

Transcription of “Mormonstories” Podcast

Hello and welcome to another edition of Mormonstories. Podcast. I am your host John Dehlin and man, I have a very interesting story today. I have with us Tom Phillips. Tom Phillips is from the United Kingdom, is that right Tom?

That's correct John yes.

You are a retired management consultant. I used to work at Bains so I used to be a management consultant too actually.

Sure.

Tom was a convert to the church in the year 1969, which is the year I was born, and he is coming on Mormonstories for a few reasons. He is a former bishop twice, he served in two wards for 6-1/2 years as a bishop, in England, he has been a Stake President for 5 years over the Birmingham England stake and the Coventry, England stake. His son is currently, is that right, currently Stake President.

That's correct yes he is.

In which stake?

London Hyde Park stake.

London Hyde Park, he also served as Area Executive Secretary over the Europe General West area, over two general authorities, Rolf Kerr and Harold Hillam, but the most intriguing thing and the main reason we brought Tom Phillips on, is because he has actually taken part in an ordinance which may not be known to all Mormons called the second anointing which another way it is described in in having your calling in an election made sure. Now I'm just going to warn everybody that, you know, we are going to be talking about stuff that a lot of people don't know about and it does relate to the Temple. I've tried to think about the implications of that, and you know, just to lay everything on the table, Tom is no longer a believer in the church, so he is not an active member although he is not resigned from the church, nor has he been ex-communicated.

He published his account of his experiences with his calling election made sure, how many years ago Tom?

Just over 4 years ago, January 2008.

And the Church has known about his publishing of that account for that many years, is that right?

I would assume so, yes.

So this is already on the internet and people are already passing it around. This is Tom as a non-believer sharing his experience, and this is me and others being curious just to learn all about what that experience is like. You know, I've made the commitment not to talk about what I've experienced in the Temple, and I won't be doing that here, and Tom I don't think it's necessary for us to talk about you know the endowment, or any of those types of things. I just want to let my listeners know ahead of time we are going to do our best to respect talking about this but also Tom, it's important probably just to explain upfront that you didn't make a covenant to not talk about the calling election made sure, is that right?

When you say covenant, no I was asked at the time.

Well I mean, let's just say you didn't raise your hand and swear like in the Temple and promise never to reveal any of this stuff right?

No.

OK so I'm just saying that this isn't something that any of us have covenanted to not talk about, so we know it's sensitive, but we know at the same time we are going to talk about it. We will go into much more detail but that's kind of what we are going to talk about. But also Tom has had some very direct exchanges with an Apostle, Elder Holland, or he has written questions and Elder Holland has responded and these are all very interesting things because there are a lot of people struggling with their faith right now, a lot of people with questions and challenges and Tom has both served at really high levels of the Church and he has had direct conversations with an Apostle about his issues and all that's really interesting. So, well Tom, thanks for joining us on Mormonstories.

Thank you John. Let me just clarify, on that you were talking about covenant, I was told at the time that the Church keeps it secret, I was to keep it secret and not even tell my family, my immediate family anything about it, so you interpret

that how you want as a covenant or whatever.

Sure, and I am just saying that I guess I am distinguishing between something you raise your arm to the square in the Temple as part of a ceremony you make a covenant.

Alright, let me just say why the reason given to me at the time was not that it was as you say normally in the Temple about sacredness, the word sacred was not mentioned. It was secret because they just did not want the general membership of the Church to know about it for two reasons. One was people would start to judge one another and say "have they had it?", and "why haven't I had it?" and they'd get all of these kind of issues. Secondly it was going to be very restricted because it had to be done by an Apostle, and the Apostles with their schedule could only do so many per annum. Therefore it was going to be a limited number that would be done, and they didn't want the general church membership to think "well why haven't I had mine done?" or "why has that person had it done who I might judge not to be as righteous as me?" or whatever. They were the reasons I was given. Not because it was sacred, but just because "let's keep the lid on this" because we don't want the membership to know about it.

And I'm just going to say, you know, that I have to make a decision as a podcaster about what I'm going to talk about and what I'm not going to talk about, and I guess I'm just going to explain to my listeners upfront that this is already out there on the internet, it's been linked to on several forums and blogs and it's been out there for 4 years, and so I guess I'm just distinguishing between a covenant that I personally made and information about something that is out there and clearly available and public that I think is interesting and important and it's sort of avoiding reality to think that awareness isn't going to come so we may as well talk about it openly instead of just pretend that we don't have to deal with it. Because I think that this is something that we are going to have to deal with sooner or later, and it's already come to us so let's just face it.

So with that, let's just start with a little bit about your background. So Tom, just tell us a little bit about your LDS background.

OK, I mentioned 1969 I was converted to the Church through missionaries, two missionaries from Utah. Initially the appointment was set by my wife, who was more interested than I. I agreed just to see the missionaries one time and then just to tell the missionaries that we wouldn't be interested in taking it any further. I knew very little about the Church, about Mormonism, so my intention

was to be polite to them, to see them and then to say we weren't interested. I was, I actually felt quite touched that evening when they came – two particular things I recall – 1 – we had a one year old daughter and I had resisted pressure from both of our extended families to have her christened, because I had observed a christening service where the minister cast the devil out of the child and absolved the child from sin, and I felt that my daughter had no sin whatsoever, so that was never done. So of course, right at the first discussion when I mentioned this to the missionaries, they immediately opened the book of Mormon and talked about infant baptism. So already there were some things here that I already, if you like, that I believed or had as my values that suddenly this was opening up something. Then the other thing that I remember about that was these two young men with tears in their eyes bearing testimony and I just figured at that time well hang on I am going to see them again because I don't know why but for some reason these two young men from America have given up their time at university or whatever to come over here for two years to teach something that obviously they believe is true, so it's worth me finding out one way or the other. So I was willing to experiment upon the word, that's basically what happened.

And again, you were married with one child is that right?

That's right, one child, a one year old daughter, yes.

And so did you pray and what led to your conversion?

Everything the missionaries asked us to do, including living the word of wisdom, praying every day. I took the Book of Mormon, I was commuting on the train each day and I was reading that Book of Mormon both in the morning and in the evening. I would start with a silent prayer – obviously – on a crowded train I would pray and then read the book and I did that for, you know, 2 or 3 weeks, and I felt that I received the Moroni's promise as it was outlined.

So you got a spiritual manifestation?

Yes, I got a spiritual manifestation. I went home to my wife that night and said, "look, I know it's true". Something happened to me on the train, I actually wanted to get up and tell everybody on the train it's true. It was like my whole insides turned upside down and I had an excitement go through my whole body that I knew this was true. So that's my conversion, I chose to be baptized, I wanted to go ahead with it and make whatever commitments there were because I guess before that I'd kind of considered, whenever I considered religion I felt that if I sat down for instance with the Pope, he might persuade me

of Catholicism, or if I sat down with the Archbishop of Canterbury or someone, he might persuade me of his, with his ability to debate. But I guess at the time I just felt, because I was one that would pray, that the one person that wouldn't lie to me was God and I felt that was what the missionaries did, they put me in touch with a way of going about these things and finding out from the actual source whether it was true or not, and I certainly felt that way and for the next 35+ years there is no question about the fact that God has answered my prayer and said that it was true.

Wow, I mean that is a witness that many of us born in the Church pioneer descended Mormons never get to have so that's a pretty special experience.

Yeah, yes.

So what was your life like as a Mormon, tell us about, I guess you had several children, and you became really active, just talk a bit about what the church meant to you.

It was everything, well it was basically number one, well family and Church were everything, career was almost an afterthought, after that it was whatever needs to be done to move forward, well Church and family should almost be indistinguishable – whatever I was doing in the Church I felt was for the family as well and vice versa. So whatever, you know, I just put myself, whatever I was asked to do, called to do, whatever, that's what I would do and I hope that we as a family, especially as we grew, we all learnt those principles and learnt their testimonies and everything else. We were committed.

How many children did you have?

We had 4 children. Which again, sometimes in Utah it doesn't sound a lot, but in our case with my wife's particular health situation, that was actually exemplary. She was advised by a doctor when we got married only to have one child. So I appreciated her for her faith in having 4 times the recommended number.

And did you enjoy raising your children in the Church?

Absolutely, I mean it seemed to add, you know I can't deny it, it seemed to add to our quality of life. I mean it became apparent to me later on – I'll just give you one example of that sort of question - I was at lunch with the director of a national recruitment organization that we were using in the UK. And as we were having lunch together – a business lunch – we started to talk together a little bit about our families and saying about we both had teenage daughters

and I talked about my younger one, and the fact that I'd waited up for her to come home from a Church dance and all she did for the next hour or two was tell me about everyone she'd met, and what boys she'd danced with, and all of that kind of thing. And he just looked at me and he just said "I wish my daughter would talk to me, say anything to me", and I guess that's what brought it home to me just how in that sense I felt blessed because of the Church or whatever was being taught, that we would have that sort of closeness, that a teenage daughter can talk to her father.

Wow, so you felt like it helped you build a strong relationship with your children and helped you raise them to be healthy, strong.....

I honestly felt that if I hadn't been in the Church, I would have gone into politics, but the thing was, whenever I.....being in the Church, I didn't really feel I personally was clever enough to juggle the time to do politics as well. But I felt that what the world needed was just the gospel, and that would solve all the problems in the world, and that is how you know, on board I was.

What are some of yourdid all your kids serve.....did your kids serve missions and get married in the temple?

All married in the temple, two served missions, two of the girls, one was married at 19, one at 20. All temple married.

Did they go to BYU?

No -English universities - and I also have two grandsons, with one currently in the mission field. One grandson is back and he is married from his mission and the other grandson is out at the moment in France.

And what are some of your fondest memories, or what were some of your favourite things about active church life? And you can just say it was like the pot luck dinners, it was the stake conferences, you know what were the things you look back on and just really loved.

It was just the people, I just loved the people, and to see people's lives changed, I mean I saw people come into the church, you know converts that their lives just changed and improved. I saw others just grow and it seemed from my perspective that everything was wonderful. You know, even comments when we would take non-members to a church social, that they couldn't believe what fun we could have with no alcohol for instance. And things like that, just that genuineness. What I felt was just a genuine feeling that my brothers and sisters

were literally my brothers and sisters. We had an intimacy that you don't get that easily or at the time didn't think that you got that easily you know, in other relationships and friendships. I think the progress – seeing people progressing – seeing children growing up and going on missions seeing them get married and have children of their own – all of that kind of thing, challenging people - even from the point of view of disciplinary councils to see people repent in their lives, and put things in order and come back – all of those things. I enjoyed studying the gospel, I enjoyed teaching. Often when I have the chance, I'll teach gospel doctrine or whatever, and for a long time I was called as a gospel doctor and teacher. So there was everything I liked about it. I didn't find.....I mean to me people would moan about Sunday, to me Sunday was a brilliant day and I never resented anything, and I hoped that as a family as we grew up certainly when it comes to the Sabbath day, because I know a lot of people had issues about "do we do this" or "do we do that", we always seemed to be so busy in a good sense, in the church and in what we did as a family that it didn't even enter our minds that we should be doing any of the other things that were not in keeping with the Sabbath, so it was wonderful, I loved it.

So you were really living the Mormon dream?

Absolutely, and looking forward to it for eternity.

Wow, so what was it like being Bishop?

Again a great experience, particularly with the ...again I took interest in the whole thing – as Bishop you are managing the whole ward and you have all of the adult issues and you've got the children, the youth. Again it was a people thing and again a stance I made at the beginning because I saw how Bishops can easily get overrun by all sorts of administrative things, and I had an executive secretary who would keep my appointments and I said to them, look, if any adult wants to see me, make an appointment for a week or two's time, or whatever. Sorry I didn't even say that or stipulated, he just made the appointments for however they fell, that was no problem. But I saw however, for youth, if ever a teenager wishes to see me, you grab me there and then, wherever I am.

Right .

Because that is not going to last. If they want to see the Bishop and you give them a day or two, they are going to change their minds.

Right, right.

So, I would usually look in people's eyes and pre-empt things like that, but I'm just saying that kind of thing I think I enjoyed doing, especially with the youth, because we had certain relationships because of that because I was willing to say, you know you are as important, if not more important, than the adults. Because the adults to be honest, I kept trying to say, you've got a High Priest Group leader, or an Elders Quorum President, or a Relief Society President, or whatever. OK there were certain issues you've got to see the Bishop about, but most issues you could be seeing someone else, instead of having a whole line of people outside the Bishop's office every Sunday.

Right.

So that was the kind of emphasis I tried, and it seemed to work. It didn't mean that I wasn't interested in adults – obviously I was – but it is just easy to get snowed under and swamped by those problems.

So you made the youth a whole priority.

I tried to.

And what year were you first called as bishop.

What century??

It was 1974, around about 1974.

And was that the 5 year term or the year term?

No that was the first one, because by the end of 1975, we had actually moved out to Australia for a couple of years because, again I went there basically and I talked it over with my Stake President and my Temple President at the time because I was a serving Bishop and I realized that ideally I would do 5 years there but I said, look I've got this strong feeling - my parents live in Australia, and they are not members of the church, and I've got this strong feeling I need to go there - not for a holiday - I need to go there and live. I need to go with my father and my son on a camp, and things like that. I need to spend time in getting them into it. Because I'd had them taught the gospel before they left England – I'd had missionaries round, I'd sat in on their discussions and my father had rejected it, so I was going on a mission with my family – I think we had 3 children at the time, to Australia, so with that understanding, the Stake

President, in fact the temple president fully endorsed me, so that is why it was a short lived term. Now, if you'd like, why is it that I'm getting prompted to do this? I was out in Australia, 3 months later my father dropped dead of a heart attack.

Wow.

So, you know, had I not acted, and left it til another year or two when I went out on another holiday, I wouldn't have had that opportunity. So I'm glad that I did.

OK so you served for a year and a half as a Bishop, you went to Australia, sort of almost led by the spirit and your father passed away while you were there. When was the next time you were called as Bishop – approximately?

1978, I came back in 77 to the UK, Elder Haight during a stake re-organisation, called me as Bishop.

So you met David B Haight

Yes, very impressed with him actually. I just remember him being with his jacket off and just as you call them, with his suspenders – we call them braces – and very business-like, but still I'm not saying that in any bad way, it was just quite interesting to see the different styles of the brethren, and no he was great, no doubt about it, I really liked him.

OK so let's get to the Stake President part, and then we'll talk about your experiences with the brethren a little bit. So you served for 5 years.....

OK so let's just mention on that growing up thing with the children, I did all the thing about going to Hill Cumorah, the sacred grove. We had a family home even in the Sacred Grove, it really felt that was the place that the first vision occurred, I took my son onto the banks of the Susquehanna River just before he was 12, before he would be ordained to the priesthood, all that kind of thing. So I guess I'm just saying, yes, I was fully on board, no question about it and fully believing.

So yeah, you were living the Mormon dream and loving it, and it sounds like your family has really benefitted. Did work, like were you successful at work, I mean you said work wasn't your first priority but did your career go OK. I mean you are retired now so it sounds like it went ok.

OK it's not what it would have been, but it's the choice I made and I've got no

regrets on that, that's no problem for me.

So you served 5 years as Bishop, a second time, and then how long before you were made Stake President? What years would you have served?

I'm just trying to think.....88 Stake President. So I was called as Bishop in 78, so 10 years later so about 5 years, I mean I've sat on High Councils oh and also had time as a counsellor to a Stake President as well.

And what was it like being Stake President?

Brilliant, when I say brilliant, I mean, look as I used to say, because some people used to look at these things as a hierarchy, I have never ever in my life sought for office in the church, in fact if anything, I would hide away. I know that in fact I would probably have been stake president in another place earlier on in my life, but I was actually in Florida when they were doing the stake re-organisation. The guy who was called said to me when I got back, "if you had been here, you would have been the Stake President and not me". I'm not saying that would have been the case but I'm saying I'm not the kind of person to seek for office and I was quite happy to sit in the background or whatever.

Right

But having been called, I'll put my all into it, and again, with Stake President, you know just wonderful – I could cry over the personal experiences I had with people, again, it was a people type thing, especially when the Coventry stake was organized, the people there come from different stakes couldn't quite get over the fact that when we had a stake meeting, they all wanted to deal with calendar issues and all sorts of programme issues and they couldn't believe it when all I was talking about were people, and names of certain people.

Right.

And they knew any high council that was assigned to a unit, they knew they were on dodgy ground if they didn't know more than me about the people in that ward because initially it seemed because to visit round, I may know more than them about it so again the emphasis was people and when I say that, that's not out of me, that's the lessons I felt I was getting from the brethren. It was all about people rather than programmes. The programmes were there to help the people, not the other way round. I saw so many other leaders fall into the trap of "we've got to have this programme, and we've got to do this, and we've got to do that". No, what we've got to do is bless the lives of our people. Now

what programmes will we use and how will we use them to bring that about, that was the emphasis.

Right. OK. Which general authorities did you meet as either Bishop or Stake President?

Throughout I've met an awful lot of them in my time.

Well just some ones that we would know.

OK let me see, some of the ones.....OK lets just go back a bit. Ezra Taft Benson as President of the Church, I was actually in his office with my family back in about 1987, so that was just before becoming Stake President. Now I know you wanted you were saying about sharing some stories there. I mean President Benson – at the time I mean we were just in awe when we were told to come to his office at 0630 in the morning, I mean we didn't mind getting up at 0530 and putting on our Sunday best and everything. It was such a privilege for us as a family to be in his office and it was just before 0630 because at 0730 he had a Presidency meeting. Now I'll just mention him because at the time, ok later on I may think differently, but at the time I was impressed by what I thought was his humility. He was very gracious to us, no question about that, as almost all general authorities are. I can't speak highly enough about them in terms of making you feel good. You know, I'm not going to be one of these that will throw mud or sticks at General Authorities and say they are this, that or the other. I know none but gracious and kind people.

That's been my experience as well.

OK, now again, I felt this way with President Benson, but there was also an anxiousness in him. Now I put it down at the time, I thought it is wonderful, this was someone who was the Secretary of Agriculture and he seems nervous going into the first presidency meeting. So I translated that in my mind that this is the man that really...this is God's spokesperson and he is going into an important meeting and he takes it very seriously. So that is the way I felt, and that was a very uplifting experience for us as a family. Now later on, and certainly hearing some more stories from Steve Benson and others, maybe my interpretation was not correct – I don't know. Yeah maybe there was something else going on his mind at that time that I certainly was not aware of.

But you felt he treated you with dignity and respect.

Absolutely – he and his Counsellors at the time, Gordon, B. Hinckley and

Thomas S. Monson. President Monson, was somewhat dismissive. That was the second time I'd met him and I just felt he was different. He was quite dismissive and more concerned with getting on with the business in hand.

Not as personable to you.

No, President Hinckley was a very personable person. You know, I'd met him on numerous occasions, he was, and I always thought he genuinely loved the people. There is no question about that. You know, in his heart he loved to be with the people and that is why he travelled so much I think, no question about it. I didn't get that feeling with President Monson unfortunately. Anyway, each one is different that's all I'm saying, each one has a different personality and a different thing to pursue.

Right, right. OK.

So that sort of thing. Again just to put another thing to rest I did some travelling with a Elder Robert Sackley at one time. He is an Australian that was called as a General Authority. Again he was a very kindly person but he was a little bit out of the ordinary from the normal General Authority. He didn't seem maybe as polished and everything as the normal one. He was more.....I'd hate to say this with Dr Simon Sutherland who is a very polished Australian, but Elder Sackley was a little bit rougher as a diamond but such a genuine and lovely person to meet. And I just want to say this one thing about him.....I could say a lot of things about him, but one particular thing because a lot of people make an issue about General Authorities and the money they're raking in and everything else. Elder Sackley told me, and I believe him, that he received a living allowance from the Church. Not that he wanted it, but he received it - he had no option so he took that, but he then immediately donated it back to the Church. I believe that because he said "Look, I've been blessed in my life, I've had a good career, I've got a good pension, I don't need any more money to live on. So.....maybe people ought to be aware of that. OK, I've met others that would take a different attitude, and others that have certainly benefitted financially from the Church, but I'm just saying there are others that are just genuinely there because they believe that the Church is true, or believed it's true, that's all.

Right.

Elder Hillam, Elder Holland, there is a whole list - I could talk about all sorts of people... Elder Eyring. Also I think mainly Elder Hillam, Elder Holland - if you want, I can take a few minutes on those, or not?

Yes talk about.....why don't you talk about Elder Holland and just what type of person you found him to be and in what capacity did you work with him, and maybe a story or two that you think would help us get an understanding for what he's like, or stories that you think would be interesting for people to hear.

OK Elder Holland, I mean I worked with him as obviously he was the Area President at the time when I was a Stake President you know, in his area so obviously I would have some contact in that regard, but also we were members of the same ward. He'd even suggested at one time that we play tennis together. Now I never took him up on that – a. he was probably a far better tennis player than I would ever be...!

Believe it or not I've actually played tennis with him, when I was at BYU I got to play tennis with him once. He had just ruptured his Achilles heel and healed from it, but he was a good tennis player.

This I would expect because I mean, OK, us Brits don't take this as seriously, and anyone who says he plays tennis, he has probably been coached by Agassi or someone or other. So I didn't do it but for two reasons: A. he was probably good, but also I knew how busy he was and also any time that he had I think it was better that he was spending it with Pat or you know, with his family.

How many years was he in your ward?

I don't know, 3 or 4 years I think.

And so did you know Matt and Mary his daughter and Duff his younger son?

Yeah, really Duff, they were only there with Duff. And Duff as I mentioned, he was quite a close friend of my son's Alan, and in fact I mentioned that to Elder Holland because one of the things I've treasured was a letter that Elder Holland wrote to myself and my wife, praising my son and the great influence.....because they were worried obviously when Duff went to the UK leaving all his friends behind in Utah and everything, just what kind of an experience it would be for him and he really praised my son, he was a giant as far as he was concerned. He couldn't wish for a better you know, role model, for his sons. So I did know Duff. Matt I met briefly because he had already left home at that stage I believe. I'm not quite sure what age he is now.

So this was after Elder Holland had served as President of the BYU?

Oh yes, this was he was called as a General Authority. He replaced Elder

Goaslind, he was the Area President, he replaced him.

So he wasn't an Apostle yet? Is that right?

No he wasn't an Apostle yet, he was a Seventy. He wasn't an Apostle at that stage so that came a bit later and obviously when we knew that we were excited when he was called as an Apostle. But at that time he was a Seventy.

So how many Stakes would he have been over as an Area Leader, Area President?

Well at the time the trouble was the area kept changing.

But 10.....100 just a rough...

It would have been 70 or 80 and certainly when I was in the Europe West area, we were talking I think about 110, 120.

OK so you would have been one of over a hundred Stake Presidents that he would have interacted with.

Yes.

Any stories or descriptions because I found him to be very thoughtful, very intelligent, very warm, very fun.

He was extremely intelligent, extremely warm, he came on assignment at a stake conference with me, and at that time, I had actually just been diagnosed with a tumour which they were about to operate on because the surgeon thought it was cancer and I was feeling pretty weak at the time anyway. And he came from my stake conference and he was just so kind to me in relieving me of certain meetings, and doing things, and he even offered me a blessing which actually I declined from him not because I didn't want him to, because I would loved to have had a blessing from him, but I thought, no, the correct way of doing this is to go through my.....let my home teacher do it. So I followed the correct channels rather than taking a privileged position and having him do it. So he was extremely, extremely kind to me. And also another time, that was on a personal basis, and another time we had an issue in our stake where one particular ward we tried for 25 years to get land for a building which just never happened, and then suddenly things had happened and we had located something and negotiated. Anyway, that started to go pear-shaped, it went south, and suddenly the whole deal was put off - it was put off by the

committees in Salt Lake - they weren't going ahead with it. I went round on the Sunday evening to meet with the people that we were buying the land off and they were devastated because they were very very anti the church at that time, because they felt the church had actually lied to them, because this deal had been going on for two years now, and they, on the basis of that, had bought other property. Anyway, I found out all the facts, I went and saw Elder Holland on the, I think it was the Monday morning, it was either the Monday or the Tuesday morning, had a meeting with him, laid out all the facts about it, and it did seem that he had been given false information from you know, other people. He left that meeting to travel about two or three hours south and then he phoned me early evening to just say "Tom, you've got your land".

I couldn't believe it, because these things usually go through committees, but he made a call at that time directly to President Hinckley, and used one of his silver bullets, because he recognized that things had been done that weren't quite right. So I've got to commend him for that as well - however he did that, I've no idea because these things as you are probably aware, go through all sorts of committee stages, and it takes weeks if not months to get approval on things, but he got it approved that day.

Wow, that's really cool.

So, I've always been tremendously impressed with him, he's been a hero of mine all the time. Him and his lovely wife Pat as well. I speak highly of them. Which later on that's why I was devastated by the kind of response I got from him recently, so anyway....

We'll get to that for sure...so any other stories or experiences from the church that were important to you, that you'd want to tell, prior to your experience getting the second anointing?

Not really, no, I had dealings when when I was Stake President about actually excommunicating apostates that went on the Adam God theory and polygamy.

How was that? How did you handle that?

Well this was quite a contrast for me. It came. It actually had one of my Bishops and there was a subtlety to it all because obviously a hook was being laid out there. Anyway by various questioning I found out that he and his wife and an Elders Quorum President and his wife were into this. I actually spent six months with them trying to look at all their....first of all understand what it was, what their issues were and trying to give them all the answers that I could. So I

spent about that, but once I then found out that he was actually preparing single sisters in his ward to be his wives...

Woah, now this is a former bishop you say?

Yes and he'd been doing this while he was serving as a bishop.

Oh no.

He'd actually been preparing certain sisters that were returned missionaries and keeping it all secret. We also found out later on, that because in his ward there were certain... he lived in an inner city ward, that had a fair amount of its congregation were black and the boys, the deacons and the teachers were black. We found out later that this Bishop and his wife and friends were going to their own home and administering their own sacrament because they wouldn't take it from a black person.

Oh.

There were issues like that, so I uncovered all that and I tried my best, but we ended up excommunicating them and I remember going into my office after that and banging my head against the wall and crying. My counsellors, do you know what I said to them? I said give me good, clean adultery any day. Because you know if someone commits adultery, I've got a good chance of them coming back. Now this, what I'd been through with these people – these are never coming back. This had a feel about it that I just didn't like at all.

How many people were excommunicated?

Funnily enough, there were a total then of about 6 – the two couples and then the two sisters that were involved, but they both came back. We actually got them back. When I say excommunicated, or dis-fellowshipped, the four that were excommunicated that's it and as far as I know they've never come back. They embraced fully I don't know if it was the Owen Allred type group.

Yeah they became fundamentalists.

They were fundamentalists and they, some of them even went this way where apparently they even had a loophole they could go to France and marry there and there were all sorts of things that they had. Anyway, they were excommunicated, but they were still coming out and then I had to go a stage further and take legal opinion, I actually had them banned from attending

anywhere in our stake. Because what they were doing, they were coming to our wards and sit next to people in Sunday school. Their group actually had in advance what the Sunday school lessons were and they would know what sort of comment to make at a particular time, because of course, being fundamentalists, they can't very well go door knocking to get converts, they have got to get them off the mainstream church and that's what they were doing. So once we found that out, we just had them banned and again I had to alert President Holland to that, because although I could do it in my own stake, I had no jurisdiction over others. So it was up to him what he did as far as the country was concerned, because I found once I'd banned them from mine, they were going to other places. They would go to Oxford University, you know, student places like that and try and get people.

Wow, and you were sad excommunicating them?

Well, one of these was a bishop, and you know what – he was one of the best bishops you could imagine – I remember someone once saying, calling his name, saying “find out what he's on and we all ought to take it”! Because he was so energetic, he was so dynamic, he was great.

He was a true believer.

He was a true believer as well, and of course he was a true believer in the sense that he believes back to Brigham Young and that Wilford Woodruff went astray. You know, he is a firm believer in John Taylor and before, so that's the way that happened.

And what was it like for you to investigate these issues? Where they issues you had already known? Were they troubling to you, and how did you deal with it – did you have any cognitive dissonance about learning these things and trying to make sense of them? Because like a lot of people ask whether the General Authorities know the difficult issues, and it seems like you would have been confronted with them and how did you maintain your belief and commitment to the church, being exposed to these issues?

Yeah, I've often asked myself that because prior to that even when I was early in the church, I was asked to do a lecture at a philosophy class and I didn't realize - they came out with the Spalding manuscript and I'd never heard of that. That's the first I'd heard of it, so there's issues like that which then I just went back to the church and said “what's this about” and then I'd get an answer which to me sounds credible. It was the same with the Kinderhook plates, anything. Now on this polygamy thing....

So the church would give you responses?

Yes.

Where? How? How would a Stake President ask a question to the church?

As a Stake President I can ask someone like President Holland if necessary, or there was the PR department of the church, they usually had things already prepared to answer these questions. Certainly on the Kinderhook Plates, they just gave me a print out of what they dish out as their standard answer at that time. I don't know what happens now. It was the same with the....see the Spalding manuscript was very easy – like “oh no, everyone has looked at the Spalding manuscript and it bears no resemblance whatsoever to the Book of Mormon.

Right.

And I accepted that, and in a sense it's true, but it's not the Spalding manuscript, you know, it's two Spalding manuscripts.

Maybe.

Maybe, or whatever. So all I'm saying is, there were these issues, but I can honestly say, you know you are a firm believer, you know it's true, so anything that comes at you, providing you are given some kind of an answer you know, that's reasonably credible, you accept it and move on. Now I'd actually taught an institute class on polygamy, which really went down well but again I took all of the church historical information and showed how it was all divinely inspired and everything and all that sort of thing. Now when these people started to talk about the Adam God theory, and these things, I looked at it, I studied Brigham Young, I could see the quote in the Journal of Discourses... By the way, even early in my days, I'd read all of the Journal of Discourses, so I know all of that stuff as well but it didn't phase me. Actually it strengthened my testimony, people say “oh don't look at that because it will...” but it did the opposite for me, I was fascinated by it all.

So, OK I came to them and the final answer I gave them in my offices before we held the court, I called them into my office and I said, “Look”. Actually I asked one of them to offer the rayer, and the offered a prayer and I just said to him afterwards, now when you addressed dear heavenly father, to whom were you referring? Were you referring to Adam? And they said “no, no, heavenly

father, Elohim". So I said then, well OK let me ask that question another way. The person you just addressed as heavenly father, was he in your opinion on this earth as Adam? And they said yes. So you see the clever way they avoided things. That's how they could just be normal members without you knowing, so when it got to then I said "the only answer I can give you if you are saying that Brigham Young taught the Adam God theory, president Spencer W Kimball says that is false doctrine. I'm going with president Kimball on this one".

Right

So first of all I'll give you one of two answers, either Brigham Young did not teach that, or he did not mean it or he has been misinterpreted, or whatever you want to say, because you know I could quote other things from Brigham Young where he says the opposite. And that's what I'd like to believe - that he didn't teach it. However, if he did teach it, then I'm sorry we have an issue here of a prophet of God that taught a false doctrine, handle that, you know, that's it. That's what's happened, he's taught a false doctrine if that is true. And that was the final answer I gave them, and that wasn't satisfactory to them and then we went before a court and because they couldn't sustain President Kimball and the current teachings of the church, and were actively going about preparing plural wives and things like that, they were excommunicated.

So let me just ask you, from the churches perspective, why would they care whether someone believed they were praying to a heavenly father that once was Adam, or not? Or was that not really the issue – the issue was the polygamy?

Well it's all part of the one and the same, they almost go hand in hand and with that comes what's called the second endowment. These three things are bound together in fundamentalism. Now someone thought that these people were excommunicated because of their beliefs – that was not true. You know, people can believe what they like in the church.

No I don't know that actually.

OK, well that was told to me by General Authority. Elder Lund said "Tom, you can believe what you like, we'll only excommunicate you if you publish that or speak about it.

Oh so it's being public about what you believe?

Yes, you can believe what you like, but once you go public on it and start to

influence others..... Now in this case, they were influencing other people and do you know what, my counsellor had a dream one night. He came back, he said the interpretation of his dream was, "we are going to lose half the stake over this one issue". So when we ended up losing 4 people, I was extremely relieved, extremely.

Yeah

Anyway, I'm sorry I'm not sure how we got onto that.

No, it's good. So you only lost 4, so you're saying it was a full package – it wasn't just their beliefs but the fact that they were practicing polygamy, and being vocal.

Holding their own sacrament meetings and just trying to use our temples for their own benefit, not for anything else because they didn't actually believe. Ok their belief was that.....and even the clever temple recommend interview - do you sustain – if you said you sustain President Monson who is the president of the Church they could answer yes to that. He is the president of the Church, he is not the president of the priesthood though. And we don't ask that question. Well later on there is a question about.....recognising no other etc. But they could very cleverly get through a temple interview even on that basis.

Interesting, and tell me again, what you felt and why you were sad. Why weren't you happy to get rid of these people, especially the Apostates?

I wasn't happy to get rid of the people, especially the Bishop, I loved him to bits, it was just that I suppose on.... All the other disciplinary councils there was always a door open. I mean excommunication is quite a serious matter, that's usually after you have taken all the other steps to try and avoid it. So when you got to that, and OK there are some cases I mean there are others where it is mandatory. I had another where someone in high office commits adultery, ok that has to be the way that goes. But you know what, take an instance like that, I can think of a man right now that was excommunicated, but the next 5-10 years, he is at every meeting doing everything possible, and you know, he has to work his way back in to the church, and he's never going to do whatever it was again.

That's why I said give me good clean adultery, because there's something people can do to turn that around, but this...it just gave me a feeling that night, and that's why I cried about it, there was something much more final about it, these people had gone way beyond that and there was no coming back and as far as I know, they never have come back.

And that made you sad?

Yes, because I'd always thought... I'm not saying it was impossible, they could have been enlightened or something might have got to them, but it's just the feeling I had that night and that's why I expressed it, it was personal concern for it. It was one of the worst things that I'd had. I'd dealt with other things but to me that was one of the worst things. And I suppose because I'd involved myself in researching some of these things, I was even glad to put that aside and not read the kind of information they'd given me and get back to the Ensign and everything else and just felt good about that.

Because it was troubling. So what did you think about the second anointing when you were reading about it, is it related to blood atonement and Adam God theory and all that stuff?

Well I didn't read much about it at the time, they mentioned a second endowment to me almost at the last minute, I guess I was more familiar with the term calling an election made sure and obviously I'd read Elder McConkie and others on that, well Joseph Smith himself. As far as I understood that it was a personal appearance of the savior to you, bring forth the day of judgement, judgement was just brought forward to this life, and you saw the saviour and he would teach you whatever else you needed to be taught at that time, so that was my understanding of it. I hadn't even gone back into the historic, I didn't even know about the ordinance or looked back into those things, I didn't know anything about it.

OK so your understanding was that the calling election made sure was a visitation with the Saviour himself?

Yes, yes.

Does that mean that the second anointing is different than the calling and election made sure or is it the same thing?

It's purported to be the same thing. It was told to me that the second anointing was referred to as a special blessing and also as making sure your calling and election. All of those terms rolled up into the one thing.

OK well maybe let's just go ahead and dive right in. So I assume you weren't Stake President when you received your second anointing right?

I was Area Executive Secretary then.

OK so you'd stopped being Stake President and then how many years til you were called in?

Oh it's quite a few years, I'm just trying to think...94/95 – about 6 years.

So those 6 years, were you just having regular callings again or were you like primary teacher?

In fact I even said when I was released, you know, I'd love to be gospel doctrine teacher or actually I'd love just to sit in the back of the congregation with my family. I mean, at that time I'd had, especially one of my children had never known me, you know he was say 20 years old and had never even known me not be on the stand or something like that. You know, I'd gone through all of that.

And also in that time from a business point of view, I'd also moved, I'd spent some time in Ireland and Canada where again we were kind of used in a missionary kind of basis, but I was more there to try and help and support some leadership and also a lot of the time I was happy to be a stake missionary, something like that. I was more happy just sitting down with missionaries and teaching converts. So I had that sort of experience and then when I was back in my ward I was teaching the gospel doctrine class or whatever. I had a very brief period as a ward missionary in between some things so that kind of thing.

Why did your stake presidency term only last 5 years, I thought that was a 10 year calling? Did you terminate that or did you have to move? Or...

No, I've always been happy to do whatever the Brethren ask and that I won't actually say the reason, but let's just say it was a decision by the Quorum of the Twelve.

OK, alright.

I was happy with whatever, I mean I said, "look, I'm happy to continue or I'm happy to be released, you just make the decision, I'll do whatever you say. Never in my life have I asked to be released from a calling and never in my life have I asked for a calling.

So there were some personal stuff that they found about?

Not that they found about, no – things that I volunteered and let them make the decision. Their decision, which on reflection was probably the wrong one, and probably it shouldn't have happened, because I think probably the stake did suffer as a consequence. But anyway, I said, whatever you decide, and that's what was done.

OK and that's something you don't want to talk about the details?

Not because it's any reflection on me, I guess I don't think for public podcast that's an issue that, you know.

Right, right, well people are going to be thinking, he must have committed adultery, he must have embezzled money or...

Well I can say absolutely there was no question of any sin on my part, or anything like that and let's put it this way, it was more business related than anything. And it did actually allow me to have some time beneficially to get on with some business.

Sure

I've always put my career second to the church and this was just maybe an appropriate time for me to spend a little bit more time, and that's really what the brethren saw as well because if I just had a little bit of time, they actually then wanted me full time as mission president and anything else full time and get all the business matters out of the way. So that was the idea, so there was no sin involved whatsoever, it was purely...

And it wasn't like business in terms of like embezzlement or some type of financial fraud or anything like that.

No.

OK I just didn't want people to assume the wrong things. I'm not trying to get you to talk about things you are not comfortable with.

I realize some people might think that but no, it enabled me to move on on some other issues and I was very supportive of the...in fact I was pleased that they called the man for stake president that I advocated anyway. I was very pleased with everything that went on so don't worry.

OK for 6 or 7 years you served in low level callings and you were pretty happy

right?

Very happy.

So what changed? You say you got called in to be the Executive Secretary of the Area President?

That's right, yes, and that was a fantastically exciting opportunity as well. I loved working with Elder Hiram, I spent more time with Elder Hiram than Elder Kerr – a man [Elder Hiram] that I thought was very misunderstood – he was in our Area anyway, he was absolutely brilliant, absolutely committed to the church.

Was he not well liked?

No, he was not that popular. Elder Kerr had been more popular than him and these people had had an experience of Elder Holland, Elder Goaslind. As you say about Elder Holland, you know, very charismatic. Elder Hiram was not that charismatic in his public persona. If you got to know him as an individual he was fantastic. But he didn't....in fact I would try to explain to people just where he was coming from, because I thought he was quite...people thought he may be a little bit....I mean even in his family as a funny aside, he was a stickler for wearing his suit, white shirt and tie all the time. I never saw him without it, even on his so-called "P" days. And yet someone like Elder Wayne Pedersen, was casually dressed on his day off and be frightened that Elder Hiram might catch him you know, in a photograph or something, casually dressed. He was that kind of stiff person and in fact the funny thing was his wife Carol once said "oh yes, our children think if he loosens his tie his head will fall off!"

That was really the image he gave off, now he wasn't, but we had some great fun together, he was very humorous and a very personable and nice person, but other people didn't see that side of him, they just saw him as this serious person that went round the missions, telling the missionaries to triple their baptisms and all the rest of it.

Right, right, so he was kind of an administrator.

Yeah, he thought a lot about this. He could bear good testimony and he would tell the stories, he used to tell of Moses and his delegation principles and all the rest of it. He was a good teacher, but you had to be there, and understand him, before you got it. Someone like Elder Holland can get up anywhere and immediately start to draw his audience in. He wasn't that type, but they are all

different.

Got it, OK, so you're just serving in this calling as Area Executive Secretary, and then what happens?

OK he calls me into his office one day Elder Hillam did and he said first of all he went through the Temple questions with me to make sure I'm worthy, that's already been happening but he's just updating my current worthiness obviously to which I answered. Then he said he'd been instructed by President Hinckley to invite me to have my second anointing or special blessing. And he said to me, "do you know what that is?" and I said "no" I mean I was just dumbfounded, I just said "no". And he said "well, we'd like to" and he mentioned the date, and the time and that it would be myself and my wife and not to mention it to anyone. I said, well what do I say if I'm going away, what do I say to my children? He said just make up any reason you like but just don't tell them what's happening or where you're going, just say you and your wife are going away for the weekend or something like that. That took me a little bit...I mean ok cogniscence....

OK let's start with how...cool it felt, like I'm thinking that would be cool! That would be, I would feel "oh my gosh, I'm about to be guaranteed a spot in the celestial kingdom", is that what that means?

Right, but I'm just giving you my immediate response. I then left his office. I went back in half an hour later, and said "hey, have I heard you correctly?" Because it dawned on me – what you've just said. What I'm saying is that I didn't quite get that at first, I thought, what is this special blessing? And then I go out and I start thinking about – it's my calling an election made sure. I panicked, I went back in and said, hey have I heard you correctly, and we went through it, yes this is what it is.

What did he tell you it is?

He said it's a special blessing that will be life changing. He said very few people have had it, again he stressed the secrecy of it, and those reasons for the secrecy – they don't want the general membership to know about it, that it was to be...but it was to be life-changing for me. He couldn't tell me anything about what would be happening there.

So he didn't say to you this would guarantee you entry into the celestial kingdom? He didn't actually say that?

No, probably not. Again I'm trying to think back a number of years. I don't think...no what he then said to me was to go away, and he recommended to me various writings by Bruce R McConkie. Now I know Elder McConkie isn't that favoured in the church at the moment, but as far as the second anointing or the Calling and Election made sure, apparently he was the authority on it in what he had written. So I was asked to go away and read about that.

Like in Mormon doctrine? In the book "Mormon Doctrine"?

Mormon Doctrine and others. I think he wrote some on the New Testament as well didn't he? He had about 3 or 4 volumes on the New Testament, where because I think Peter mentions calling an election made sure, so he elaborates on that. It was quite extensive, I did quite a bit of reading from different sources, all by Bruce R. McConkie though, and in that it was very clear cut what it was – it is making sure your calling and election. I went back and said yes I've read that, I understand that, that's what it's about. Now, me being me, I figured I'm not ready for this, you know, I haven't yet proven, I can't believe it's happening to me. So I'm going through all sorts of things – not that I had anything major to repent over or anything, but you just don't feel that you are at that level, that you are, that any of us are that worthy.

OK, I'm going to go ahead and read from Mormon Doctrine what it says about calling an election sure. Is that alright?

Sure, yes.

It says "those members of the church, who devote themselves wholly to righteousness, living by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God, make their calling an election sure. That is, they receive the more sure word of prophecy, which means that the Lord seals their exultation upon them while they are yet in this life. Here is summarized the course of righteousness which the saints must pursue to make their calling an election sure and then referring to his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration with James and John, said that those three had received this more sure word of prophecy". And then it refers to second Peter, Chapter 1. It goes on to say "Joseph Smith taught 'after a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, which is the first comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God. And the Lord will soon say unto him 'son, you soon shall be exalted'. When the Lord has thoroughly provided him and finds that the man has thoroughly

proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling an election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other comforter. To receive the other comforter is to have Christ appear to him and to see the visions of eternity”.

OK, so that's actually saying that there is some type of visitation with Christ potentially, right?

Yes.

OK, alright, so that's the kind of stuff that you read as you prepared to go to the temple is that right?

That's correct, yes.

What were your reactions, what did you think, like you said you started to feel you weren't worthy?

Well, yes, I hope that's a natural reaction, I mean you answer Temple recommend questions, that doesn't mean to say you are perfect. You try to do everything your best but do I get angry thoughts....do I do this....there are things, so yes I spent a lot of time prior to that and a lot of time on my knees and considering all sorts of things because as far as I am concerned I was going to meet the Saviour and he knows, you know, this isn't meeting a Stake President or a Bishop – this is meeting the Saviour.

So you thought you might meet the Saviour at the Temple?

I didn't think, I well, yeah, yeah. You've just read out what's happening, I didn't think I'd need to say too much, I mean I think he's going to have more to say to me than I'm going to say to him.

So you were getting ready to meet the Saviour?

Yes.

Wow! OK, and was your wife invited?

Yes, yes.

So it was something to be done together?

Together, that's right.

But she wasn't in the original meeting where the invitation was extended?

No she wasn't. It was me that invited her, and I then booked....and what we did it was on a Sunday, which is an unusual so I actually booked.....funny thing was I phoned the Preston Temple to arrange a room for us on Saturday night – I just decided I wasn't going to drive up there. Elder Ballard and Elder Hillam were going by one of the Huntsman's jets, they were travelling in that way, and I was to drive up to the Preston Temple with my wife, and I decided we'd just stay there – I mean what better thing than to stay at the Temple overnight, and end up walking the grounds hand in hand just to prepare. So I phoned the Temple just to book a room and as soon as I gave my name, they said "ah yes, you're here for the special occasion" and they booked me in. And when we got there, I didn't realize it, they gave us the honeymoon suite. They just treated us so well – we had a honeymoon suite at the Preston Temple. I didn't even know they had such things.

In the Temple itself?

Well, there is accommodation actually at the Temple, and this was the honeymoon suite that was reserved for us and I thought it was absolutely fantastic. We walked hand in hand around the Temple grounds that night and retired to our honeymoon suite, ready to get up the next morning for this very special occasion.

Wow, and again, what did you say to your wife? What did you guys talk about?

Well, she wouldn't, I tried to get her to read the same things as I did but she, again and sometimes sisters are like this – they just seem to have a more simple faith or whatever, I don't know, I guess I was making a bigger issue of it than possibly she was. I don't know.

Or she was just relaxed about it.

She seemed more relaxed than I. Certainly internally there didn't seem to be much of a problem, it was just something that we were going to do together. OK she recognized it was going to the Temple and it was a very special thing to do, but you know, I don't know that she understood "hang on, we could be meeting the Saviour here". Or, and I didn't know at that stage whether we met him then or it came afterwards. Or whatever, and all I knew was that this was a serious business, this is earth-shattering really, and I can't talk about it. I mean we went

there early, well we went to the Temple as I've said, on the Saturday, and we actually bumped into some ward members that were there for a wedding, and they actually asked us "what are you doing here" on the Saturday night, and again we just had to duck the issue and not tell them why we were there.

Right.

So, in some ways, even after that, when I say "lie", it was easy enough for me, because people knew my position in the church – it would have been harder if I didn't have this – I could easily say, even if they found out that I was at the Temple on the Sunday – that I was asked just to go there to meet with Elder Ballard and Elder Hillam. And that would have been appropriate for my calling anyway, so it wasn't a big deal, it could easily get passed over.

Got it. OK so tell us what the day – all that went into the actual experience.

Well obviously we went with our recommend and our Temple robes I think I can say Temple robes without saying anything else about them. And we went into the Temple. I think I had been told that we wouldn't be on our own, that there would be some other couples there as well, so we weren't the only couple. I think there were four or five couples including us.

OK and were these people you would have known?

None of us knew before that day that each of us had been invited, but obviously when we saw one another I think of the five couples, I knew four. So it was that kind of a situation. One of them that I did know was actually a returning Mission President who had been serving in our area and he was actually American and he was on his way back to America. But again, just because some people speculate on who gets these – is it Mission Presidents? No, in this case, I got the impression he was getting it not because he was Mission President, but because there was another reason, so it's hard to say who categorically gets these and who doesn't. Obviously all of the 70 – well at least the first and second quorums do, anyway I won't go further. Anyway, so we met other people there, so there was one couple I didn't know. We were greeted there by Elder Ballard and also a councillor instead of the Temple President, because the actual Temple President, he was away because his wife was sick in hospital -but otherwise it would have been the Temple President. Normally it would be the Temple President, the Apostle, and another General Authority. In this case Elder Pedersen was also there – he actually asked if he could be there just because of the personal relationship with me that we had. Normally it would just be one other General Authority – you know you would have the Apostle

and one General Authority as a witness. In this case there were two General Authorities as well as the Apostle.

So there were two General Authorities and an Apostle?

Yes.

Wow! And it was Robert Ballard?

Elder Ballard, yes.

OK and so what do you do, you go in and you dress in your temple clothes?

Yes, we gathered, again I'm going back a few years now but we gathered in the Chapel area and then yes, we obviously put on our temple robes, we went into a special room preserved in the Temple, well it was a room that was sort of set apart for this, where we had, we started with a washing and an anointing, you know, Elder Ballard would wash our feet, and, hang on what....

Ok so...

Again I'm being a bit careful now, as to what I actually say.

Sure.

It's in the write-up, to be honest when I say my write-up, it's actually on the internet in almost verbatim from the early days of the Church, the 1840's or whatever. I think you can read on there the exact way the thing....the only thing that is different is that in those they'd have the thing in the Temple, and the second part which was done in the couple's home. In our case, the second part wasn't done in our home, it was done in another room, it was done in a sealing room in the Temple.

Are you comfortable in talking about what things actually happened?

Yes, but I'd have to jog my memory! As to what happened, but...

Yes, so Elder Ballard is there with you with a couple of other General Authorities, what happened from there?

OK Elder Ballard explained what would be happening – we were to have our feet washed and be anointed by him. He said he was acting under the direction

of the Prophet as in Gordon B Hinckley, and after that we would be allocated a ceiling room for each couple to be alone and perform the second part of the ordinance. We would then all meet again with Elder Ballard in the Celestial room of the temple, so that's what he had said to us. So he then, you know, I was beckoned to sit on a particular chair and Elder Ballard knelt down and washed my feet and dried them.

And what's that like?

Oh, can you imagine – I've got an Apostle down there on his knees! I mean what was going through me was the new Testament scripture where the Saviour did that with his Apostles.

Right, how would you describe it – the feeling or the experience?

I think Elder Hillam was right, it's life-changing that whole thing, you can't believe it, it's out of this world. You're in heaven.

Were you crying?

Oh, you don't stop I don't think, everyone is tearful. When you see everyone crying, tearful all the time, it's just so touching.

And so there's this Apostle of God, this beautiful, thoughtful man, washing your feet. Wow. And then he did it to your wife as well?

Yes.

And did he say a prayer beforehand? Did he explain what it meant?

Yes, and after in the Celestial room, he explained more as well.

OK, OK, so I'm getting ahead of myself. So he washes your feet and your wife's.

We'd started the whole thing with prayer as well, obviously I omitted it, but obviously anything in the Church is started with prayer anyway. And then after that there was the anointing so he put the oil on the top of my head, so I was ordained. So I mean, OK there are other ordinances where you are ordained to become such and such, in this case the wording was different. I was actually ordained a king, and a priest unto the most high Gods.

So you were literally ordained a king?

Yes, ordained a king – it wasn't to become, I was ordained a king.

Right.

Obviously to rule and reign in the house of Israel forever. Then blessings on my head, brow, eyes etc were anointed with oil and specific blessings were given relating to knowing, understanding, and speaking the truth. The ordnance gave me the fullness of the priesthood, and a blessing was given which included the sealing power to bind and loose, curse and bless. The blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Holy Spirit of Promise bestowed. This was an interesting one – blessed to live as long as life is desirable. I mean that is a powerful – you know you suddenly think, hang on... I mentioned to you before, with Elder Holland, years before when I had that sort of scare about cancer which turned out to be benign, at that time my wife and I thought I had about 6 months to live, so to be blessed to live as long as life is desirable and then blessed to attain unto the Godhood and power to be a member of a Godhood was bestowed upon me. I was sealed up to eternal life and powered to have the heavens opened. So the sealing as far as I understood at the time, that's it, it's done. The only other thing, and that you can read in McConkie was what happens if you do commit some kind of a sin, but idea was that's it, your judgement is made, and you are sealed. So we were charged not to reveal to other individuals that we'd received this ordnance, and again, my wife was anointed and ordained the Queen and a Priestess, just as I was a King and a Priest.

Got it. And again, how did she like it?

Oh, again, tears, and then the second part of it we go into a sealing room. Each couple was assigned a different sealing room. So you go in on your own. We were told we were to go in there and the wife was to wash the husband's feet and then she was to put her hands on his head and give him a blessing – whatever she felt inspired to say.

So she put her hands on your head and gave you a blessing?

Oh, now if you want to talk about crying...that's when it really happened.

Wow, do you remember what she said?

Not really, not at this stage, no. I didn't write it down but it was powerful, I mean obviously the love that was conveyed and everything that came through. No I don't remember the specifics now of what was said but all I know is we

wept after that and just held one another and you know, probably spent longer in the room than maybe we should have done. But that was it, it was a bowl of water and a towel and my wife did just as Mary did to Jesus, just comes and dries them. It was very moving, very personal, you know as a couple, we experienced tremendous joy.

So you got your feet washed twice.

Yes, once by the Apostle, and once by my wife.

But you didn't wash her feet?

No, she did it to me.

And you didn't give her a blessing?

No I didn't give her a blessing either.

Wow, that's kind of cool.

This is women in the Priesthood, this is what it's about, it's there you know. Oh. Women does have Priesthood in the Temple. They may not have it outside, but in the Temple the woman joins in the Priesthoods. She gave me a blessing, yes.

Beautiful. So then you guys go back and Elder Ballard talks to you, what does he say?

Well this is it, he asks us into the Celestial Room and summarized what had happened that day, and asked if there were any questions because they could only be answered at that time, you know we can't walk out of there and suddenly ask a question. Now my question that I had on my mind I just wanted to say to him, "when do we meet the Saviour?" you know, up to that point I hadn't seen him so I said "when is this going to be?" but the feeling in the room I just couldn't even get that out of my mouth and no-one asked one solitary question. Maybe they were all wanting to do the same thing, I don't know, but I didn't ask, no-one asked the question. So then he volunteered some things and said "look don't even ask me about what happens if you now sin because we don't even want to go there."

Right.

But I'd already read extensively with McConkie there which basically said that after you've had this ordinance that obviously, if you were to commit sin, then that's not going to deny you the Celestial Kingdom. You know, you may have to be handed over to the buffetings of Satan for a period, but you know, you are going to atone yourself for that and you're still going to get there. And the only exception obviously was the unpardonable sin, so providing you didn't do that, you're home and dry.

And the unpardonable sin being denying the Holy Ghost?

Yes

Being a son of perdition.

That's right, you deny the Holy Ghost and supposedly you then become a son of perdition and you are cast into outer darkness with Satan and his followers and you never do inherit a kingdom of Glory, even the Celestial. Since then I've expressed "well, hang on, you're updating this in my situation as it is now, does that mean I'm actually worse off than Adolf Hitler who killed 6 million Jews and any number of other people, but anyway...that's a side question. That's if I am a son of perdition of course, I may not be.

OK, and so this happens, does anything else happen in the Temple that was worth noting?

No, I think that was it, I mean we left the Celestial.....I mean I can't even express now how wonderful....I mean I think you've already felt a glimpse of it just from going through your own thoughts John. I mean you go out and you're not even walking on the ground. We went home, I mean I thought I was committed to the Church before then, now suddenly "what do you want me to do, what mountain do you want me to move? What do you want me to do, I'll do anything" this is the thing that gives you the feeling you come away with. The day before there had been an area training meeting and that's why Elder Ballard was there where we had all of the Stake Presidents and Mission Presidents in for training, and I went home and that night I just sat down, and I hadn't taken any notes of any of those training meetings but I just hammered out a paper on what Elder Ballard had taught and I took that into the Area Presidency and they were just bowled over. Now I'm not taking credit for this myself, in terms of..... – that was just the way I was feeling – on overdrive and if you like, feeling inspired at the time, but I put together a paper which we put out to all of the Stake Presidents, really summarizing the whole message and what they were to do, and to get them to come back with their specific goals based on those things that had been

outlined, and therefore we would then hold them accountable during the next 6 months or 12 months or whatever.

So it was just such an uplifting experience, you know you just wanted to do whatever you could to move the work forward.

Right.

And I know that when that paper was read by the Area Presidency, every one of them was just bowled over by it, but again, I'm not taking credit that it was just Tom Phillips doing that – it was like Tom Phillips on steroids at that time, just because of the impact of such an ordinance. And again, John, I know you are doing clinical psychology and you maybe understand more about apart from the spiritual aspect, anything else which might have motivated me at that time. I performed better than I had before I think.

Sure. I don't like to psycho-analyse people in that way. If someone has a beautiful experience, I want to say God Bless You, you know. That's how I feel about it. OK so how in the world do you go from that experience, to losing your faith?

You certainly don't go there immediately, with me it was about another year and a half went by when I was again at that point of...and I don't know whether we said in this interview...or before we actually started recording, that I was really just preparing for full-time mission – as far as I was concerned, I was not going to be a full-time missionary for the rest of my life, that's all I wanted to do, with myself and my wife.

Were you done with work, were you retired by this point?

That's what I was planning to do – I was just coming to the tail end of that and saying, right this is what I'm going to do from now on and that's what the brethren had understood – I'd get to that point where I'd finished with everything, I'd put in my mission papers. They were saying then that they wanted then as the mission papers went in, to recommend me as a Mission President, but whatever way it went, it didn't really matter, as long as I was able to go out and teach the Gospel. So I just took that opportunity, as I've said, in the past I've had experiences with Spalding manuscript, and things like that – the question of using Jew in the book of Mormon, or the usual things about Jesus being born at Jerusalem. All of those myriad things that people put up which weren't anything as far as I was concerned. What I was concerned about was obviously people who would be genuinely, because of their scientific

understanding, would be skeptical about the message or the scriptures, and therefore miss out on the Church because of their knowledge – that’s what was concerning me. So I though hang on, I need at least to be in tune and anyone that I supervise needs to know how to speak to people or answer the questions. You know, someone had said to me years ago about the flood and things like that, and I’d even been at a museum with my wife and we saw dinosaurs and she asked me that question. I gave the standard kind of Church answers which satisfied her and satisfied me at the time, but now I kind of thought, hang on if I’m actually saying this to someone that knows their subject, they’re either going to call me an idiot or they’re going to be very kind and polite and just sort of, you know, there’s no way they’re going to get converted, because it’s going to be a road block. So I’ve actually got to find out what is wrong with the scientific methodology, or not necessarily wrong, but at least some kind of possibility that it may not be quite right at the moment and it could be discovered later on that something else happens.

OK, so was there like someone you knew that had fallen away.

I didn’t know anyone that had fallen away for those reasons.

So again, what brought it up? What made you care enough to want to look into it?

Me, again, just studying the Book of Mormon, so again, it’s very clear in the Book of Mormon – to me at least – from all I’ve read from the Prophets in the past – that there was no death on this earth prior to the fall of Adam, so that I believe 100% to be true. So that’s what I believed all my life no question about it. But aha, if I was saying that to a scientist, or not even to a scientist but to most children at school these days, they’d say “no the dinosaurs were here 65 million years ago, there was this, there was that, this place is 4 billion years old”. How do I answer that? OK the 4 billion year old earth Joseph Smith even talked about things like that, but certainly mankind, or the hominids that we are now apparently date back no more than 6000 years when you take the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine of Covenants into account. So that I believed 100% at the time. We’re going back now to whatever it was – 2003 I believed this completely to be true. So if a scientist says to me, you know what there are cave drawings in France that we’ve dated to be 30,000 years old, that were obviously drawn by hominids, homosapiens. There are those things and I go and I look in museums and they’re right – there are these things, so how do I explain that? It must be that the carbon dating they do is not correct and I’m as a non-scientist thinking of industrial revolution, and pumping carbon into the atmosphere and all sorts of things that could interfere with these things. So I started to try and

find out more about that subject.

So you just started to have scientific questions huh?

Yes, I just said, ok what's the problem radio-carbon dating? I studied that and I couldn't find.....OK it may be out +/- 5% or whatever you know....if they something is 40,000 years old, maybe it's 35,000 or 45,000 years old. But my problem was, if anything was more than 6,000 years old that was human related, I've got a problem here because that means why is God in the Book of Mormon saying there was no death. You know, when we dig up things and find that there's things that have died when clearly there isn't any death...

Yes, so there's the claim that there was no death before Adam and Eve.

And Adam and Eve are the start, yes.

And also the Doctrine of Covenant says that the earth is 6,000 years old.

Exactly, section 77, it talks about the temporal existence, so without getting into all sorts of other creation periods, that's a different matter, but what we know of our temporal period, it's 6,000 years old. We are now in the 7th, where the 7th seal is supposedly opened.

Right, right.

6,000 years ago was the fall of Adam, now I'm not even getting into how old was Adam and Eve, were they billions of years old, how long were they in the garden - I'm not even going there.

Right.

I'm just saying, looking at the scripture, there were 2 people, 6,000 years ago that are the pro-genitors of the human race. We are all related to Adam and Eve. And prior to them there was no death. Animals lived together in harmony and all the rest of it.

And the bible gives lineage as I understand it, from Adam and Eve down to Abraham.

Which again says 6,000 years, yes.

Yes, so there's no real way to wriggle out of that and so if we have writings on

walls from 20,000 years ago, how do we reconcile that, with people being born 14,000 years before Adam and Eve left the garden.

Or skeletons that are 1.5 million years old? Things like that, let alone getting into dinosaurs that are 65 or 100 million years old. So they obviously died, those things that were there – the whole definition of fossils is that these things died. So the book of Mormon says there was no death, so that was the big issue that I had – well how do I reconcile these things – they both can't be true. Maybe I've misunderstood the Book of Mormon or I've misunderstood the science, but I was really going into the science. I then wrote to a particular university with about three or four questions and I just said – is there any chance first of all, that there was no death on the earth before 6,000. Is there any chance that everyone living today is related to two people who were living 6,000 years ago. Is there any possibility that there was a global flood about 4,500 years ago. Those sort of questions I put to them and also I threw in about the Israelite being the American Indian coming from Jerusalem 600 BC or whatever.

So you wrote to a museum.

No, I wrote to a university science information department with those four specific questions.

Was it like a written letter?

No, actually it was an email.

Do you still have the response they gave you?

I'm not sure because I've changed computers since then. I don't know, I'd have to look at that.

That's OK, but do you remember what University?

It was the Smithsonian.

The United States Smithsonian.

Yes. The United States Smithsonian had a sort of a public information department.

OK so you wrote the Smithsonian, alright (laughs).

What's funny about that?

It's because the Smithsonian is kind of famous within Mormonism because...

I know their anthropology department, but this wasn't their anthropology department. And there was no mention of Mormonism there either, this could have been a Christian that was writing to them.

No, no, I'm not laughing at you, I just think it's really cool that here you are, this sincere man, believing in the Church, but wanting to gather the scientific data, and you think, "well I'd better write the Smithsonian" you know.

Well it's what came up on my search I guess.

Sure sure.

Ideally I would have written to Oxford University, being in the UK, or have gone to something like that.

Of course, of course.

But whenever I put the search in, they came up and made it easy for me and there was a department, rather than going to different professors and how would I get an answer. Anyway, so they first of all wrote back saying "no chance of any of this".

They said no chance of any of that?

Yes, but I then even didn't accept that, I wrote back to them and said, look, I don't want to know that any of these four are actually true, I just want to know even if there is a 1% chance, and you know I had in mind Elder Holland when I said this, because I know a lot of very bright, intelligent people, that believe this – far brighter than I will ever be.

Right.

So I wrote back a second time and said even if there is an infinite....even if you were saying to me we're 99% sure, that 1% would give me...

It's like the movie "Dumb and Dumber" – "you mean I've 1% chance?".

I've never seen that. Yes, so I was actually asking for that – if they gave me that 1% I'd say OK that's enough, that's all I need right now. They wrote back 100% no.

Oh, they said 100%.

They said there is no 1%, this is fact, these things cannot happen, and when you think about it, in the mitochondrial DNA they have done studies. Our most common female ancestor lived 170,000 years ago, not 6,000 years ago. You know, they can demonstrate that. When I say 170, I mean between 150 and 200, you know, we're not going to argue too much about the precise date, but it certainly was longer ago than 6,000 years ago.

Right.

So I got those sort of responses. Then when I get into the Book of Abraham.

How did you feel getting that answer back from the Smithsonian? I'm just imagining you opening up your email inbox, you open up that email. How did that feel?

Gutted in a way because I believed this Church to be true and now this factual that this aspect anyway is not true. And to be honest I take the Elder Holland position, you know, that the strength of this Church is based on the Book of Mormon. If that's not true, this Church isn't true. Even if the Book of Mormon were true, it doesn't necessarily now follow that the Church is true because it could be the Community of Christ, or the FLDS or anyone else that takes the Book of Mormon. But certainly if the Book of Mormon is not the word of God, if it has falsities in it, and here I am now saying falsities about the death before 6,000 years, the flood, the Tower of Babel, let's get into the Lamanites and turning skin black – all of these kinds of things, and then turning white when you become righteous and all of these issues, you know these are testable – you can test these in a scientific way whether they are true or not, and they all come up as false. There is no semblance of truth in these matters. So it's starting to crumble, I'm starting to say hang on, the Book of Mormon may not be true. It may not be the word of God - but I'm still hoping because I still have all these other things, including the second anointing in my mind, and you know what, I have the fear of death in me because if I become a Son of Perdition, I'm done. You know what, I had nightmares over that, nightmares. That's how much....with your psychology you might understand it better than I do, but that was deeply embedded in my brain, soul, or whatever you want to call it.

Sure.

That scared me to death. So I've got to be sure. So this didn't happen overnight – I'm spending months on this.

And you said Book of Abraham?

Book of Abraham, because I went to a museum, I saw a hyperphallis, I saw exactly the facsimiles we have got in the Book of Abraham and I go to a Curator or I go to an Egyptologist and say what does this mean, and they can give me an exact translation. None of it matches what Joseph Smith said it translates as and it's all just magical funerary text to get these people through the underworld. You know even the Coptic Vases and everything that Joseph Smith said - they're for the heart and the lungs and whatever else that they take out of the body, not what he said they were.

Right.

This whole thing is unraveling, I'm in a museum and there's museum curators know more about Egyptology than the Prophet Joseph Smith ever knew, and yet he is supposed to have had this revelation, he is supposed to be able to do this by the power of God and this is supposed to be the writing of Abraham. It's all unraveling – it's not. Now the relevance of that to the Book of Mormon is if he lied about the Book of Abraham and translating that, is that not an indication he may have lied about the Book of Mormon? Hence the relevance there, it shows a modus operandi for Joseph Smith in this case.

Now, just to be fair, apologists would speak up there, and even Elder Holland would speak up there and say it doesn't necessarily have to be that he lied, it could be that he had the scrolls and he thought he was translating, but in reality he was channeling from God Holy Scripture, and he didn't even understand the full inspiration behind the process. So he wasn't lying, that would be the Church's position today on it.

The Church's position today is exactly that and let me also tell you, I've gone through all this doubt, you know what convinced me? Two BYU Professors and two General Authorities convinced me 100% that the Church was not true.

Oh, wow, how?

First of all Professor Steven Jones, I think he is a physicist or a cosmologist at BYU. He wrote a paper about evolution and about death before Adam. He

actually says in that paper, and I haven't got it to hand, so I can't quote verbatim, but the general message to his students is "don't even argue with evolution – it happened". This earth is billions of years old, no question about it. There has been life and death on this planet for billions of years. Now, how do I then, Professor Jones, reconcile that the Book of Mormon. The way I reconcile that, as I recall his argument, is that nothing up until the fall of Adam, had a spirit in it. It was purely a physical body, a physical being, therefore he is giving a different meaning to the word "death". Death being in the old quote scriptures, death is a separation of the spirit from the body. Now he then has another problem which what actually animated all those animals before the fall of Adam, and his answer to that question is that they were directly acted upon obviously by the Spirit of God, you know, because they didn't have spirits of their own, so there was this kind of universal spirit that was floating around animating them. Well, I'm sorry Professor Jones, but the way that argument falls down is the next question. If the spirit of God is animating those animals, how come they are all killing and eating one another? That doesn't sound too God-like to me, so I rather thought that this was a professor who knows that there is death before 6,000 years ago, but somehow he has got to reconcile it in his own mind, for his own personal satisfaction, his own personal religion or whatever reason, to the Scripture, and it's not a very good answer.

Unless of course, God's ok with animals eating each other, it's just the way God wants the animals to behave.

Do you know, they do awful things to one another, and people – do you know what, we have skulls with axes in them – that was humans that put axes through the skulls of other humans. That all happened prior to 6,000 years ago, and they were being animated by the spirit of God. I'm sorry, it begs some questions there.

Right, it's problematic about our understanding of a loving, compassionate God, which of course isn't scriptural, because the scriptures allow God to do all sorts of difficult things, right?

Exactly, from the scriptures, he could be quite a monster at times.

So, I mean, that would be consistent with, you know.

OK, I don't accept that. I accept that as someone trying to reconcile something in their brain.

So for you, that's not the type of God you want to worship?

That is not an answer, they are trying to get out, it's a get-out clause that satisfies some people. Now, same question to Elder Hiram, who was an orthodontist. He said "Tom, of course there's been life and death on this planet for millions or billions of years". He said "I've held skulls when I did my dentistry, that are 10's of thousands of years old. He said, "also we wouldn't have oil and gas on this planet unless there had been deaths". So again, he is saying the same as Professor Jones – don't even argue about the point. However, the way he reconciles it is, he doesn't even mention about the spirit, he just says Adam was the first man made in the image of God – all the hominids prior to him weren't in the image of God. So then when I said well what happened to them because now apparently all the human race is related to Adam, where did all those hominids go in 6,000 years? He just said "I don't know".

So again, that just showed me, he just used a simple thing to reconcile his mind, because he wants to believe it's true, and this is the problem when you get into apologetics, you know there are some I think, quite dishonest apologetics that go around. Let's take the Book of Abraham and Michael Rhodes. Yes he does exactly what you say, he agrees that the translation of the papyri is not what Joseph Smith said it was, however it may be a catalyst. Why the heck then the Church go into debt to buy that papyrus for \$2,500, which I assume was a fairly significant sum of money in those days, and why does it say at the beginning – I don't know if they've changed it, but when I read the scriptures, right at the heading at the beginning of the Book of Abraham, that this is a translation by the Prophet Joseph Smith of the papyri he acquired from Michael Chandler? The Church states that – they don't say he used it as a catalyst. You see - and this is my issue with the so-called apologetics in the Church, I'll mention -you know, Brother Millett, Brother Peterson, them all – they will just side-step the issue and go on to something that in itself is dishonest, or even change the doctrine. You go back to the lamanites, it becomes a limited geography theory – they are somewhere in Guatemala or whatever. No, I've been to Hill Cumorah, we have a Hill Cumorah pageant every year. Joseph Smith right up to President Hinckley said all of the American Indians in North America. President Kimball went further about the Polynesians – it's been clear cut all my life – I taught my children a song called "Book of Mormon Stories" – about the lamanites inheriting the land and all the rest of it.

Right, you're sounding upset right now, are you? Are you upset.

Sorry...I...

No, no, no I like it, I'm not saying I like it, but I want to help our listeners to understand what you're feeling, that's all. What are you feeling?

What I'm feeling right now, because I actually went to the apologetics because I was looking for answers. I'd looked at a Steven Jones, or a Michael Rhodes or a Hugh Nibley - I looked at anyone. I looked at past Ensigns to give me the answers, and what I saw was the usual thing - side stepping, you know, I think Brother Millett made a statement one time, he said "don't answer the question they ask, answer the question that they should have asked", and that to me sums up apologetics. No answer to the question, bring it up to date, I gave specific questions to Elder Holland who purports.....

OK let's not jump to Elder Holland quite yet is that ok? Let me ask you a question. OK, so we're back at the point where you are like prepping to become a Mission President right, you know, assuming that you think that call is imminent, and you start stumbling upon these problems right? There has to be a point, you know, where so many people choose to just compartmentalize and turn it off. They're like "no, the Church is true, no, I've had that spiritual witness, no, I know it's true - the spirit has borne witness, I've all these good experiences. What kept you from just turning it off? What was behind that? Because so many people don't go there. They don't feel like it's safe, they feel like it's dangerous, they feel like it's scary or it's Satan or it's evil right?

Well, I'll use the word but some people might find that offensive, but before I say it, I will say I was only a member of the Church because I believed 100% it to be true - the one and only true Church on the face of the earth. That's the only reason. I didn't join it as a good club or something that would benefit my family, or get me on in my career, or anything like that, I joined it for only one reason - that it was true. Now, if I then find out it's not true, I'm sorry, I'm out. I'm not going to just continue in something that purports....I don't mind if it then admits it's not true, or something like that, but if it purports to be something that it isn't, I'm sorry I don't go there. I can't sleep at night if I'm going to do that and I just use the word integrity. It's like my own personal integrity would not allow me to compartmentalize, and therefore what am I going to do - teach my children and grandchildren something that's supposedly true, which I know isn't true. I'm not going to do it, I'm sorry, I'll give up everything, I'll risk everything. Now Elder Hillam even warned me on that, he said "Tom, it's not worth losing your family over". I can see what he was saying now. He was actually suggesting I just lie and play the role, just play the role and everyone will be happy.

OK, maybe it's a failing in me, again I would have to ask a psychologist that, but I

cannot live with myself if that's what I do. I'd rather live with myself happily, than subscribe to something that is patently untrue, and now I find out – I'm sorry if you felt I was getting upset, but...

No, no wait, I

What I was feeling was at the time I felt that I had so much esteem for the Brethern, it's not true. I've loved and adored them all my life, so I assumed they just didn't know these things, so all I had to do, like even recently, write a letter to Elder Holland and I'd be treated kindly and respectfully, and the issues would be addressed, instead of – "shoot the messenger".

OK so for you it was about truth and integrity.

Truth and integrity and that's what I thought the Church was about. Every time you are interviewed for a Temple recommend that's what you are asked – "are you totally honest in your dealings with other people" – and things like that. When I found out – you know what – when I found out the Book of Abraham, we'd had the papyri since 1967, and I joined the Church in 1969, how come no-one ever told me that? Even when I asked Elder Hillam about it, he said he didn't know we had the papyri. Now I don't know whether that's a true statement or not. For me I find that surprising because he was once the general Sunday school President of the Church, but anyway he said he wasn't even aware that we had the papyri and couldn't even answer that question for me. We've had it there, and we've known right since Hugh Nibley's days that it ain't what Joseph Smith said it was. We've known that, but we prevaricate and.....when I say 'we', I've read articles by Michael Rhodes and Hugh Nibley and all the others, that somehow side-step the issue and made it all sound alright, and it was acceptable to me. I don't like those type of apologetics, to me when I asked Elder Holland in the letter "if I've stated anything which is untrue, please correct me on it", you know, show me where I'm wrong, that I accept, but don't just come up with some spurious argument that's got nothing to do with it and bamboozle me.

So, you're sitting there and you've decided you're scared to learn these things, but it's your love of truth and your commitment to the truth and integrity, that probably was reinforced through your Mormon experience that lead you to keep going right?

Oh yes, I wanted to learn the truth. If it's the Church that is the truth, I want to know that, if it's the Church which is not true, I want to know that. Either way I want to know.

OK and that feels very courageous to me, but there's a next step – it's one thing to decide internally that this isn't necessarily what it claims to be and that maybe you're not able to internally believe it, but there's a whole other step – and for you it was a lot of steps – because you weren't just the average ward member, right? You had been a Bishop, you had been a Stake President, you'd had your calling election made sure, and you had this incredible family experience, this Church that you loved, the experience that you loved, and then this wife, and these children that all believed it, and it was going to become incredibly disruptive to them and very risky for you, because you could lose your wife, you could lose your children, you could lose the love and respect of so many people. How do you make the decision to risk all that, and actually speak publically rather than just let this die with you as a secret that you go to your grave knowing, but just decide that others have their beliefs.

OK first of all I didn't think that I would lose friends and family over it. I honestly thought that sharing things, truth with people that they would discuss that and either convince me that I'd gone down the wrong track and correct me, in which case we're back to normal and it's no problem for me– in fact that's what I wanted. I would have loved to have someone show me that I was wrong, loved that, that was my number one wish.

Even now?

Oh, even now. Even now, if that were possible, yes.

Why?

Because I'd spent my whole life doing that, why would I want to say "what's my life been about?" Why would I want to do that? No, no, no, no, no, I would rather it was true, because you know what, it was comfortable, you know everything was going fine with it true. I didn't want it to be not true.

Right.

And I certainly didn't know I would have this kind of opposition, in coming out, in just wanting to discuss the truth. And the refusal to discuss the truth, I didn't expect that for one minute.

So your commitment to truth made you feel like there was nothing to fear?

I thought that other people would also share that truth. I didn't see why ...ok I

don't subscribe to the view that there are all sorts of different truths and different realities, I guess. I know to an extent there is and there are perceptions, I can get that, but there are also things – I keep using the experience of the light switch – you know I can switch on a light here and the light goes on and it does it every time. If it doesn't, there's something wrong with the bulb or the wiring or the power – you know, there's something wrong that we can fix and then it will go on again. It happens every time.

Right.

So that to me is true, you know, if someone wants to come up with “well it's only in my imagination that this is true” or I'm dreaming this life and one day I'll wake up. I'm not even going down those sort of philosophical realms right now. That to me is true, putting on a light switch. Now some of these things like cave drawings or skulls, you know, skeletons that are 1.5 million years old – these are light switch type items. They're not something someone has dreamt up – or fabricated – that happened.

Right.

So I can't dismiss that – I've often thought now – if I knew the way things would turn out, would I have kept quiet and just persevered – like you say, just go to your grave happy, everything else. Again, I can't do that because do you know what I would say? I wish, if my grandfather knew something and didn't say it and went to his grave without saying, and I spent my whole life on something which I eventually found out was not true – I wouldn't be too happy with that grandfather. I owe it to my children and grandchildren or whoever comes after them to speak out and say “hey, have a look at this”. And all I'm asking you to do – I'm not even asking you not to be Mormons or disbelieve or anything, I'm just saying, “hey, these are and there is a whole load of serious issues that the apologists just do not answer, the Brethern will not answer”. So we've then got to face up to those issues, and how do we balance that with what is true and what is not? And that's all I'm asking for – that kind of discussion. The Church as President Hinckley said – he rested it all on the first vision and the others rested it on the Book of Mormon. They're the two founding principles of the Church. If either one of those is false, that's it – it throws the Church out. Now it's very hard – I know there are different accounts of the first vision – you can argue that til the cows come home – I'm not even going to go there – because that's not a 'light switch' type thing you can go to and demonstrate, but the Book of Mormon is and Elder Holland has put himself out there as the main champion of that book being exactly what Joseph Smith said it was and being the word of God.

What about people who say the Book of Mormon is too amazing of a book to have been invented, that nobody has come up with a plausible theory about how it got created in 90 days or 120 days or however many days it is that it's supposed to have been written, and most importantly, the spiritual truths that one experiences through reading it are testimony alone. What would you say to those arguments about the Book of Mormon?

First of all, I'd refer them to the Koran – and if the Koran is true, and it would be under all of those principles you just outlined, that denies that Jesus was the Christ or the Son of God. I would also say one....

Because the Koran is an amazing document and because it was written in a short amount of time and because people.....

A short amount of time, in better language – if you read it in the original Persian apparently it's a beautiful poetic language. OK a lot of our scriptures comes from the King James version now that is a poetic language – it's not the original Hebrew – the original Hebrew didn't say that or even the original Greek, but the King James version has made it sound more from a work of literature – it's better than it was. And let's face it, the Book of Mormon has a lot of either straight from the King James version, or whoever the author is – influenced by the King James version and using some similar language and syntax.

In terms of inspiration I've got tremendous inspiration out of people like Marcus Aurelius – a Roman emperor - and some of his writings. Some of his were put down in the battlefield - in between battles he wrote things. Far more inspirational than probably there are in the Book of Mormon, and you can recount lots and lots of books like that.

So do you have a theory about how the Book of Mormon was created then?

I don't even have to have a theory – I know of various theories – and even that – what was it the one done by the guys at Stanford University where they feel there is multiple authorship there with Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sydney Rigdon, some of Ethan Smith and maybe some of Solomon Spaulding. I don't know and I don't even have to worry about who did it.

Why not? Why isn't the burden of truth on you to prove that it's a fraud?

I don't. Well first of all if you want an answer to Elder Holland, there are a number of scenarios - every one of them as credible or more credible than the

one he put forward. He's the one that has the burden of proof, he tells me it's from the Lord – he tells me “an angel came and showed Joseph Smith some gold plates that were written in reformed Egyptian”. We haven't got the plates by the way but this is what happened and Joseph Smith wrote these down. First of all we have all these pictures of him with gold plates. Then we find out from Elder Nelson, “no, he looked at a rock” – the same rock that he used to try to find buried treasure, and all sorts of things come out of this thing. Now somehow Elder Holland would have me believe that is more credible than some 19th century people, whoever they are, whether it's one author – Joseph Smith – or multiple authors – got together and made, if you like, an American bible.

That is much more credible, I don't have to prove who did that, all I have to do in my mind is that book is supposed to be the word of God, now if I understand the God who is the great scientist, the omniscient, the all-powerful – if he has written or inspired a book, the things contained in that book would be true. Now I'm not talking about spiritual matters and subjective matters, or good moral teachings, because you know what, Mark Twain was good at that with his writings as well and he wasn't a religious person. I'm just saying there's other people – a lot of people get things out of the Harry Potter and even I think the recent Twilight series, there are all sorts of people getting inspiration from books. It doesn't make them true and they're all for saying they're not true. So if it's true then what's contained in it would be true. Now if there are untruths in there, and I say there are a number of untruths, we haven't even touched upon the archaeology but there's lots of untruths in there – that can't be from God, that's all I'm saying. Now if Elder Holland you say otherwise, show me, prove to me. Elder Holland has been in Britain and other countries, he's seen Roman villas. We still use Roman baths, there's a city called Bath in England. You could go in there and drink and immerse yourself in actual Roman baths that are 1600-1800 years old. We've got them. The Romans were in Britain from about 50AD to 400 AD. The Nephites supposedly were 600BC to 400 AD, and their Golden age was from presumably 33AD – they had 200 years of Golden age after Christ visited them, right, it was peace and prosperity throughout the land. Not only is there no evidence of that, all of the evidence says the opposite.

Right,

Everything says, “no, that didn't happen”. And if you want to liken the Mayans, they offered up children as sacrifices and things like that. If you want to talk about, you know, American was populated roughly 15-30,000 years ago by people from Asia via the Behring Straits. I go along with that theory, or what the anthropologists say because it's even been borne out with DNA, and they

found this Clovis people 13-15,000 years ago in Texas. These things we can see, they're there. None of that is in the Book of Mormon. I actually asked a missionary one time, "give me one quote from the Book of Mormon you can show is actually true – demonstrate it's true – a statement of fact that is true".

Like a city or a mountain or a river?

I'm not talking about a city because they name cities after....there's a Bountiful in Utah isn't there? Euphrates are all over the world. I mean, New York – that's named after York in England. Names mean nothing. I mean you can come up with that, and let's face it a lot of those names can be made up. I don't even see where we're going on that. That's why I say with apologetics it seems to me they're side-stepping the issue and saying "well, who wrote it". I don't even have to say who wrote it, you know it's not for me to say. I think Joseph Smith had a part in it, there's no question about that. Is he capable of – Emma says he's not. Other people say he is. I used to think he was because whenever I read anything by Joseph Smith it was brilliant. I found out later on it was re-written by other people – he was fairly illiterate, had poor grammar and poor spelling. OK did Sydney Rigdon come in with the theological arguments? Was Oliver Cowdery more involved in that – I don't know, but there are probabilities there. All I know for a fact, when you look at the Book of Mormon and you take all of the teachings out of it and especially the erroneous teachings – the anti-Catholic, the anti-Masonic – all those kind of things – they're all 19th century America. Answer that Elder Holland – these aren't ancient writings, they didn't write that way anciently. And even, take Isaiah – apparently – and I don't know how true this is, I don't even have to answer the question, but from what I understand, the Book of Isaiah was written by about two or three people and it was more like, it was certainly after 600 BC – it wasn't even there in 600 BC when they supposedly took the brass plates with them.

We haven't covered this in our listening, so this is my understanding as well, again, that Lehi was supposed to have taken the brass plates with him that would have contained the Book of Isaiah to the new world and that's where they would have gotten the source from to quote Isaiah in second Lehi. Well it turns out that scholars now believe that Isaiah was written after Lehi left Jerusalem back in the old world. So there is no way that Lehi could have brought Isaiah, or at least several of the chapters of Isaiah to the new world. So he would have had to, like Joseph in the Book of Abraham, somehow channeled Isaiah, you know before it was ever written, or you know, contemporarily or after it was written but without the actual source text. And so how can it contain the actual errors that the King James bible would purport and still have that source text. So it's problematic right?

I don't think it's problematic, I think all of these things are death nails – to say they're problematic – no, no, no, no, this is pretty obviously 19th Century writing.

OK so let's, - we're going to come back to your correspondence about Elder Holland, but tell me what the process was for you coming out, like did you start with your wife?

Yeah, what I did, in May 2004....

Oh, well first, was there a moment where you just said to yourself "I'm not sure the Church is what it claims to be". Did you have like a moment? Like I can think of a moment in time where I said "oh my gosh, I'm not sure the Church is what it claims to be". Did you have a moment like that?

I think so – when I got that response from the Smithsonian, I think that was probably it – you know, I'd been clutching at straws then to find someone who would just give me the 1% chance. They closed the door on me. Now, but even after I got that, because actually my Stake President called me in for a calling, while I was waiting around, they wanted to call me to the High Council. I actually said to him at the time, you know I'd love to serve on the High Council, no question about it, but to be honest, I'm not now in a situation where I'm going to go out and re-activate, or convert or anything, because I'm having these issues, and I explained some of them to him. He did listen to me for a couple of hours, but he said "no, I believe the Book of Mormon is true and the scientists have got it all wrong" end of conversation. And he kept the calling open for me for about three months and I said look no. At the time I would have loved to have talked to my wife but she saw the email that I wrote to the Smithsonian and she just flipped – "what's the meaning of this?" and tore me off a strip for even asking the question. So although I would have loved to have studied this with someone else, I just didn't have that opportunity and what I was hoping by studying it myself, is that I would then find out the flaws with all of these arguments and get back to "ok that's it, I've made the journey". To me it was worth investing a few months just to even prove the Church because then I'd be stronger. I thought I was strong anyway but that's made again 110% sure that it's true. So it was a lonely journey, and there wasn't anyone – as I say a Stake President was aware of it, but he didn't really take any interest in it.

And when your wife found out you were just studying this stuff, she got really mad at you.

Yes.

OK so when did you go from gently denying callings and having private meetings with your Stake President and realizing that you couldn't talk to your wife. How did you progress to coming out of the closet?

That was in May 2004 when I met with my wife and my children, well three of my children – one was back in the UK so I met with her separately. And I just called them together and said – in fact we were all in Arizona at the time – and my wife and I two days later had tickets to come back to England, but I just told them before I left that – I just apologized to them, I just said look I made an error of judgement back in 1969 but I don't think it's harmed us as a family – I think we've actually benefitted. And then I told them that I had found out some things and I no longer believe the Church is true. I think I've made an error in believing that it was true.

Was this like blind-siding your wife and your kids all at the same time, or had you told her you would be doing this?

No, she knew there was something up and I told her it was of eternal significance. She didn't want to discuss it – there was no way I could do it 1 on 1, and in fact, to be honest, she instigated the meeting so it was said before I'd go back. She was anxious to know what it was but she wasn't also anxious to listen to it so the best way I saw was that the three children that were there plus my wife, I told them like that. And I guess expecting them to say "well what are the issues?" or something like that, and let's discuss these things as a family. But I got a very violent, unexpected response.

OK so all your family is around, you're telling your wife and kids all at the same time, and the response was what?

One daughter fainted

How old were your children at the time?

2004 – the youngest was 26.

The youngest was 26, so they were all married in the Temple by this point.

They were all married in the Temple.

And they're starting to have children.

Yes.

OK and one daughter faints?

She fainted.

Did she like hit her head or...

No, just collapsed, or went down on the floor. My son immediately went to her and looked up at me and said "you'd better get out now Dad, before xxxx (and he quoted her husband's name) get's home".

What??

Yes, you know, he said get out before her husband comes home.

Get out of the house?

Get out of the house.

Why?

Well because he's probably going to punch my head in or something.

For just telling your truth or experience.

Exactly.

OK

Another daughter that was there, and typical of her, she's just a sweet person was absolutely silent, she didn't say anything at all. So I got that kind of response. I did as instructed I left the home.

Wait, did someone scream at you, did your wife scream at you?

My wife screamed at me? I'm just trying now..... I mean what's ringing through my ears is the words from my sons saying "get out before so and so get's home".

And this is a son you had a good relationship with or....

Most people thought he was a clone – we looked alike, talked alike – yeah. In fact Elder Hillam said when you put him in a Stake Presidency you know, he said he's your son. I'm not saying he doesn't deserve it himself but the Brethren's eyes were opened with him because he was my son. So...

And you felt like you had a good relationship with these kids?

Absolutely yeah, yeah.

So were you worried, were you scared or worried about what would happen if you told them?

I was worried? – well no, because I assumed because I'm so close with them that we would have a family....this is a....what are we taught – we have family council – we talk about these things.

Right.

And this discussion, they've grown up where every Sunday at the dinner table as a minimum, it's open discussion for everyone – anyone can bring up any subject, we talk about it as a family.

Right.

Family home evening, family councils – that's what that was all about - I thought that's what we had. So this was a complete – no-one got blindsided I don't think then but me! I'm the one that was gobsmacked by the reaction. Then later on and by the way that husband didn't come home and punch me in the face or anything, he just smiled at me and said, "you've opened a can of worms now haven't you" and that's all he....he's never said anything since to me about it.

OK so you left the house – by yourself?

No, I went out with my other daughter as well, we were just walking in the nearby park and then when the husband came home, he came. Obviously the first concern was about the daughter that collapsed – to make sure she was alright. I mean I went outside to let their mother and my son to see what was wrong, and if necessary to call an ambulance, but there wasn't a serious problem – it was purely emotional and she was over it within minutes. There was nothing serious there but obviously I worried about her til I heard she was alright. I'm worried, I'm a father who's daughter has just collapsed. So I'm

outside and gradually they join us and the two husbands come from my two daughters, hardly saying anything to me and then I heard my son say to one of the sons-in-law "oh I know what his issues are, but don't worry, they're nothing".

Right, they're nothing.

They're nothing – that I take as an offence because I'm quite open and he'd looked at some of the files on my computer at the time and I had a file marked "issues" which were these kind of things. So he says "I know what his issues are and they are nothing" that was his comment. Then, as I say the next night we were preparing to go back to England, my wife was dutifully reading her Book of Mormon and OK I may have made a mistake in saying "why was she reading a book of fiction?" and she immediately told me, that's it, she's not coming back with me, and told me off. So I'm admitting I wasn't the wisest person to make that comment, but as no-one had bothered to discuss anything with me.....

So that's the kind of reaction I got – I came back on my own then from America, saw my other daughter, sat down with her for 1.5- 2 hours, again to tell her the issues. She was very kind – didn't respond to anything but just everything was alright. Then later on that day when we were on the phone she said "Dad, I just found it highly offensive all the things that you said", and all I had done was I guess like in my letter to Elder Holland, I'd quoted scripture – what the Brethren had said about this or that, and what science or history says about those things, that's all I'd said. So that was the reaction from my family.

So how has it played out since then?

Tragic. I assumed then, ok like anyone else would say, hang on, give them a few months – I mean it took me – let's face it, I can talk to myself and say "look it's taken me months to get here", give them time. But we've got to have discussion to have that time and there was no discussion – it was always refusal – same as Elder Holland's response. My wife even said to me at one time it would have been better for her if I had died, rather than lose the faith. Now that I found was a very hurtful statement, also coupled with statements like "Satan has got you, he's not going to get me" and things like that. Now she's a sweet person, she's very kind, you know thousands of people could get up in a court of law and say what a wonderful person she is, but what I'm saying is that they were the things said to me from a wife that we've had the second anointing together, we're married in the Temple for eternity and everything else. Instead of "Tom what are these issues, can we discuss them?" All I ever wanted to do was to discuss them together, not be told Satan's got me and she'd rather I died.

This is going to sound stereotypical but were you committing adultery, were you...did you have a pornography problem...you know...were you secretly drinking....or smoking...

No, nothing at all, nothing at all.

Were you reading your scriptures and praying?

Oh, and do you know during that few months, I was not only praying, I was fasting specifically and one I spent at least two of the monthly fasts just on the Book of Abraham – just on the Book of Abraham, I fasted to know that, whether that was true.

So your righteousness actually increased? Your outward manifestations of righteousness actually increased?

Yeah, by, well, again when you say righteousness, I'm still as righteous as I've ever been. You know this Mormon definition of righteousness may be somewhat different to mine now.

Right.

Because actually I value honesty and integrity and other things, and I can then get upset about you know, things like Joseph Smith, whatever he did with the 14 year old girl, and whatever promises he made to her, and all sorts of things you can get into, but I don't do those things at all. So I feel I am as righteous as any Church member I know. Now if you want to....do I ever take alcohol, yes I do. Does that make me unrighteous – no it doesn't. Do I drink coffee – yes I do. Does that make me unrighteous – no it doesn't.

But at the time you were....

At the time I was doing nothing like that, in fact, even after May, I still went out to Church every week for another 8 months, no 7 months. Mainly I was sitting in Church mainly for the sake of my children, my grandchildren because they were in the same ward, but again, and I was in there and even the Stake President was aware I would make comments in Sunday School but they were all strict comments that were, in fact they were supporting the teacher. If there was something being taught that I didn't agree with I just wouldn't even comment. But anything I could latch onto and make a positive comment I did. But do you know what, after 7 months I said "I've had enough of this, you know

I'm hearing such garbage being taught, I'm not doing this any more" and so I stopped going and even then when my wife would go out to Church, when she came back she saw me dressed in my Sunday best with my white shirt, a tie, dress trousers. You know, no TV, nothing. I respected her idea of the Sabbath day. So I did a lot of things like that for another couple of years or so. It wasn't just an instant, "oh I'm.....and certainly it wasn't that I wanted to sin or anything like that, things that people put about but they're not true.

So did you ever have that – after talking to your family, did you ever try talking to your Stake President? Did you ever have anyone from the Church reach out to try and help you?

I had a meeting, I met with Elder Hiram and his successor was Elder Lund and Elder Lund came to my house on two occasions. In the meantime I also had a visit from the Bishop, which my wife arranged – she thought he could come and sort me out.

And how were those conversations?

Well the one with Elder Hiram, I told you what he said about the death before 6,000 years. He knew nothing about the Book of Abraham and knew nothing about DNA and the lamanites, so it was only that one thing.

He didn't know the issues?

Well he said he didn't know the issues, and what he said to me was "Tom, it's not worth losing your family over".

Right.

So that was the meeting with Elder Hiram. Later on then the wife got the Bishop to come round and sort me out, so I then again just on the one issue before 6,000 years. He said he didn't read the scripture that way. This man at one time had been the Area Director of CES for our area, he's had a lifetime career in CES and he says he doesn't.....well I was dumbfounded at that answer so I then went and dug out some institute and seminary manuals that all taught what I understand the doctrine to be. So I concluded from that that he was either mistaken which is kind of hard in his position – or he was lying to me. I then was visited by Elder Lund and the same Bishop. Elder Lund did not know me too well. He didn't know me like Elder Hiram and Elder Holland knew me, so he first of all came in with a load of dismissive comments to get rid of my issues and then realized they weren't going, by the way.....he actually admitted he

was a wordsmith. He then after two hours went away, he then came back he said with some answers some time later for another two hours. He categorically said that the doctrine of the Church, and he said this in his position as Area President the doctrine of the Church is very.....because first of all "well what is the doctrine of Church" – he gave me all those sorts of things because he didn't know me that well. As if the doctrine of the Church, it may be this, it may be that. But on his second visit he said categorically the doctrine of the Church is there was no death of any kind on this planet prior to 6,000 years ago, and the scientists are wrong. He then left me a paper written by a doctor so and so about carbon dating which I agreed to read. On the Book of Abraham, he trotted out the usual thing about there's another 15 rolls of parchment, etc, etc. That was the answer on that one. And the lamanites, it was just a question of oh well what is a lamanite? He said "I tell people I'm from Salt Lake City. In fact I'm from Bountiful but they wouldn't understand what Bountiful was so I just say I'm from Salt Lake" and brushed it off in that kind of way. But the main issue, the one about death before 6,000 years, he was quite categoric that that was the doctrine of the Church and so again that's a final decision to me that if that's the doctrine of the Church, then I'll go with the scientists on that one and say "no, you're wrong".

The paper he left me I did read because it said Doctor someone, it did have a title at the beginning and it was Doctor and I assumed it was some kind of physicist or whatever and I read the paper. I then found out, I went back, it was actually a medical doctor and one of these....he was a Christian who is, you know, what is it, a young earth scientist type person. Anyway the main conclusion of his paper on carbon dating is that it's not that accurate. If it says 50,000 years old, it may only be 45,000 years old. So I don't know that even Elder Lund had read that paper because it didn't help the argument at all. In fact it cemented it really so.

Now is this Gerald Lund the Author of the Work and the Glory Books?

That's right, he said he spent 10 years researching Church history, his father was into Church history all sorts of things. That was why he had all these answers for me, he could resolve it.

Did you get into polygamy and all that with him?

No, I didn't even bother, didn't even go there. I mean we've had two meetings of two hours just basically on these three issues, I didn't get to polygamy or anything.

It was Book of Mormon, Book of Abraham.

Well the book of...the death before 6....the only thing on the Book of Mormon was two things – the death before 6,000 years and the lamanites, the lamanite situation. You know, whatever we say the progenitors of the American Indian, or whatever you want to call it. Now saying they're one of the....the principal ancestors we used to say, of the American Indians now they're one of the ancestors or whatever it's been changed to. That and the Book of Abraham, they were the only issues on the table.

OK.

To go any further, I mean fine, if those had been answered yes that's a different matter, do I just then close it or do we then go on to the others, I don't know because we never got that far because the three issues I've had so far have never been answered by any General Authority, or BYU professor and from whatever I've read of apologetics, I can't find any credible answer there.

Right.

Other than changing the doctrine that i.e. oh no the Church has always been in favour of evolution, and then you get back into the arguments between Elder Talmage and President Smith at the beginning of the 20th century, where the first presidency statement categorically declared one thing and Elder Talmage and I think Elder Roberts were of the opinion "no, that's not really true because, you know what, geologists say this".

Right, OK, did they threaten to excommunicate you, or did they tell you not to talk about things, like how did you leave it with these people they are, they have got to be nervous that a former Stake President – and I'm assuming they knew you gotten your calling election made sure, at least Elder Lund had. Did you get a sense that they were nervous?

Well, he was, as I say, he, Elder Lund is one of these guys that he's almost...he blends into the background, and he's not the charismatic normal General Authority, and I can see why he just sits there writing books rather than being up front. He's not like the others, who...you know...but he came across in almost like a bullying type way which was quite unusual I thought at the time, for him, because it didn't seem to be his character. Nevertheless it was almost that threat "look I can believe what I want but just don't say or publish it" in which case they would excommunicate me they were his words.

That's what he said?

Yes, that's been many years ago, and he's been replaced maybe two times since then. The last communication I had because that area was then changed so that the headquarters were in Frankfurt, and living here in Malta, I did get a message through from some missionaries here that the Area President wanted to speak to me from Frankfurt. I don't know why he didn't just contact me because it's very easy to get that information off my family – they're not going to withhold it, especially if an Area President wants to contact me. So then I communicated with the Mission President in Italy, who comes over to Malta every six weeks, and was very anxious and wanted to come and meet with me, and help me in any way he could, etc, and I just wrote, well give this to....I cannot remember now the name of the Area President at the time, but you know, if he wants to contact me, you've got my email – just tell me what it is you want to contact me about – or phone me. I'm not going to phone him in Frankfurt – what am I going to do that for? I've been through two Area Presidents.

So you didn't talk to him?

I never talked to him, and he never came back to me either. I said, anything you want to do...even if you just say, I mean – like you did, you outlined what it was you wanted to talk to me about – fine I can read that and we can have a conversation on the phone about it. That's no problem for me, but just a message to contact him, what about?

Right. So what happened with your marriage and your children?

Let me just say, I was just going to say about him, and this applies to everything, the whole thing. I spent my life in the Church, one of the principles I was teaching was going after the lost sheep. We even had at one time in the UK a "Lost Sheep" programme. I don't feel anyone in the Church has come after this lost sheep. The attitude I've had is really summed up by Elder Holland's letter I have raised what I think are genuine issues of concern. My son has said to someone else, they're of no consequence whatsoever, they never addressed them with me – well except on one occasion he addressed some of them. Others in my family have refused, and just like Elder Holland, they refuse to discuss any of the issues and instead say nasty things about you. When you look at that Elder Holland letter, he's expressing his love and admiration for me but at the same time there are insinuations in there which, even if they're not apparent to outside people, he and I know exactly what he means.

Right, so we'll get to that for sure. But you're saying that a few people have

been willing to spend a few hours with you – what more would you want them to do? I mean, you've had a couple of Area Presidents you've talked to, you've talked to a Bishop – what would....like I'm in conversations right now with my Stake President about some of these things and you know, he wants to help me and I don't know exactly what to say – like – what type of help could they offer?

Well I just, I guess reverse it the other way – supposing, and I've said this to each of my family – if my wife or one of my children had ever said to me they didn't think the Church was true, and they had some serious issues about it, I would at that moment drop everything, I would spend whatever time it was with them, on their issues, and I would feel confident that I would resolve their issues by explaining to them where they've gone wrong. If however, I couldn't do that, I would join them. Now again, as a Stake President, I already dealt with apostates. What did I do – I didn't just invite them to a two hour meeting and lecture them, I spent six months and I looked at the material they were on about to try and see what was going on here, and where they might be wrong. I didn't just categorically say....now remember I had two General Authorities – OK you say OK I've had two General Authorities – they both gave me opposite answers. One tells me there's been death on this planet for billions of years, the other one tells me that it's Church doctrine that that wasn't so, and the scientists are wrong. Now which Area President am I supposed to believe on that one? You know, no-one came kindly and lovingly and say yes, look hang on....I'll give Elder Hillam his due, one time – again I think I was in Arizona – and it was round about conference time – he was over at October conference. He phoned me and said he'd just met with some people at BYU, and he mentioned the name of a Dean, now I don't know if it was Dean of BYU or Dean of Religious Studies – I'm not sure what it was, and I can't recall the exact name, but he said, he will put the resources of BYU to you, to resolve your issues. As an example, he sent me a paper from Michael Rhodes. Well, I read that paper, and I thought, if this is the kind of help they're offering, I don't need it because it's just a bunch of....well I'm talking about a paper that says yes, this is not what it says it is. Joseph Smith didn't translate it, but maybe the word 'translate' means something else, therefore maybe it was a catalyst for him to get the original document, blah blah blah. Well, OK, look into the Book of Abraham – in the Book of Abraham is the only place I think we have in LDS scripture, not the Bible, about the curse of Cain. Look at the Book of Abraham and tell me how Egypt was discovered – apparently it was after the flood when there was dry land there. Egyptus one of her sons, became the first pharaoh of Egypt. Now John, you go along, I don't know about BYU but any other university and find their experts on Egyptology, they'll say 'nonsense'. There were pharaohs before this supposed flood of 4,500 years ago, and by the way, if there were such a flood, how come we've got the pyramids still today that predate that, and

all sorts of things? So you can't have it....what was I faced with – my so-called answers are the plain and precious truths of the gospel. I understood the Book of Mormon was for our day and age – the doctrine and covenants certainly. It wasn't written in some ancient language that we don't understand or don't comprehend any more – it was today's language, and now suddenly death doesn't mean death, translate doesn't mean translate, and lamanite doesn't mean lamanite.

And steel doesn't mean steel, and horse doesn't mean horse...

OK John, you're ahead of me there but all of that, yes. I didn't even waste my time discussing these things with them.

All of a sudden words become meaningless. If words can mean anything, then they really don't mean anything, right?

Yes, and I'm not sure what kind of a God we are worshipping that gives us that kind of confusion, because it was supposed to be simple to understand and act.

But so in effect, the original question was "what do you expect people to do to reach out to the lost sheep?" What you're really saying is, either study this stuff and conclude that it's false like I have, or prove to me that it's true...

I'm not even talking about proof here John, I'm reversing those two orders as well. I'm saying going after the lost sheep is that you go after the one that is supposedly lost. You find them, you find out...first of all I used to go out after people and first of all find out "why aren't you going to Church? What is your issue? Now let's address this issue". Not "oh so they're your issues, oh don't worry about those".

Or you're a bad person for asking them... But how could they possibly address these issues? How could anybody? What type of answer could they give you that would satisfy you?

Now?

Yes.

It's hard to imagine now, at the time, well when I say...no at any time – any credible answer. OK as far as death before 6,000 years – the answer to that would have to be 'you know what that was wrong in the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith got something wrong when he was translating it. It shouldn't have

said that'. That maybe is an explanation. Obviously it cast doubt on....I mean, it's the same thing now about quoting a Prophet – well was he speaking as a prophet, or was he speaking as a man? Well, when do I know this? You know I've grown up and when I joined it was David O McKay – just before he died – how many prophets have I been through? Now we certainly disagree with Joseph Smith because all of Mormon Doctrine was based on Joseph Fielding Smith.

Right.

It wasn't Bruce R McConkie, ok he was quoting what Joseph Fielding Smith said all the time. Apparently most of that is untrue now, according...you know...and some – President McKay and others – thought it was untrue at the time. So who is it I'm supposed to listen to – President Benson, President Hunter, President Hinckley. President Hinckley – I've got quotes from him where he says the lamanites are all of the North American Indians. Now I'm pretty sure if he were ever asked that question – if he had been asked that question on Larry King or Sixty Minutes, he would have denied that. You know, where do we go from here. You know I've got this second anointing, the whole thing about the Church. One of my favourite sections was doctrine 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants "and then they shall be Gods" This is wonderful – this is a gospel where us mere mortals if we live in the right way, and do all the things expected of us, eventually become like our Heavenly Father and as Gods. Then President Hinckley says "I don't know, I don't know that we teach that". He knows perfectly well because he then spoke at a Priesthood meeting afterwards and said 'of course I know the doctrine of the Church'. Now what's going on here, why does a Prophet of God tell lies, or misinform people, or...I don't know what you want to call it. To me a lie is something that isn't true. Now I realize there's two types to that – you could...I could say something to you right now and it's untrue, but I thought it was true. You know, what I did, I made a mistake and I can be corrected on that. On the other hand, if I know something is definitely false and I say it, that's a lie. And I'm sorry, I'll call Elder Holland a liar now. I have great respect for him, but you know, now...

OK, before you get to that – we are going to get to that – so basically what you are saying is that the only way that they could reach out to you was to disbelieve their beliefs, because that's the rub, that's the...

I don't expect them to do anything, all I'm saying is, when I mentioned the lost sheep, I'm saying that gets preached all the time in the Church, and I was a leader that preached that as well. Certainly when it came to my case and certain other people I know, that's rubbish. There is no going after the lost sheep, and

do you know why – I think part of the message is I think my family were given it, I don't know this for sure, so I could be if you like, in my words "lying" now, I don't know. I suspect that Elder Hillam or whoever it was at the time, contacted my family and said "don't even answer...just stay away, because you'll get polluted". I've had it actually referred to in that way by someone recently. I'm not going that route because I don't want to get polluted by it, and I, i.e. by inference, end up like you. That was said to me by one of my family just recently, when I asked them just to look at the issues, take some time and then come back to me. No, I'm not even going to go there. That's not going after lost sheep, sorry John, that's not doing it.

Right, so tell me what happened with your wife, with your marriage and with your children.

I don't know....

Well, are you married? Are you still married?

I have been separated for six years from my wife. I live in Malta, she lives in the UK.

Was that her idea, was it yours?

It was both at different times. From 2004 to 2006, that's two years I spent trying to make things work, often being, and most of the time it worked perfectly. But whenever something came up....I tell you what happened one time, it was an unfortunately....I'll just give you an example. My wife and I had had a wonderful weekend away together and we were back at home, and she was just preparing some meal and I was watching the news on the TV, again I made the mistake – it came on about Warren Jeffs being on the most wanted list at the time, so this was a number of years ago, and I happened to comment "look Warren Jeffs is on the news, he claims he's only doing what Joseph Smith did". Now my wife's immediate reaction to that is "get out" No discussion, just "get out" Now ok there's other times I've...ultimately I've chosen to stay away....well I've tried, I've gone back on various occasions, but as long as I toe the line, say nothing, and accept all the garbage that goes on, live in a home with the Temple and Joseph Smith and everything else all around us, that's ok. And have all of our Mormon friends in saying whatever they are and talking about their sons on missions or their children going to EFY, or whatever's going on, or the youth camp, that's ok. But I never can have someone in my home that's not of the faith you know that I could discuss openly some politics or whatever with. I found that unbearable. Now no doubt my wife could say she finds life with

me....you know...whatever. But the only issue is the Church. That is the only issue that we had in our marriage, and the fact that she refuses to discuss anything, and treats me on occasions as if I am the lowest of the low because I don't have the faith that she has.

How does it feel to have the Church separate you from your wife?

Well, let's put it this way, if at the time, my wife had come with me, I'd probably have done nothing more about the Church, her and I would have just lived out our lives in retirement happily together. But having separated me from them, I'm actually now...you see I didn't leave the Church because I was offended by anyone – I've now been offended – Elder Holland has offended me, a number of people have offended me. They didn't offend me when I was a member of the Church but since I've left they've offended me, and they've offended me publicly. He...I may take this personally, he's addressed me and thousands of other people in his 2009 talk, saying we are "foolish and misled" Well, I just answered, I just said to him, well in what way am I foolish and who has misled me? No answer. Why am I foolish and misled? That's a defamation of my character, let alone anything else that's said about crawling over and under and all the rest of it.

So, you've never had this heart to heart with your wife where you said "Sweetheart, please" you look her in the eye and say "you know me, I love you, I'm a good man, please don't throw our marriage away, please don't throw our family away – at least look into this stuff and consider what I've been saying because I'm an honourable, good man and I deserve that much respect". Have you not had that conversation with her?

Yes.

And what did she say?

Let me....John, I'm now not feeling too comfortable in getting – not from my own point of view, I'm happy to share with you anything, but I'm now bringing into something someone that is not party to all of this.

OK.

And I don't think it's really. I probably said too much more than I should have anyway. Let me just say in encapsulating all of that, because it takes into account my wife and children – 2004 I told them, no discussion whatsoever. In 2008 out of sheer frustration of hearing nothing, or not being able to do

anything, and me visiting them and being polite and all the rest of the thing, I then wrote an email to them to try and take away, you know, you talk about the...face to face is a difficult thing to do because everyone bristles. I mean what you just said is wonderful, and it isn't a perfect world but I just start to mention these issues to my wife and it's a problem for her, and then I get angry, I admit, I then get angry because of the non-response thing. So that's no good, so what I did, I wrote a very careful email which I showed to other people, which they thought was very polite and everything else. I basically wrote to my wife and my children and saying, "look, it's now 4 years since I told you, we've had no discussion on it, I think we ought to, in order for a healthy family relationship". Now what I proposed was a two step method. First of all we ought to agree or disagree on certain facts, once we know what we agree on, then we can go from there to what conclusions we may have. So I wrote them this email and I wrote down 19 specific facts that came from - they were either Church sources or textbook each one of them. And I just asked them to take 30 minutes - probably they don't even need 30 minutes, because most of them they would readily just agree with, and I said "just let me know if you disagree with any of them, and if you do, just let me know the reason why". So it could have been a simple email back saying "yes I agree with everything" or "no I disagree with number what and what, you know number 14 and number 18 for these reasons".

In all but one I just got right back from them a similar thing from Elder Holland - not one answer, and a diatribe of other abuse that was hurled at me.

Do you still have a copy of that email?

Yes, the one I sent to them, yes.

OK, I'd be curious to see what those issues are.

They were simple questions.

What were some of the questions? Just give us an example.

OK, I'll give you an answer....ok the obvious one on the Book of Abraham - or, hang on where are we...there were some....Joseph claimed to translate the Chandler papyri as the Book of Abraham, blah, blah, blah, and I quote the source of that. All Egyptologists - LDS and non-LDS, because I think even the apologetics in BYU accept that the translation isn't as Joseph said it, you know, ok they'll give some other reason. Another one I wrote down 'Joseph Smith and Essentials in Church history states that the Nauvoo Expositor Press was

destroyed because it printed lies about Joseph Smith. In fact Joseph Smith told the City Council the newspaper was all lies. Now I've since then read the Nauvoo Expositor and said the Nauvoo Expositor statements about Joseph Smith were in fact true. He had multiple wives and was teaching the doctrine of plural marriage to others, he had been ordained a king and was planning a theocracy. Those things were true but it was destroyed, according to Church history, so it was statements like that – and the obvious one about Adam and Eve and things like that – the Flood – and statements like that – what the Church doctrine was and what school textbook says. So I'm saying which one do you agree with, and if they said, "I agree with the Church and the school textbook is wrong" at least I'd know where they stood on that. But if they say "no, the textbook is right and there's a question mark about the Church", that's all I was seeking to find. There were some things there that were conflicting and they're from credible sources. None of these are from anti-....see this thing about anti-Mormon, I haven't used any anti-Mormon sources on anything – I don't even point the....

Yes, it's the Church's own sources.

It's the Church's own sources, so...

What was your children and wife's response, again was it just diatribes?

Yes, even two years later I followed up by saying "you still haven't answered me" and I got an even worse diatribe.

OK, so here's a question. You raise these children, you taught them integrity and morality and honesty.

Actually John, I've got to....because of the way this is going, you know what – even 8 years ago, I was trying to post anonymously it was to protect my children. Now I'm not so bothered about protecting them, but you know what, I'm still not going to say things over the air about them, I'm sorry.

OK, that's fine, that's fine.

You're right, I love my children to bits, there's no question about that. What I hate is what the Church has done to them and I've been a party to.

Well that's my question....

They've been brainwashed, now it's a very simple thing as far as I'm concerned,

as far as Elder Holland was concerned, this was a sudden...I put to him, this was a sudden death challenge. Now, either I'm wrong, in which case he can...you know what – I want to be proven wrong. Tell me, show me how I'm wrong. Show me these textbooks are wrong. If not, stop the brainwashing, stop telling my little grandchildren 'follow the Prophet', when the Prophet is telling them things that are false. I don't want that in my life. I don't want in their lives, I want to protect them.

OK so it's now 2012 so that's 8 years after you know you first stopped believing in the Church, right?

Yes.

So you wrote a letter to Elder Holland, when did you write the letter?

I did that recently and again that was a last ditch attempt, because I can't ask my family any more, so what I did I wrote to Elder Holland and I copied it to my family. So what I hoped here would take some of the emotion out of it and look at it more objectively. Here's the father or husband writing to an Apostle, now let's see how the Apostle responds, and let's observe this, that's what I was hoping for.

And when did you write the letter?

I think it was in May.

Of 2012?

Yes.

So last month. So you wrote a letter, and what was the basic – if you could give a summary, what did you do in the letter?

OK I reminded Elder Holland of our personal relationship, which obviously he hadn't forgotten anyway, and how much we thought of him our family and everything, and that I had this issue with my family that they were obviously following him and his teachings and I was not, I wasn't, and I wanted him to resolve things with us. I said 'OK taking his talk in 2009 – I took from that talk what evidence he was giving for the truthness of the Book of Mormon, and I offered my rebuttal of those evidences.

I'm just going to say that the way you open the letter is really powerful because

you said...

Oh you've read it have you?

I've just got it right here. Where you say "after you set me apart as Stake President", you say "Tom, we are now sealed". Which is something that I can totally see Elder Holland saying.

Yes, he said that, yes.

And so you're basically saying 'this is my heart, this is my experience, these are my struggles, and if we're sealed, please, please help me understand these issues'.

That's it.

And then you kind of refer to his talk on the Book of Mormon and his challenge about that, right? Then you say 'alright if the Book of Mormon – if only a fool would stop believing the Book of Mormon, if only, you know, if the Book of Mormon is so self-evidently true that you'd have to crawl above it or under it or around it to stop believing in it', then you sort of ask him a series of questions, and these questions were evidences in your mind, that the Book of Mormon, you know, was a problem. And these were the issues that we've covered on Mormonstories quite a bit, from the age of the Earth, to, you know, anachronisms in the Book of Mormon...

Yeah, the horses and everything.

The fall of Adam, DNA and the Book of Mormon, archaeology...

Nothing new at all.

The Book of Abraham, change of skin colour, these are the things that we've covered really extensively on Mormonstories. And then....so what did you want...what did you ask him for?

Well I think I referred to his talk, first of all he made claims in his talk – he said it was true because Joseph would not have died – I'm paraphrasing here, he said something along the lines of Joseph and Hyrum – rather than deny the Book of Mormon they were willing to go to their deaths. That is patently untrue. Anyway he could rebut me if I say it is patently untrue because I think I gave him some things there, but his other statement that for 179 years this has never

been disproven – well I'm just giving some evidence – this is without going into authorship and anything, here's some things here that actually disprove the Book of Mormon. He can't just say it's not been disproved because no-one's answered that as you say, the horses become tapirs or whatever. Everything changes – the Chariots – what are the Chariots now? Everything changes and apparently they weren't in Hill Cumorah at all, or there's another Hill Cumorah somewhere else.

So lamanites are no longer lamanites...

Now I've heard these from the apologists, I want to hear this from an Apostle, and this is a man, you see, he's a man that I'm sealed to apparently, we're sealed together right.

Right.

So I feel he owes me on something here.

That that's got to mean something right?

It's got to mean something – we're sealed together, you know I've got love and respect for him. I think he had love and respect for me at one time. Now what I'm saying is he's the one that's making these claims that this is absolutely true? And OK, the apologists say these other things and we can argue with that – I mean I listened a bit to when you had Simon Southerton and the rubbish they came out with on DNA which forced him to write a book to show that they were wrong on these things. So this is the thing, the apologists for some, for whatever, and I don't know what their motivation comes from, but they certainly – I won't use the word "lie", but they certainly bend things around so that...I don't know what happens...anyway. I want to hear from an Apostle, who is first of all he admits he is an expert on the Book of Mormon. His Masters Degree at BYU was on the Book of Mormon, that's when he was 25 years old.

Right.

He then did a Masters and a Doctorate at Yale based on what – American Studies and the faith of Mark Twain/Samuel Clemens. This is a man that is highly intelligent, knows literature, ought to know American history because you know, he did a PhD in American Studies, now maybe that means something different, I don't know.

From Yale?

From Yale oh yes, this is from Yale. Now this is something I find highly...now I mention an Oxford or Cambridge while you mention a Yale or Harvard, you know, or an MIT or Stanford or whatever and you know, we listen to those sorts of things. If they thought he was good enough to give him a PhD, this man must know his stuff. And not only that...so that's academically he should know these things – now as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, he should know even more. If I can't get answers from him, there's no-one I can get answers from. He's not even giving answers – his answer was nothing. He didn't address one issue.

So let's go through what his response was. You have a letter...or did he write you just an email or...did he send you a hand written letter?

No, he wrote me an email.

OK so you have an email.

I don't have it on me.

OK just a second let me get it, let me get it.

Sorry about that.

Sorry, say that again.

Sorry, you won't have the full email from him – because he had the corporate warning at the bottom about not sharing the email, I didn't copy it to anyone else. What I did though, was I did a response to his email and quoted certain sections of it in my response.

Because there is a copyright thing there and..

Well I'm not sure, I've had legal advice that goes both ways. I don't think they...actually I think I could show the whole thing, and there's lots of people want to see the whole thing. Partly there's some personal things in there about Elder Holland's wife which I don't think I do want to show to people, and I think he was wrong for even mentioning her.

Right.

Secondly, but there are parts of it which show his presence of mind at the time,

which I think would be of interest to people but I haven't shared that either.

So if it's ok – what if I read what he responded and then you can respond to little segments of it?

OK.

So the first thing he wrote was “Tom, I love you but you absolutely break my heart. I've seldom met anyone during my years in England, unless it was your son Alan” – and he is the Stake President?

Yes.

“...in whom I saw greater potential. You have a remarkable family and that of course only adds to the immense pain I feel”. Now that's a sweet beginning right?

Yes, OK.

OK, then he says “Oh my Tom I weep over you and where you now find yourself. Don't you realize I have been reading stuff like you sent, since I was 25 years old, but I'm sad to say, never in all those years, with such disappointment.” What's your response to that?

Well, if he has seen those things, well first of all when he was 25 there were not DNA studies for a start.

Right, but what he's basically saying is...

But in substance those things were there. Now if he knew about those at age 25, then presumably he answered those things satisfactorily for himself, so all he has to do is give me those answers. Why has he then spent almost another 50 years proclaiming the truth of it, but he's not given us any indication of how he addressed those issues. He's never even mentioned those issues.

What if he just says it's the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, it's just a feeling, it's a different type of truth, it's a type of truth that comes through the Spirit and through a different layer of understanding, I mean that the intellect will just never be able to comprehend?

OK, then I would say to you, I know that there are men – and I think that they were all men – that flew aircraft into the Twin Towers and killed thousands of

people. Their motivation we understand was the Koran, and their feeling that they were doing Allah's work. And they were going to go straight to Heaven as their reward, that's why they were willing to die.

Now, then I can quote you a guy here I know who is a Christian, who used to be an alcoholic, and he found Jesus. The Spirit has told him and he has had that spiritual witness, but do you know what he tells me about Mormons? They're not even Christians, and the same God that converted him from his alcoholism to Christianity says that Mormons are not true and the Book of Mormon is not true. Now so if Elder Holland wants to come up with this "Spirit has told me| I've told you I've had many spiritual experiences, and that was part of my months of coming out – how do I handle this now – I had a spiritual witness the Book of Mormon was true, right. Now all I've seen from Elder Holland when he talks about the "spirit" is emotion. Emotion – and you'll understand that John.

No, but he'll say it's not emotion. The Spirit is not emotion, it's something more powerful.

And I said the same thing. I've been up and I've spoken in Conferences and things and even related my conversion story and said, "look, if that were pure emotion, I would have got over it by now" so it is the indelible mark of the Spirit. I've been through all of that conversation, but you answer this, I can get at least a thousand people all to tell you about their spiritual experiences they've had, and every one of them conflicts with the other one. Now what we're trying to say here is, "oh, but it's Elder Holland" and this is the superiority of Mormonism – we're the ones that have the correct spirit – the rest of them are misguided, by whom – Satan or someone else – there's a deceiver. Why don't they come out and say that – "Elder Holland, say that I've been deceived by Satan, if that's what you think." And why have I done that, what sins have I committed, that have caused Satan to enter my life at a time when I'm about to go on a mission? OK maybe that's his way of stopping me from going on a mission, maybe. No, Elder Holland, you said you knew these issues at 25 so at least address one or two of them to me.

So let's go...

Why not even...

Go ahead, why not even what?

I was going to....even when I challenge him about why Joseph and Hyrum died – they died because they destroyed a printing press. They died because Joseph

was expecting the Nauvoo militia to come and rescue him. He had a gun on him. All these stories that I was told about martyrdom – NO! That’s not a martyr – he died because he was doing that, and other people knew he was taking other wives, they also knew he was after young girls. Why was Joseph Smith tarred and feathered? I was told he was such a righteous man and he was taken out and tarred and feathered one night and the next he was preaching a sermon on forgiveness. No apparently he was tarred and feathered because he’d gone after some other girl and actually they weren’t going to tar and feather him. Now actually I don’t know how true this is, according to some sources there was a doctor there that was going to perform a castration on him but they didn’t do that – the tarring and feathering was a lesser punishment for him. Now I never knew all this in the Church history, and I’ll just go back to one item, which shows Church history is false. The thing about the destruction of the Nuavoo Expositor – it says quite clearly in Church history that it was done because William Law had told lies about Joseph Smith and therefore it had to be destroyed. It did not tell – from my reading – it did not tell one lie. It talked about his polygamy or his plural marriage, however you want to term it – the fact that he had more than one wife – the fact that he was teaching other Brethren to take more wives - the fact that he was ordained a King. I’ve just read out I was ordained a King. Of course Joseph Smith was ordained a King. Did he not have the second anointing? Of course he did. He was also ordained a King by the Council of the Fifty. He was setting up a government, he was running for US President and trying to set up a theocracy. They’re the reasons he was killed, not because he wouldn’t give up his faith or the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon was not even mentioned. So that’s what I called him on and he doesn’t respond even to that.

OK so let’s go on and see what he says. So he says “Tom, the Book of Mormon is true, it was delivered by, and translated through the gift and power of God.” Quick response to that? I don’t know how you really respond to that.

Well, the Koran was delivered by Gabriel, that’s a response to that. A billion and a half Muslims believe the Koran was delivered to Mohammed by Gabriel. Then I can find all sorts of other scriptures to other traditions that all say the same thing. So that doesn’t say it. That’s his claim that that happened. Now again I’ll say to you, if that happened, then whatever’s in that Book of Mormon will be true. That’s the test, see all this thing about “oh it was through the power of God” or whatever, that’s fine – they’re the sort of things you can neither prove nor disprove. You know, we get into the realms of things that have to rely on people’s beliefs or whatever or the position they take, but the book itself is what we’re looking at and that book and all the things you’ve rattled off about horses and.....I’m not even going into those things....I’m just saying about the death

before 6,000 years – those kind of things are all untrue. The Tower of Babel, the black skin, the flood, all of these things are not true but they're in the book that was delivered by the power of God. I don't get it – explain to me why God would give us a book of mythology, as opposed to all the other books of mythology, and say "his one is the true one." Why would he do that?

Well, in reality, what's taught in it is not very distinct from what we already have elsewhere.

There's nothing – is there anything unique in there?

Well, I guess apologists would say there is a couple of things but... So he says in here 'alongside this statement...'

Well I'll tell you the one thing I know of that's unique in there is the death before 6,000 years, because that's not even in the Bible.

Right, right.

Because it talks about periods of creation and..... anyway.

It also says polygamy is not a good thing. So after he makes the statement that the Book of Mormon is true, he says "longside this statement, you can post on the board my general talk on the subject." Now why is he referring to a bulletin board and you posting things? Did you do reference....

In my letter to him I said, and this is why, yeah. I said to him "Elder Holland you have made public statements, you know, on the internet, in Church magazines, in books, on Youtube, it has been broadcast through general conference.....you have made statements and my family hear those statements – you made it publicly to all sorts of people and called the likes of me foolish and misled. Because you have done that, I am going to post this on a bulletin board and any response you give me will be posted in the same way" i.e. "you've made it public, I'm going to make it public."

Which makes it all the more incredible that he responded, right?

Yes.

Because he knew that...he basically gave you permission to discuss what we're discussing now.

He knew I was going to do that, yes.

And he still responded, so these are the questions he asked you:

1. Have you ever had a spiritual experience in your entire life?

Thousands, I think I responded to that, didn't I?

2. Are you having any in recent days or weeks or months?

Every day – even by the hour. I'm not so sure in the last three hours, but...

Where do you think he was getting by that question – where do you think he was getting at?

He's trying to make out, well first of all the fact "have I ever had one in my life" – he's now trying....you know the usual tactic is you know what I was "never converted" in the first place, I never had a testimony of the Church.

If that's true, you should have never gotten the second anointing.

Well, exactly.

Because surely God wouldn't allow his leaders to be deceived about who's worthy of the calling of election made sure right?

Right, hey now one thing that's relevant, just let me add in on the second anointing. After the second anointing, Elder Hillam called me into his office one day and said "Tom, I'd like you to nominate two more couples for their second anointing. I was flabbergasted, I actually went away and told my wife. I actually fasted....I said do you need it immediately, he said "well in a few days", I said, "because actually I want time to fast and pray about this". I took that as a very serious responsibility. If I'm going nominate people for this kind of ordinance wow! So I went away and I went through countless lists of people I knew and obviously went through the Doctrine and Covenants Section 8 and 9 method of studying things out in your mind, praying about it and all the rest of it. So I fasted and prayed and I went back with two names. So again if what Elder Holland is saying is I was never converted, what the...again why are they asking me to nominate people for a second anointing? They know I had spiritual experiences, that's as much....and I will say this, I've had spiritual experiences I am convinced now I've had them as equal to anyone in the Church – anyone.

Sure, sure. And you say you're still having them?

I'm still having spiritual experiences, yes.

OK, we can talk about that later. That's probably it's own topic. So then he goes on to say 'no discuss...' so you think he was trying to either say you were never converted, or what I read this to be saying is that he is expecting you to say you're no longer having spiritual experiences. Now isn't that a testimony that you've lost the Spirit?

Exactly, it gets back to what my wife said – she said "Satan's got you, he's not going to get me". Elder Holland's quite obvious in that – he won't say – when I ask him who's misled me, the answer is obvious – it's Satan has misled me, I've lost the Spirit and therefore I'm listening to the Adversary, that's the answer, that's the simple, honest answer to it. Well say that Elder Holland, say that in writing that that's what you're saying – don't hide behind it and try and suggest things in innuendo and insinuations.

So then he goes on to say no discussion with the Book of Mormon, or the Church, or the Gospel of Jesus Christ has any ultimate meaning at all without that experience.

Which again is right...a lot of these actually been commented on the bulletin board. People far brighter than me have made all sorts of comments on some of these.

OK then he goes on say...I'll just read these quickly:

'How does your family feel about your views?' Again....

The same as him.

Right. 'Are those views helping them?' So he's going to where Elder Lund went or Elder Hillam, I forget who it was – facing you with a pragmatic view of...

You're going to lose your family – you know what he doesn't realize is that in at least one or two situations, my family are much worse off now than they were 8 years ago - much worse. So it's not that their lives have been blessed and mine has been damaged – in fact the opposite – I'd say I am the happiest person in my family alive today. That's not what they say and that's not what they would like to think. They would like to think that I'm unhappy and I'm this angry

anti-Mormon. No, I've written a letter, you know, I don't care. At the end of the day I personally don't care about Mormonism. I do care about my grandchildren being brought up and not told the truth about things, or the lies they are told about their grandfather.

You certainly miss being close to your children right?

Yeah, that close, and we can do things together, we can do all sorts of things together, but we had a closeness that was priceless. Now that closeness, they obviously can't feel comfortable in talking to me about the Church, even though I'd welcome that, but they probably feel that they can't because they think it would upset me. On the other hand, I can't say anything to them about it. So we can have a relationship and probably, you know what, the relationship I have with my family is as good as 80 or 90% of families have in the world. It's just not as good as it was. We had an exceptional relationship.

So you still see your kids and grandkids?

I see them from time to time, yes.

OK, good. OK, so he asks 'are those views helping them?' and he says...

They don't share my views....they would help them, I mean, I've got a grandson on a mission right now. I don't know if you know about our English education system, but he got 5 A levels at A+. He should be at Oxford University now, or whatever he chose. No, he is on a mission in France.

Right.

He should be at a University doing what he wanted to do, but no, his parents say he has chosen – no he was brainwashed into....you know....bright as he is, he's out – in my mind he's out there spreading untruths and has never been allowed that conversation with his grandfather. You know, it's interesting because I've had conversations with him in the past on politics and all sorts of things and he's bright, and in almost every respect of things we've discussed, we've agreed upon. But we've never been able to talk about the Church.

Right.

So I think his life is actually worse and it will be worse, because he'll be that far behind, again with our system, because he goes on a mission at 19, normally we go to University at 18. We don't have the system like in the US where you go for

a year then do your mission.

Right.

It actually puts him two or three years behind any University experience.

Then Elder Holland goes on to say “Are people happier, prospering more, doing better following your lead?” So this again is a very pragmatic, ‘what are the fruits of your apostasy basically. Well I see that as a personal insult first of all. First of all the people that I associate with nowadays are in the main not Mormons anyway, and as far as I know, all of my friends and all of the acquaintances I have like me very much, love me. They seem to want more and more of my company and I seem to inspire them and help them and they seem to lead better lives. And I also learned from them, I’m not saying it’s a one way street, but I don’t know of anyone that is in any way disadvantaged or unhappy because of an association with me. All I know of is my family hate the fact that I mention the Church, they hate....it must be hard for them when they meet someone that they haven’t seen for years, and they say “oh, how’s your Dad doing?” you know, and the usual question “what’s he doing in the Church?” How do they answer those things? I think that’s painful for them.

Do you think other people in the British Isles have left the Church knowing that you’ve left?

Some have, some found out after. Some had left and then found out that I had, so I am aware of some but not all, and I know some people were influenced over the second anointing post and other things. Some others have written to me about this thing about Elder Holland – that’s been the last straw for them – they see him for what he is – a ranting – you know this isn’t the loving Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ – this is a.....anyway I know we’re going through some of the things that he said.

Let’s keep going, so he says “Who are you trying to convince? Surely not me, is it yourself or others?” So he’s saying you’re trying to convince yourself.

No, hang on, I say, Elder Holland, read the beginning of the letter. I’ve already told him what I’m trying to do. I’m approaching this as his death, sudden death situation. I...from all my evidence it seems to me that the Book of Mormon is not true. He says it is true, my family side with him. I’ve put to him the two sides of the argument. I’ve said here’s the evidences against the Book of Mormon and here are your evidences for it. Now please, what I want you to do is rebut my evidences against it and support your evidences for it. That’s all I’m

asking, then you've convinced me. Yes, you've convinced me. I'm not trying to convince him, and my family I'm just looking at as observers. They ought to be able to, if they were rationally thinking, either Elder Holland is right, or Dad is right. It can't be both, we can't both be right on this. Now if I am confused or something, then Elder Holland please kindly show me and lead me as a kind shepherd and bring me back to the fold by showing me either that you've got answers, or these things don't really matter because of this, that and the other. Don't say to me 'oh gosh I looked at this when I was 25, they're nothing'.

Right, right, right. OK so...

That's a brush-off, we're light years away from that from science, from physics and you know...anyway that's getting on.

So he says, "You can do what you want about the Church, so do it, stay, leave, hide, run, burn the Book of Mormon, bury your Temple Covenants, do anything you want. As the very book you reject says 'Truthfully, you are free to act, and not be acted upon'. Tom, my heart is broken as I write this, I wish I hadn't begun. I was raised without the Gospel in my youth and now I have it, so I am manifestly the wrong man to talk to about whether to go or whether to stay, whether the Book of Mormon is true, or whether it isn't, the Book of Mormon changed my life dramatically than any book could change any young man of whom I know, before or since".

OK that's essentially a sweet....I'm just thinking for Elder Holland for a second, that's a sweet testimony. That's just saying, my life is better, it's changed my life, I feel it's true and I just, I'm committed to this do you know, that's what I hear him saying there. It's just, "I'm sorry, but I'm sticking with this."

Well, let's just back up, and I think you're taking a kind translation of that. Let's hope that the way....I can't remember all now that he did say but...

He's just saying the Book has changed his life.

OK, do you know what, I've got a book on my shelf right now that has changed my life. It's called 'The Greatest Show on Earth' and it's written by a science professor from Oxford University. That has changed my life, writings of Marcus Aurelius have changed my life. It doesn't make them scripture. The Book of...the Koran - I keep coming back to the Koran. That has changed the lives of billions of people - many more than the Book of Mormon have changed it. Harry Potter's changed people's lives. The Lord of the Rings.

Right.

There are all sorts of books out there and there are a lot of fictional books that change....you know...they touch you. They touch you. You can read a book, I've read fictional books that I've cried over. Do you know what, I've even seen a programme....do you remember that TV series "24" when the hero...at some stage there was some kind of a terrible bomb on a plane and he was going, he was riding the plane to his death and the last thing he did was to phone his daughter to say goodbye. I cried when I....that's inspirational, but you know what, it wasn't true, it didn't make it true. The fact that it was uplifting for me to learn the lesson – that doesn't make a thing true. You can write fiction and it uplifts you and it can change people's lives, so that isn't an evidence. No, the evidences he gave remember was that Joseph died for it. He refuses to defend that argument. Now suddenly that goes off the sights....the thing he said in General Conference – remember he even said the very book that he's holding is the book that Joseph and Hyrum read from – all of that kind of thing. They were the theatrics that he was doing. They were the theatrics, that's not the Spirit, that's theatrics.

OK OK...

And no substance whatsoever.

OK.

So what's he asking me to do? Believe him – no, I think Elder Lund put it better – do I believe his statement that the Church doctrine is that there was no death of any kind on this planet prior to 6,000 years ago – or do I believe the scientists? That is basically my sudden death challenge – do you know what, I believe the scientists, and I know fine rightly if any of the Brethren go into hospital, they do rely on medical science to operate on them, or get them right, or whatever. They don't go by what they feel – they use that and I've got first hand experience of how the Church uses science and other things for its benefit.

Right. He goes on to say, "I know a couple of Christian Evangelists, who are both alcoholics and had their lives transformed by the Bible."

Sorry, I said that.

Oh, that was you...OK, OK, OK.

It was one of my answers to..... ok there's another thing, I know two people –

yeah, they could say the same thing as he said.

OK, got it. That didn't make sense coming from him, OK, but it was boldened, so I thought it was him. OK, then he goes on to say "So do what you want Tom, but don't embarrass yourself by asking about metallurgy or archeology or horses. The discussion about the power and the promise of the Book of Mormon went light years beyond that a long time ago."

OK, so again, "do what you like Tom" so here is this loving person to whom I'm sealed, basically says that same thing to me as Elder Lund – go do what you want, resign, hide, do whatever you like, I'm not going to come and help you Tom. OK and so when did the power of the Book of Mormon go light years? And here I'll ask a question – does Elder Holland even know what a light year is? And what concept...how can the power go light years beyond metallurgy and anything else? What kind of nonsense is that? Do you know what, that's playing to the audience. The audience of devout Mormons and remember I was one of those, I would hear something like that from Elder Holland and I'd say 'hurrah!' that's great! He's really nailed it there. What has he said, boil that down and explain to me – maybe I'm thick here – what has he actually said? In all of his talk and his thing to me, he hasn't said anything. Nothing but hot air and emotive language.

He goes on to say "I love you and pray God you will be open to some spiritual indication of what is at stake here. I do love you and I will pray through this very night for you – more so than I will for the man who has cancer whom I now leave to bless. Yours is the more serious circumstance."

Again I see that as offensive – that I am in the more serious circumstance than a man dying of cancer. I wonder if he said that to the man he visited and how that man would feel about it. No, I'm sorry, Elder Holland in my view now, especially with that kind of response – he's the one with the thing worse than cancer. Far worse, because not only has he, in a sense, wasted his life on an untruth, he has influenced thousands, or tens of thousands, millions – I don't know how many people he's influenced to believe the same tripe that he's trying to trot out, and there is absolutely no substance behind it. It bamboozled me for 35-odd years so I understand why people do it, and I was in awe of him and all the others, but part of that was taking their direction not to look at anything that might be against the Church. Now I didn't even go and look at anything against the Church, I just looked at science, or history by historians that know what they're talking about and who don't have an axe to grind – they don't have a particular position...I know some will have a position to try and prove...but in the main those people get weeded out. In the academic world, it

is usually those that are looking for 'what is the right thing', 'what is the truth here?' and that's not what Elder Holland's interested in it's not truth. This is his position, he's staked his whole life on it and I better believe it or just go away and hide somewhere and lose my family and he's not going to do a solitary thing about it. I asked him to put up or shut up – be man enough to put up.....I'm not talking about conclusive 100% proof that it's true, I'm not saying "bring me an angel" or "bring me God" or anything like that – I'm just saying "answer the critics" – don't say there are no criticisms to the Book of Mormon, or we're "light years ahead of that" – they've never been answered – never. They've tried to bring up apologetics – you might as well use the word "excuses" – that's all been – excuses and rationalization – that's all that we've been offered to substantive questions, and all I've asked for was answers, and the way I've been treated is this way to give me no answers and to infer that I might have sinned in some way?! Or I've done this, or something terrible is going to happen to me in consequence of this? No. What is the big problem that they have with truth? You know, it's supposed to be "The True Church" so truth ought to play some kind of importance in it. I've come to realize rather painfully that truth has got nothing to do with it. This is our position and this is what we defend to the death.

So what do you mean by his position is worse than having cancer. I mean you kind of said it, but I just...

Yeah, and I wouldn't want to say that to anyone...no...hang on....sorry...please take that back or even delete it.

No, it's ok but you're saying it's a serious thing to mislead people, is what you're saying. When so much is at stake. Correct?

Sorry, but John I've got to be careful here, this going out of context is completely wrong.

No, no, OK...

Look I hear today on the news that Cheryl Crow has a brain tumour – it's not cancer. She's already had breast cancer. You know cancer is a word no-one wants to hear.

Right.

So I'm not saying anyone is a worse....that is a terrible thing to have. Now I'm sorry, when I used those words this is in response to someone saying to me

that whatever I've got is worse – I'm in a worse state... Now I know what he means because it's the same thing my wife said – this man, presumably a faithful member of the Church, is in hospital with terminal cancer. Elder Holland's going to go and kindly give him a blessing. He may have some remission or he may die. If he dies, it doesn't matter because he's alright for the next life, blah, blah, blah, it's no problem. Whereas me, I'm a Son of Perdition, that's what he's saying, that's why my position is worse. Now I'm saying, you know I went through all the nightmares about perdition, I had night sweats about it – that I would be cast into outer darkness just because of what – telling the truth? Now I've come to terms with that, and do you know what – I'm not going to outer darkness, and all I'm saying is "no, Elder Holland, you haven't worse than cancer, not in any ways, I retract anything that I've said that", alright.

No that's fine.

I take that back but I'm saying, he's in a bad condition because he's in the position as an Apostle and as someone that has a doctorate in American studies to actually get to grips with and show us all, one way or the other. Now what he's shown is that it's not true. He hasn't shown that it's true – he's done the opposite. He's blurted and he's gone all emotive, and on the attack about it being true, and of course it's light years of science the Book of Mormon. No. You get someone to actually read the Book of Mormon, it's no great work of literature. Most members you've got to force them to read the Book of Mormon. I've been through all that. I used to...you know...I've got a daughter unfortunately that's read the Book of Mormon, or the Scriptures every day of her life for the last 30 years, that's commendable because that's the way she was taught in seminary and everything else, and people do that, but most members do not. Most members can't be bothered. Most times when I speak to a Christian even about their faith, they've never read the Bible. They only know certain quotes from it, they've never read it all.

Right.

Now he's an Apostle that knows these things so he can put it to bed one way or the other, it's either true...it's his statement I only put back to him his statements, his sudden death which he's talked about now for 20 years or more. He's done it in books, in talks, this is not a new thing he's come up with. He's always said it's a sudden death. It's either true, or it's the biggest fraud of all. Now I've never used words like that, but I'm saying it's either true or it's false. He's only shown me that it's false, not that it's true. Sorry.

No, it's OK, I got it. So and then he ends the letter with "immense sorrow and

unfailing love". Now did you cut any parts of the letter out where he actually responded to your actual questions?

No, he never responded at all.

So he didn't say "read this book" or "you could go read this article" or "check out this website."

The only parts I left out were personal things about what he was doing in his office right then, his personal state of mind at the time, which I think has relevance but I didn't feel like sharing that because, do you know what, I don't know – some people will say that's a calculated message that Elder Holland had, not for me but for everyone else because he's actually trying to warn people. I actually don't believe that, I think actually he did that and maybe regrets it now, I don't know, but he did that on the spur of the moment when he should have been somewhere else. He stayed later in the office, did that email, and I know the reason why he would have done that – because I'd been trying to phone him that day and he got that off his chest and maybe, that should have actually gone through some other Apostles and there's no other Apostle that would have allowed him to have written that. No way.

Do you feel like it's weird that you could be sued if you shared the actual email he shared with you?

Is it weird?

Well, how does it seem to you that...

I don't even care if they do sue me – sue me then – I guess I was just trying to be respectful...

But how does that strike you that his conversation with you is sort of protected by law so that you can't share it?

Well I don't because...ok... he puts that disclaimer on it, but some people...and there's differences of opinion out there – some people say he is protected and that he actually has the copyright on that and I have no right. Others will say "no, once an email goes out...", and certainly knowing all the circumstances and the very fact that he knew I was going to post it on a bulletin board, I think in any court of law, he's not going to win if he were to sue me anyway. So that I'm not worried about. I guess I'm a little bit....he puts in there the actual location of his wife for instance at a particular time. Now I'm not so sure that I want that

around the internet – there are crazy people out there – I wouldn't want any...to identify exactly where my wife or daughter was at any particular time – especially someone like an Apostle. If someone wants to get at the Brethren, why not get at Pat or something if they know exactly what her location is.

Right.

Or was, I don't know. So maybe that's me just being too protective of him, but I don't really think the world needs...and it's totally irrelevant to the message anyway. That's got nothing to...again all it was, was a personal dig at me, it wasn't anything to do with the substance of the letter. I know why he said that.

So what.....overall how did this email make you feel – overall.

It was....first of all it was a great surprise – let's face it – all I could have expected – I expected a) no response.

Be ignored, right?

To be ignored, ok that's number 1 – ignore it. Number 2 – a very polite letter that would basically say, you know, "there are a lot of things we don't quite understand right now and in the future we will" and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah and bear testimony. That kind of thing I could expect as well. Obviously the thing I wanted which was least expected was "yes Tom, OK I've looked at these issues and here's the answers to them, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And yes Joseph Smith did die defending the Book of Mormon for these reasons" – something like that.

So that's what I expected. I even expected it to have come out from a BYU professor....or draft....I expected him just to hand that to a BYU professor or apologist that would have drafted the response for him. I only expected him just to sign it and maybe add a personal note. That's all I expected. What I got dumbfounded me – the fact that it was by email, that it was personal, that it didn't address any of the issues, and quite honestly offended me. I may be over sensitive there but he offended me.

It offended you.

Yes. I took offence at it – rightly or wrongly I took offence.

Because....you have a personal relationship with him, so what offended you about it?

Well ok, first of all, he's suggesting I never had a Testimony, I've never had a Spiritual experience, my family are better off than I am, I'm getting terrible – I'm in a worse state than a man dying of cancer, I shouldn't even bother about these silly issues that he sorted out when he was only 25. You know – what problems have I got – that kind of language I find offensive.

Right.

I don't think my letter to him was in any....in fact....most people that have read it say that they're quite commendable to me about how respectful I was of him, and I've only used any strong language to him in retaliation to what he may have said to me. You know, I've not been the attacker or the ranter on this.

So did you respond to his letter? Did you write him back?

Yes, I think that's what you're reading from isn't it.

So that's your response, and then have you received any response since then?

No, no.

OK, do you think he will, or probably not?

I don't know, I mean on pure conjecture from the way the Brethren work I don't....first of all I think he's been rapped. I don't know who's rapped him – I think it's someone more senior than him. He's been rapped for doing this in the first place, I would think.

Right.

This is not what his lawyers or PR people would have him do.

Right.

And the other Brethren.

Right.

You see, I remember getting emails from Elder Holland when he was a junior Apostle, and he was at everyone's beck and call. He couldn't get done the things he wanted to do and he was desperate, chasing all over the place. Now he's a

more senior Apostle, but he's still got those people above him and he should have consulted with them – this should have gone through correlation if you like, this is quite an important issue.

But isn't that also kind of, in a strange way, commendable, that he cared enough about you to reach out to you, even though he knew you could share it on the internet and that he bore his testimony to you, that even though he knew he could get in trouble for it, or that...

Alright, I'll tell you what...he did not write that email out of love for me, and that particular day I know what happened and I'm not going to share that publicly either, but he was not intending to write that email that day, that night, nor in that way. I think he was going to try and go the other route by having someone else draft something and just be polite and even refer me to papers that, as you say, have been done on all sorts of issues.

You're saying something happened in his life that made him write...that sort of lead to him writing that email when he probably wouldn't have otherwise. Is that what you're saying?

Something happened that day which as a result of an initiation by me that caused him to write that, yes.

OK, but you don't want to talk about that, ok. Alright, well wow, so...

No, hang on, no sorry, I will tell you what happened. I had not received a reply so I phoned up his office and spoke with his Executive Secretary – Randy – and she said that she didn't even know about my letter - when I was chasing it she didn't even know about it – she said it was probably handled by another Secretary – she would find out about it and get back to me. A day or two went by, she didn't get back to me, so I then phoned her again and she said “yes, he does have it, and you'll probably get a response in a few weeks time”. I asked, “could I speak with him”, she said ‘he's in a meeting’. I said, “ok well when he comes out, please tell him a few weeks is too late – I need this answer”. Now I was actually surprised to get it that night, but I did expect him to get something to me within a couple of days. So that's why I know, he came out of some meetings that day, on his way to go home via a hospital and to pick up his wife, he stayed late – and this is part of his resentment in that – he stayed at the office to write that to me. Now he didn't intend doing that, but whatever message his Executive Secretary relayed to him, somehow he took that as a serious issue and did it. Not out of love.

And were you basically saying “answer my letter or I’ll go public” or something like that?

No, no, no, no, no, because he already knew I was going public – I didn’t say that not at all. I wouldn’t threaten anyone in that way.

OK but he felt some urgency, like if he didn’t respond, something bad would happen right?

There’s nothing I can do against him, I’m not threatening anyone.

Right, right.

But I’m saying, in my life I needed that answer – I’m not...I can’t wait a few weeks.

Got it, got it.

I can’t wait a few weeks for that, and not with my family situation right now – I need to get some closure on some certain issues, because I was hoping...I mean, hope against hope, I thought he was going to respond in a way that either...you know....let’s say what could have happened if the response had been right. Either it convinced me that the Church is ok and I’m back on board, or it doesn’t but it’s done in such a way that it’s obvious to anyone else reading it – such as my family – that he hasn’t got the answers...you know...so either way I thought, hang on, even a non-answer is actually an answer to me, if he refused to answer. Because that’s actually saying he can’t answer those issues. So again, I’d go back to my family and say, “look I’ve put all these issues up to an Apostle, he’s got no answer for it – what do you make of this?” That’s all I was expecting and then that’s closure for me because then they just say one way or the other, and if they say “well look we still believe the Church is true, blah, blah, blah, you’re ranting, Elder Holland isn’t ranting, he’s very polite and loving and kind to you”, ok then I understand and do you know what, I don’t need to talk about it again. But he didn’t...you know....it’s....instead he rants....so anyway.

Maybe he’ll still respond, who knows.

Well I would hope....but I did....I....if you read the end of my reply, I put something to the effect of “don’t bother responding unless it is of substance”.

Right.

Because I do hope that he does but I don't need any more flannel like that...I mean....give me.....you know, please respond by all means, but answer the questions, that's all I'm asking, and I'm afraid I did put an unkind sort of comment in there somewhere – I said “put up or shut up”.

Right.

And by 'shut up' I mean stop talking at General Conference about the Book of Mormon being the word of God and in 179 years no-one has proven it false, or there's no other credible alternate theory about its authorship – that's patently untrue – there are credible alternatives...now I'm not saying they're right, but they're at least as credible as Joseph Smith's theory, not theory but what he says happened. The Craig Riddles and all the rest of the world, they've got some credible theories out there that could, may or may not be true but they're credible – acknowledge that.

Right.

Sorry, am I ranting now.

No, it's good.

I call it...well the funny thing is you see, my family will say I'm ranting and I'm angry and yet when Elder Holland gets up - and he did it all over England - and he thumps on a pulpit, or in General Conference thumps on a pulpit, and holds up a Book of Mormon and cries and shouts and everything else – that somehow he's full of the Spirit. I'm not quite sure I understand someone being full of the Spirit and spouting things that are untrue. Whereas if I get a little bit passionate about something and spouting things which I consider are true, and no-one has told me they're untrue, I'm a ranter for some reason. Do you understand that John? Why would that be? Why am I a ranter and he isn't?

Yeah you know, it's just....people have mindsets, and they have a mindset that it's true and so if they hear evidence or comments or commentary to the contrary of their world view then it's perceived, it's received as offensive and as dangerous and you're feeling the opposite paradigm – you're feeling like you've discovered the truth, you're feeling like you're now more grounded in reality and so you're excited – so for you it's exciting – for you, you're feeling the Spirit, and they're feeling awful – they're calling that the Spirit telling them that you're awful – you know what I mean? This is just me, this isn't anything official.

But I've got the Spirit and he's being misled by Satan – I'll go with that (laughs).

Yeah because you know the way the Church sets it up is “the fruits of the Spirit are love and peace and joy and happiness and goodwill” – well certainly they're not feeling that when you tell them the things that you think or believe, so they've been set up to interpret your words through the filter of their interpretation of their feelings which is that you must be wicked because they're not feeling the hair stand up on their arms and warm fuzzy things inside, and even though you might be feeling the hairs stand up on your arms, and the tingly feeling and the inspiration that what you're saying is true, you're just now coming from a totally different paradigm, right?

Right, but also when you say that, I mean, in fairness in this whole conversation we've had, I've just said I think - other than those recent comments about Elder Holland, I've tried to say very positive things about them. Now I know these Brethren quite well and I've seen a number of them get angry and upset and all sorts, you know - I've seen the other side of things which I'm not even going to give details on, and I've seen the bitter infighting which goes on – even in the Quorum of the Twelve – you know – this is not a united or a warm fuzzy...now you have to put on that front...but you know, you have to call it as you see it sometimes (laughs) anyway.

Right.

I'm just saying these aren't just loving kind people that are trying to...no, they've got whatever it is – turf to defend or whatever reason is giving them this reason to attack someone or people or the en masse. You know, everyone's anti-Mormon apparently – anything that's said – and most scientists don't know what Mormonism is, let alone be anti-Mormon.

Right.

Anyway, sorry.

So why do you think you haven't been....ok, I have a bunch of....actually just one second, one second...I'm going to... OK so I've got a bunch of just quick follow questions, I think we've covered the meat of them that we're going to talk about. So why not, let's call the 'middle way', why not do what some...

The NOM.

Yeah, more the NOM way – why not just say “you know what it's not necessarily

literally true, but it's a good way to live, and it's benefitted my family, my grandsons can go to Oxford", I mean "what a blessing the Church has been in our lives, so...."

He can't – he's not at Oxford because he's on a mission.

No, but you know, he's able to go there, I mean you've clearly...

He could have gone there but without the Church though, that's what I'm saying.

OK I know, but I'm just saying like why not sort of take a non-literal view of religion and say "religion does a lot of good things, be practical", right, why not just be...look at what's functional instead of what's binarily true or false, and just go with it because it has good fruits?

Alright I'll tell you why – first of all, if you were to try and find out all the good fruits, right, and identify them, and also make a list of all the bad fruits, I think what you will find is all of those good fruits could be provided in another organization or another setting – they don't have you know, the only way on that. If you want a good family....you know....there's plenty of Churches and communities and social clubs and all sorts of things. You know in Ireland they have, you know, a local community based around a local game called hurling – which no-one else in the world has ever heard of, but it becomes a focal point – now although you might say they're all Catholics, they're actually focused on that. In Malta, there's another game called Bocci that they focus around, you know, and whole families go out – all generations. Now I'm not saying that's the right thing to do John, but what I'm saying is – whatever good fruits there are in the Church, there are in other organisations, but the bad fruits of the Church are not necessarily in other organisations. You would say, what as? Such as gay marriage – what the heck does gay marriage – how does that interfere with someone else's marriage? My son, a Stake President, believes that the Church was wrong in opposing gay marriage. Why is he a Stake President then? You know, come out....now I know John you're doing some activity there so I'm not going to go - you know - but you know...ok, there's not...we now come...we've got to understand gays is genetic, and you know what, I've got friends that are gays. I've got a nephew that's gay. I went to his 40th birthday party and it was wonderful – there's 100 gay people there and me. Now I'm not gay because genetics....if I wanted to become gay I can't because I'm not genetically made that way and that's all there is to it. But there's nothing wrong with them, and if they are – like my nephew has been in a loving relationship for the last 7 years. It's as good as any couple that I've seen. So there's one thing – then you want

to get into the blacks and everyone else – the Jews...the Church....the Book of Mormon – let's get back to the Book of Mormon – the Catholic Church being the "whore of the earth." The Joseph Smith history all the Protestant Churches, their creeds are "an abomination to the Lord." They hate the Jews because they're the only people on earth that would have crucified the Messiah. Women – let's not even go there, and you have a whole list of everyone that's hated, and all non-religious people are hated. President Hinckley gave a talk against Atheists at one time – how evil they were, and it goes on and on. You know what, I meet people all the time, and none of them have any of that hatred in them – none of them. The only people I know with that hatred in anything I've heard in my experience has been Mormons and certain other fundamental type people. So that's my answer – why am I not a NOM, I couldn't keep my mouth shut – that's why I'm not a NOM. I could see how there could be benefits for my children for me and my family now – not for my posterity, because they're all going to be raised in that same cult. Sorry, I used the word cult – that same organization. Elder Holland says it's not a cult, or he says something like "people call us a cult." Well, when you get the kind of thing that's been thrown at me, I think it's pretty definitely a cult. Anyway.

So, does that answer it, why I'm not a NOM? Now again I can have respect for NOM, do you know what, I think my son is probably a NOM. He's a Stake President. He doesn't believe....he thinks there's things wrong in the Book of Mormon, he thinks the Church was wrong about gay marriage, and he definitely thinks Joseph Smith was wrong to take more than one wife. Now if Joseph Smith was wrong to take more than one wife, that makes him a fallen prophet, as the Community of Christ would say, and that then debunks the Doctrine and Covenants, the Book of Abraham, and everything else. So, you know, where do you stop on this, you can't....you know...I like Elder Holland's sudden....actually I think it wasn't him, I think it was someone else – was it President Benson – someone else – he actually quotes someone else – I think it was President Benson or someone that actually came up with that 'sudden death' proposition.

Right.

Elder Holland has just, you know, mentioned it a number of times, but I like that....you....this middle way...and I've heard of it in politics and all sorts of things, and maybe you can with coalitions, and all the rest of it, but in this case when a Church gets up there and says "this is the world, Jesus Christ himself restored this Church in the latter days, we are the only true Church on the face of the earth, all the rest of you – your creeds are an abomination, you've got to come to us for salvation" that in itself is rather a toxic message which goes out – unless you can back it up. I'm not going to be party to that. Now at the other

extreme, and I'm not saying it's the same, but you know what, in another age, if I'd been grown up and I'd been a member of the Ku Klux Klan, but I decided, do you know, I'm not going to kill anyone, and I'm not going to do this or that, but do you know, we've got quite a nice fraternity going here with us, and there's a lot of nice things we do, and also if someone's unemployed or something, we make sure they get a job and things like....I'm sure there are aspects of that in such organisations – of course I don't know for sure....but you see how offensive that would be? I wouldn't stay as a non-practising Ku Klux Klan member. Now I think the Mormon Church is guilty of, you know, we want to go back to mountain meadows and all the rest of it, we want to go back to basically child abuse, and child rape? You know, I don't want to even get started on that, I'm trying to focus on just the issues on the Book of Mormon. But these are the reasons I'm not going to be a NOM. I found out this organization is riddled, is riddled. Once I then found out that the leaders are not as honest as I thought they were, this whole thing...they're on....ok they're on shaky ground. This is based on a lie and a deceit from the beginning, and they're doing the best job they can to keep the ball rolling. And I get your point about a NOM because they are changing things, the priesthood now goes to all worthy males. They are now talking about what gays have in callings.

Where is that – where are they talking about that?

The latest handbook of instruction – a gay can have a Temple recommend and a calling, as long as they don't have any sexual activity outside. And then the Church tried to say that's because it's the same rule as for heterosexual couples – well no it's not – you know fine rightly John, heterosexual couples can get married to have sex. Gays, if they're gay means 'right you have no sex for the rest of your life, because we as a Church don't want you to get married. There's nothing wrong with gay marriage, and it's coming. The Church is on...you see it's been on the receiving end of too many things. You know, polygamy, it was against women voting, it was against the civil rights movement in the 1960's – you know – you've seen the letter to George Romney...

Actually I'll just correct you on one thing – my understanding is that we were leaders in the women's suffrage movement in the late 1800's, in that we were one of the first states to allow women voting. But I think I...your larger point is that we did fight the....we fought the civil rights movement, we fought the ERA, and now we're fighting gay marriage.

Gay marriage, and it's going to be a losing battle because we know the popular opinion it's going to...well it's going to go to the Supreme Court anyway, and then it's just a question of whether it's this time or next time, so it's coming. So

at some stage the Church has got to face up to that, and it's not as Elder Packer...you know his....well you know let's not even get into the number of people who have committed suicide because of his talks.

How is the Church doing in England? Any idea?

From what I hear it's bleeding.

So it's not growing.

No, oh no, no, no, no, no, not growing, I mean the nearest ward to where I lived that have got some people that are still living there, they've dropped 50% in the last 3-4 years. There's people leaving. I mean it's....and missionary work – forget it – it's only those that want some welfare or something like that – it's basically immigrants – and that's throughout Europe. You know when I got baptized in 1969, and it was all young couples, young newly married couples, starting out in life that wanted the best for their families, that's who joined the Church then. Not now. And most of the people whom the missionaries are teaching, if they do find a couple they are not married, they are living together, so you have got all of those problems to get over. No, they're not baptizing.

So the Church is not growing – it's probably contracting in Western Europe?

Yes, I mean, we know it's not reflected in the statistics because the statistics are actually false. I mean the membership statistics, all they do each year is just add on to that the baptisms basically – not realizing people die...ok they'll take in certain deaths....there's a lot more people die, there's those that leave the Church and all sorts of things.

People go inactive.

They say 16 million – there's no 16 million people in this Church – you're lucky if there's 5 million- lucky.

Right.

And here again, the question of honesty, as I understand the Jehovah's Witnesses, they say the only count you as a member, first of all if you've been going out regularly for a certain period of time and if you continue going out. If you ever stop, they don't count you as a member.

Right.

So their statistics are actually active Jehovah's Witnesses that are also going round spreading the, you know their magazine, "The Awake" and all the rest of it.

Right.

So their 3 million could be more than our 5 million or whatever, or 16 million – I don't know.

So do you have any regrets?

On what?

On either joining the Church, raising your family in the Church, or you know, coming to believe that it isn't true, or being vocal about your disbelief?

OK, no, the only regret I have that I regret joining the Church because I've got to blame myself for that because it wasn't forced on me, I you know, bought the whole package, the whole ball of wax, and I brought my children up in it. I regret that, but I'm not going to be bitter about it, you know, because I can't do anything about it. I did it, it was a long time ago, it was 1969, we're now in 2012. It's no good me being so regretful that I'm going to canker my soul for the rest of my life. No, it's done. I'm sorry. Now I console myself by saying there were some benefits to the family, so I think we did have some benefits and try and ignore some of the detriment that there may be. I'm just thinking more now about future generations. I think we can have all the benefits we had as a family we could have had in another situation as well. My wife and I were good parents anyway and there is...I admit...you know now that I associate with people that are not Mormons, you know what it's like – OK you're in Utah, it's very easy to get into a situation even in England, where most of your friends, most of your associates are Mormons. When you then actually come out of that, you actually find there's good people around that are not Mormons, that don't believe...and they all have different kinds of beliefs. But, do you know what, they raise children to be really fine children as well, they're good people.

So you could have raised a good family outside the Church?

Who knows, we don't get that second chance to find out...it's certainly possible.....all I'm saying is there are other people, I know people that have raised excellent children, and those children wouldn't ditch them over their religious view, that's all I'm saying to you.

Right.

Even if they have differences of opinion, those children will still act in a certain way. Anyway, I'm just saying...

If you....you know this may be a question you're not comfortable answering and if it's not that's fine, but let's just say that one of your kids or one of your grandkids ends up listening to this story, which maybe is unlikely but who knows. What would you want to say to them?

Please, please, just talk to me, let's have a discussion. You know what, a couple of years ago I took one of my grandsons out for a lunch, I had intended to have a discussion with him because he'd already come back from his mission, and we ended up talking about his education, and about his music and I just didn't want to raise....and I knew he wasn't going to raise the topic of the Church. I didn't – again out of deference, out of respect for him – not wanting to upset him. I wish I'd done....I wish I'd asked that now – I would just like them to talk about it. I'm not going to get angry, you see my family portray myself as angry. I only get angry if people don't answer and then hurl abuse at me, that makes....I'm sorry I'm human there, that makes me angry. But if we can have an actual discussion on something, oh, I love that, I love that. And if my mind could ever be changed, I'd love that as well, I'm quite happy to have my mind changed. I can change my views politically, or in any other way if there's a substantive argument for me to address. So I'd say, let's just talk, and let's talk about the elephant in the room and let's not ignore it any more. That's all I want to talk about, the elephant in the room and I think it will benefit all of our lives and certainly future generations.

Right. Yeah. So what do you.....so you say you've had spiritual experiences recently, do you still believe in God, do you still – do you have a new religion like what is your spirituality based on now?

When do you want to end this John? (laughs).

Just do a couple of minutes, just do a quick summary of, you know, what do you believe now?

In some ways I believe in whatever's real, I believe in reality. I told you about the light switch. I believe that I will wake up and be alive tomorrow morning, I do believe that. Now it may not happen, you know, any one of us – you know I mentioned Elder Sackley, he died in his sleep one night you know, just after a

wonderful day. That's a belief, it's not a certainty, but it's a belief and I think it's reasonable to have beliefs like that. I think it's reasonable to have hope, I think it's reasonable to have faith, but when I go into – as I have done – into someone's home you know after a family home evening where they have "Follow the Prophet", and faith as a virtue all over their home, the kind of faith they're talking about I think is wrong and dangerous. Faith is ok, or belief in something that we can't know one way or the other – everyone is entitled to their beliefs and they ought to be respected on that, but if you have faith in something that has evidence against it then it's either because of ignorance i.e. and that was me for most of my life, I was ignorant of the arguments against. Or, having found out about it or wanting to find out about it, then you still go ahead with that – to me that's stupidity, so it's ignorance or stupidity, and I mean ignorance in a kind sort of way, just not being aware. But I think what I'm facing in the Church where – and it's not just my family – it's...there were thousands of members of the Church which I was supposedly friends with and knew me that suddenly avoided me in the street and all sorts of things. If they don't want to know something then again that's a form of ignorance and that's very dangerous, yeah, not wanting those answers.

Right. So your testimony, so do you still believe in God? Spirituality, scripture.

Alright, now my reluctance is not...you see I'm...whenever I'm asked a question, I'll give them what I think is a truthful answer. My reluctance on this thing is I guess what I want is for people to look at these issues. The reason I didn't give my name on the original second anointing was not to make it about me but about the issue – not about me. Now if I were to say to you, do you know what, I've become a Jehovah's Witness or I'm now a Buddhist, or I'm an Atheist or I'm an Agnostic, or whatever, does that then colour what people think of the substance of what we've discussed, you know, discussed, or not?

Right.

So I'm happy to talk about that but I think as a separate issue and I'm happy to be open and honest about what my beliefs are, but I don't really want it connected with this because what we're talking about here, I think is basically two things – is a) the second anointing and b) my letter to Elder Holland and his response. They're the two things on the table. Now whether...let's for instance say...supposing I say "I'm a Buddhist", well straight away people are not even going to want to listen to this – most Mormons. Now I will tell you, I'm not a Buddhist so we'll clear that one off the table – but you know what I'm saying here – I could say any number of badges and that will then suddenly alienate certain people.

I totally get it.

They wouldn't see the substance, now if we want to do another one of these where it talks about where I've come from since this and what I now believe in, I'm very happy to do that but you know that's a separate podcast I think than this.

No, I get it, I get it.

I mean a shorter one, I'm not talking about...

Not a 5 hour one! (Laughs)

(Laughs) yeah, sorry, and you may not want to do that, and I'm happy even to post that on a board what my beliefs and things are but I'm just trying to separate these issues right now.

Sure.

Because I know what happens, it's the way I've been questioned in all sorts of things, you know, it's almost the first question – 'what do you believe in?' As if you give a certain answer and then nothing matters after that, they're not going to listen to you at all – that's wrong, that's wrong.

So let it stand on the merits you're saying?

Stand on the merits here, and my beliefs...you know my beliefs don't affect what we've said today one way or the other – what I've come to in my life.

Right.

It's of no relevance, you know, it's another story – it's another version of my life, it's not anything to do with this. I was a believing Mormon, I believed it to be the true Church of Jesus Christ, that he had visited, and that he still visited on a regular basis with the Prophet. I understood that from Elder Goaslind and other people that there was almost a weekly, if not monthly, meeting of the Saviour and the Prophet. I believed that all my Church life, so I've gone from that to saying "this is not true", that's as far as I'm going right now. If anyone else wants to look at that, if they still want to take the original viewpoint, so be it, let them do that. I think it's one or the other. I don't actually see in my life the middle way. I know it works for other people, and I value what you're doing

John as well, in terms of what's going on there, so I'm not going to decry that, I'm just going to say you're probably a better person than I am, for being able to do that, and also you're a much younger person than I am, and you know what, I haven't got time to waste on...you know I haven't got a generation to change anything, so I'm enjoying each day.

Right, and you are enjoying it?

Oh thoroughly. You know what, I've never been happier in my whole life, I can say that honestly. The only thing....I've never been happier, and the only thing that would make me happier is to have my family with me, but even without family, I have NEVER been happier, and this is coming from someone that's had a wonderful family experience, wonderful Church life, no issues with the Church – I'm not anti....I'm not an ex-Mormon that begrudged their tithing, or thought the Bishop was awful, or whatever they want to talk about, I'm not that. I loved being in the Church, loved everything about it, but I can honestly say to you right now, at my stage in life, I have never, never been happier. Never.

Do you think they're going to come after you for doing this interview? What do you predict?

I didn't even think – you know you've asked me the question out of the blue. What have I said firstly that's untrue – maybe I've given more information than they would like to know, I don't know – what...you see I'd have to look at the handbook – what is the definition of Apostasy – I'm not actually teaching anything to anyone, I'm asking questions and I'm not getting any answers, that all I'm doing, now if that is apostasy, you know what, it's dead easy, don't even need a disciplinary council, I'll admit to apostasy, if that is your definition. To me apostasy is going against the truth. Now I actually feel Elder Holland, you're an apostate against the truth of science and metallurgy and anything else you want to quote. You're an apostate against Yale University who stands for, you know, credible research. Whatever you want, come and get me, I don't care. It makes no difference to me whatsoever, or I can feel like...what I can also do is just write a letter of resignation right now. Either way it doesn't matter, I don't care one iota, there's nothing they can do to me. If anything, I almost feel like getting hold of...I've forgotten his name now...the other guy that's had the second anointing that was the Temple President and Mission President, Gerald Chesney.

The guy from Oklahoma?

Yeah, I mean, I know he won't, but I mean if we're the only two members of the

Anointed Quorum that's willing to stand up, then maybe we should convene a disciplinary council of our own and call the Brethren to account on this.

Do you think they'll come after me for releasing this interview?

Again, what have you done? You've interviewed someone...well John I ...from what I understand, they've been after you anyway and somehow you've managed to placate whatever needs to be done so I don't see what you've done here any different than you did with...to be honest the only one I've listened to was the Simon Southerton one.

Oh, now that's an offence! Just kidding!

I'm sorry about that. To be honest, when I said to you, what's this three hours about, because when I see three hours, or 2.5 hours, you know what, I need a 5 minute segment. But do you know what, last night I decided, hang on, I'd better know what I'm getting into here, so I listened to the Simon Southerton. I was blown away, I loved it! So you know what, you've got a convert here in terms of Mormonstories. I'm going to go through yours, I'm going to listen to all these stories now. Before I didn't like the idea of an hour, or two hours, or whatever it was listening.

It is long, isn't it. (laughs)

But no, I was fascinated, I couldn't believe I listened to the first one of Simon which was just over an hour and I couldn't believe when the hour went. I mean it was just fascinating. So I'm going to listen to the next one of that as well, so you've converted me better than Elder Holland did John.

Well, a lot of people give me grief for the length but time goes so fast for me, I never get sick of these interviews. So somebody after I die can edit them down and make them shorter but I'm keeping them long for now.

Sure.

Alright, well Tom Phillips, I just want to thank you so much for coming on Mormonstories and sharing your very important story, I think you've laid out a very credible set of experiences and stories, and I just want to beg any believer that listens – any believer that feels as Elder Holland does, that these are old or silly issues, or ones that were resolved or that we're light years past, I want to invite any listener to come on and answer the questions that Tom Phillips wrote to Elder Holland. We'll post a link to Tom's letter to Elder Holland and I would

like to invite any listener to come on Mormonstories, and answer the questions in a way that's credible. And I don't offer this interview personally, as a way to get people out of the Church, or to cause doubt, I guess if anything, I'm tired of seeing the casualties of families and friendships and relationships, and people's mental health suffer because of these credible issues and experiences. And I just want to have a dialogue where we can come to a better understanding and ground our mutual life experiences more in reality, and less in misunderstanding or you know – myth or fable or lie – so that we can really live based on truth, and Tom, I think you've done your best to tell the truth and I just want to let you know that I and my listeners really honour and respect you for what you've done.

Thank you John, I've certainly appreciated talking to you, and I'm grateful for all the work you're doing as well and all your intentions, so thank you again.

Alright Tom, take care.

Take care John. Bye then.