.

Adam – God

EK: I – let's – those are the questions. Oh, Adam-God, Adam-God. Again, complicated question. People read books on the subject. Bottom line, the Church position today is that while Michael was Adam, and as Adam was the father of the human race, and through the process of exaltation can become celestialized, Adam is not God our father.

Question: *So in that way the Church opinion is that what Brigham Young taught is in accordance with what we believe today?*

RT: It isn't.

Question: *I mean if you interpret it this way.*

RT: If you took what you're interpreting, yes.

Question: *He actually did teach it this way.*

RT: Well, it's complicated, again, because you've got a lot of sources. I haven't seen an official Church position that goes back to deconstruct all those sources. So as a historian I have to say if you look at the evidence sometimes it's a little squishy.

Question: *But is it true that we're taught it in the temple? In Brigham Young's time*

Question: *Or spoken about the general conferences by Brigham Young?*

RT: That's why I say the evidence is squishy. OK? If you go back into the early time period, you can find evidence that goes both directions. That's what I mean when I say it's squishy.

Conclusion

RT: Alright, I just want to conclude with two statements. The first statement is about questions that you asked. Elder Jensen said you've asked questions that lots of other people have asked. And there are other questions you haven't asked that other people have asked. The process of asking questions is part of this concept of by study and by faith. If you approach the Church from purely the standpoint of study, or what you would call secular knowledge, you'll come out with a purely secular answer.

What we're asking you to do is combine study with faith, which is a choice. OK, it's a choice that you have to make. Sometimes I conclude with my own choice that I have made. I came to the Church history department not because I applied for the position, but because I was invited. And I left a very enjoyable occupation that would have made me a considerable amount of money in order to do that.

Question: *Working for the Church?*

RT: No. I was working for a Chicago-based law firm that was [01:59:15] and I left that early on in my career by invitation from the Church to come and do Church history. Why? Because Church history was my passion. As an undergraduate I studied under Jim Allen who was the assistant Church historian and chairman of the history department at BYU, did an honors thesis on . . . it was my passion. But in those days, the wisdom was, there are no jobs for historians. Or as I like to say, there's no future in history. So I went to law in order to make a living for my family and I pursued history on the side. Then I had this invitation to come in and study the history of the Church. During the 25 years that I have been there studying the history of the Church, I've had two things happen that I want to talk to you about. Number one is, I've felt a need to make Church history information more broadly accessible to the members of the Church. And number two, because I have had broad access to that material myself, I have a desire to tell you how its impacted me. I could at any time quit my current position, make more money, and go off on my own, OK? I'm not being held into my Church position because it's my livelihood. I have another profession, I have another livelihood I can go to and increase my income beyond what I get paid by the Church being a Church employee.

So why do I stay? Because you look at the total picture – if you look at the total picture of the history of the Church, like a million piece jigsaw puzzle, there may be little things here and here and here and here that sometimes catch people’s attention that they want to focus on.

What I do is I look at the totality of Church history, not just a few pieces of the puzzle, but the whole puzzle. Now, when I look at the whole puzzle, I see the hand of god bringing forth the restored gospel to the earth and I see that hand of god operating in nations around the world. I stay because I really believe this, OK? I really do. I believe that Joseph Smith was a prophet. I believe God appeared to him. I believe he translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God. I believe that the priesthood was restored. I believe that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Church of Jesus Christ on the earth today. And I want to leave you with that testimony in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

MJ: I want to thank all of you for coming tonight and I want to thank you for spirit that has been here. Cooperative, friendly, kind spirit that you all brought back. I wondered how this would play out. We prayed that it would play out in a way that would be helpful to everyone here. I hope and pray the spirit been here. I want to thank Brother Turley for a lifetime of study and thought and for being in a position probably as well as anyone in our Church to answer these questions tonight. Has he been able to give an answer that has satisfied every one of you on every question? I doubt it. Could we? Could anyone? Could the collective intelligence of Mormonism do that? I don’t know. I doubt it. I’m pretty sure it could not. Do I have lingering questions about some of this? Do I know some gay people who are among the most wonderful people on earth? I do. And can I understand why they have been born with these feelings or why they have these feelings? I don’t know that they’re born with them. They may be. They may not be. But they have them and many of them, probably like your sister, have tried to overcome them and haven’t been able to and now are living the life that they think is honest and reflects their true identity.

Question: *But that’s simple.*

MJ: It’s sort of simple. Can I understand polyandry? Not really.

Question: *Is that holy?*

MJ: I don't know. I can't say that Joseph Smith did anything that was unholy. I can honestly say that everything I know about him and his goodness and his compassion helps me at least suspend my judgment about what I don't know. And polyandry is one of those things. I personally couldn't live polygamy. And it's something my wife couldn't live. We're so grateful that we came in a time when that wasn't a commandment of God for us.

But again, if I look at the totality of the Church – we haven't spoken tonight of eternal progression, of the glory of god being intelligence. We haven't talked of eternal families in the more normal sense of one husband, one wife, and children. And when I look at those of you, Hans, you included, whom I know best here tonight, who are struggling with these things, my heart goes out to you. I feel love for you, I feel compassion. I wish deep down we might have helped you more than we have tonight.

But I want to say to you as the savior said to his disciples after he fed the 5000. And if you remember, they were very happy to have the bread and the water, but then Christ did what he always does with us and that is he tried to take them to a higher level, and most of them left, remember? They walked away when he began to talk about himself as being the bread of life and the living water. And remember his exchange? He turned to his disciples and said, will you leave me also? And what did Peter answer? That's right. To whom should we go, Lord? For thou hast the words of eternal life.

And that's what I want to say in my final testimony tonight. Where will you go, those of you who have doubts? Sure, we have some inexplicable things that are difficult to answer. Some of them, if Rick had a day to spend with you on each of these questions you'd see greater insight, you'd get maybe greater comfort. But maybe you wouldn't. Maybe it would bother you all the more. And I know in my own case, I've just looked at the totality in my life, I've savored the truths of the Church, I've lived the commandments and I can say in honesty and in sincerity, I know this is God's way of life. I know this is the way he wants his children to live, that the plan of salvation is his plan, and that our privilege in this life is to make that plan our plan, to live our lives accordingly. And if [I or we] do that, though there are trials and tribulations and unanswered questions, it is the best way of life, it is the happiest, most fulfilling, most growth-producing way of life.

President Eyring's dad who was probably the finest scientist the Church has ever produced said once that in science there are contradictions and there are unexplained questions and paradoxes. But he said those things have never caused me to apostatize from my science. And in like manner he said that there may be things about the Church that I don't completely understand. He had what he called shelf issues; issues that he would put on a shelf, that he would suspend judgment on. And sometimes that's the way we have to handle the very few little things about this Church. The vast majority of what I've experienced and what I know speaks to my soul and to my heart and leads me to belief, brothers and sisters, this is God's way for our life. And I express that testimony and my love and appreciation and very best wishes to all of you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

[02:08:51-02:20:39]

EK: My dear brothers and sisters, I am very thankful that I could be here this evening. I am not a scientist, I am not a historian. I'm a very simple man from very simple circumstances. [...] I was raised all my life with these kinds of questions: blacks and the priesthood, plural marriage, you know? [...] the things that we have discussed here. They came to me as they came to you. Since I did not know English at that time, I learned it later in my life, so I didn't have any way to go to the resources that we have right now. The Encyclopedia of Mormonism was not translated into German. I only had one way, one way, to go and get answers for myself, and that was searching the scriptures. I'll just give you one example. [...] But then I read that it was hard for some. It was hard for them. [...] And he changed the way he would allow his people to have the priesthood. [...] It was all patriarchal. Then, it was reduced to a tribe. So there were different ways how the Lord have handled the priesthood. Now, it is ... to all worthy men. Marvelous. [...] It has to do with this choice. [...] He was accused that he would receive money ... [...]