

**Q&A Session**  
**“Keeping the Covenant” Conference**  
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Hah! I guess it’s “ten to” [the hour], and the blessed moment has arrived. That was a great musical number, and both Sarah [Sariah] and Doug did a remarkable job with that. And I’m led to believe that there’s yet another great musical number coming up to conclude this.

I was handed some questions and some of ‘em are pretty good, and let me see what good I can do.

**[QUESTION:]** How can you know if the boils you receive in life are due to being like unto Job, or because you are more akin to Pharaoh?

**[ANSWER:]** It’s a great question; I love the question. First, there’s an interesting exercise that I would commend to any of you. Go to the account of Exodus, the early events, and only read the words of Moses. Just read Moses’ responses, his reactions, his complaints, his fear, his doubts—and what you will realize is that it doesn’t matter if someone occupies a great position, as Moses did, or the lives that each of us are now living. No one fits easily or comfortably or without anxiety into the work of the Lord. There’s a measure that you take of yourself in which you look inward and say, “I’m not adequate to what needs to be done; I don’t have the faith required.” And you’ll see that that’s exactly what Moses was telling God—that looking inward, he did not think himself equal to it.

In the Book of Mormon, Nephi gives us an account of their journey—after they had been delivered from Jerusalem which was about to be destroyed and they were migrating—here are some comments that he makes about their experience:

- *“We have suffered much afflictions, hunger, thirst, and fatigue”* (1 Nephi 16:35; see also 1 Nephi 5:10 RE);
- *“...we did travel and wade through much affliction in the wilderness”* (1 Nephi 17:1; see also 1 Nephi 5:11 RE);
- *“...we had suffered many afflictions and much difficulty, yea even so much that we cannot write them all”* (1 Nephi 17:6; see also 1 Nephi 5:14 RE).

This is Nephi explaining his experience in the wilderness. Afflictions, hunger, thirst, fatigue—so many afflictions that they can’t even talk about ‘em. We don’t look at those words; we pass over them as if Nephi were somehow being modest, or Nephi were being self-deprecating. We pass over what Moses says when he’s getting the responsibilities imposed upon him by the Lord, as if it’s just common sense that he’s heroic and larger than life and greater than the common man. When you read his reaction, he sounds like us: he sounds common, he sounds ordinary. And when you read the lamentation—we suffer because we are... because we’re mortal, because we’re here, because that’s the common lot

that is designed to be experienced as a consequence of the fall. And there's no escaping that.

The question isn't: Are we going to suffer while we are here? The only question is: To what degree do we bear up under the troubles of this life, graciously and humbly—and acknowledging that God rules in the heavens above; He rules in the earth beneath; and He rules in your life, too. And that everything that you experience is designed to make you be added upon by the things that you suffer and the things that you experience here.

**[QUESTION:]** I was asked, verbally, if I would comment on some of the challenges that people of faith have in defending the Book of Abraham.

**[ANSWER:]** And that's probably a subject that's worth writing about, rather than just talking off the cuff, but—here's, generally, my observation. The people want to know what Joseph did and how he did it, in order for them to understand, maybe, how **they** can do it.

So there's this relentless inquiry into: "How did that process take place? What went on?" When, in fact, the gifts of God are almost entirely incapable of being transferred from one to another. Each person has to come to God on their own.

Oliver Cowdery was a man of faith, and he believed in Christ and the possibility of the second coming of Christ being proximate (or in close proximity) to his life. He believed in, and he got answers from God; and then he hears about what Joseph is doing, and he goes to become his scribe.

One of the early revelations that were given to Oliver talked about his, Oliver's, own gift—that he had this gift, in which Oliver could get yes or no answers by using the (what we would call a) "divining rod" (or a stick) that would respond positively or negatively to inquiry. And so he had this—and the revelation does not call it anything other than "a gift." It may seem like a peculiar gift to you and I; but it's, nevertheless, a gift, and it came from God.

Joseph had a gift in which he was capable of receiving revelation—sometimes through instrumentalities, sometimes by study, sometimes simply by God speaking through him in the first person in a spontaneous way. How he went about doing that is unique to him. The way in which you relate to God is unique to you. Running out and trying to replicate something—in order for you to know the process by which God involved Himself in revelation in Joseph Smith's experience—is not gonna teach you what Joseph Smith experienced. In the same fashion, those that would like to anchor the process of restoring the Book of Abraham to the surviving remnant of the Joseph Smith papyri and to say that that is the source material from which the Book of Abraham was derived are neglecting the bigger part of the process.

Can God use a bird in flight to answer a prayer? Can God use a billboard to convey a truth or an idea? Can God use a song to inspire you? Can God use the words of a poet, speaking

about something entirely different, to convey to the mind, inspired by the light of Heaven, to see those words in a context that speaks directly and immediately to what it is that they're searching for?

There's a line in one of the Indigo Girls' songs: "The less I seek my source for some definitive, the closer I am to fine" (*Closer to Fine*, Indigo Girls). It's a beautiful song. It's about the frustration that they have with gurus, generally, and the notion that you really need to divorce yourself—"There's more than one answer to these questions, Pointing me in a crooked line" is part of that same song. "I spent four years prostrate to the higher mind, Got my paper and I was free... The less I seek my source for some definitive, the closer I am to fine." Because the answers that you get from most of the authoritative sources will always point you in a crooked line, but the paths of God are straight. Which is one of the reasons why I juxtaposed those two issues involving "sacrificing for the sacred" and "sacrificing for the benefit of man"—which, if you adopt in an absolute sense, point you in a crooked line. And yet, it's incumbent upon you to find the harmony, to find the middle road, to find the path that reflects the graciousness of Christ's walk while he was down here in this troubled sphere, dealing with all of the troubling issues in which we find ourselves.

In one of the very earliest meetings that we have a report of, Hyrum Smith got up to introduce his brother, Joseph, and he introduced him by saying, And Joseph will now explain to you the process by which the Book of Mormon was translated. And Joseph got up and said, It's not needful for that to be explained. The person who understood the process of translating the Book of Mormon was Joseph Smith. Even the scribes who were in the immediate area don't know the process by which the Book of Mormon was translated. The reason for settling upon the Book of Abraham (and the remnant or relic of the Book of Abraham) as a basis for criticizing Joseph Smith is to enable them (who desire to discredit Joseph) to then extend the argument from the translation of the papyri to the translation of the Book of Mormon—so that they can dismiss the work of Joseph Smith altogether and not have to trouble themselves with the heavy, unnerving obligation that devolves upon the shoulders of every person who finds out that God sent a prophet (in the form of Joseph Smith) in order to begin anew and complete the process of preparing mankind for the second coming of the Lord. And so, criticisms directed at the Book of Abraham and that translation process are surrogate for criticism, ultimately, intended to be aimed at the Book of Mormon—in order that Joseph might be diminished as a authoritative figure, on the one hand, to equip you to dismiss him as authoritative figure, on the other hand. People want a much smaller, more cunning, more contriving, less virtuous Joseph Smith because then it justifies **them** in their smallness and cunningness and treachery in dealing with their fellow man.

One of the reasons why I mentioned, earlier, *A Man Without Doubt* is because it's impossible (in my view) for a small, cunning man to write the things that Joseph Smith wrote in the three transcripts of his three longest writings (apart from the Book of Mormon) that are put into *A Man Without Doubt*—particularly given the graciousness with which Joseph Smith endured the circumstances he was put into by the betrayal of people who should have been his friends and who should have endeavored, in a kindly manner, to

reclaim him if they thought he were deluded. That's a quote from what Joseph Smith wrote about his history in the Joseph Smith History (see JSH 2:10 RE) that he was recreating in 1838, after being betrayed by John Whitmer (the church historian who took all of the history) and his brother (one of the three witnesses). They betrayed him, and they took it.

So, when Joseph was writing in 1838, and he was reflecting back upon how he was treated when he had mentioned (to a handful of people) the first vision—when that had happened (in 1820, as he dates it in that history), he wasn't really talking about the persecution that he had received when he was a child; he was commenting to the people of his day who, if they had thought him to be deluded, ought to have endeavored, in a kind and affectionate manner, to have reclaimed him, instead of betraying him and surrendering both him and the people who remained true to him to violence.

Well, if you start with the **real** proposition about the Book of Abraham, that's **really** where we ought to go first. And that is: Is Joseph Smith the kind of man that would be capable of receiving a revelation to outline for us something going back to the era of Abraham and give us insight by restoring a text? Is Joseph Smith capable of doing that? Or is he a craven manipulator who's dishonest and inventive and fanciful, egomaniacal, and in it for his own self-gain? **That's** the real question that the 'Book of Abraham translation issues' raise.

And for the answer to **that** question, I don't think you can parse your way through a relic of papyri—which is clearly only a fragment of what he was working with and doesn't match, at all, the description of the text being in a beautiful hand in both red and black ink [from a letter Oliver Cowdery sent to William Frye, dated December 25, 1835, and published in the Latter Day Saints' *Messenger and Advocate* of the same month]. It's a rather sloppy hand (the fragment we have), and there's no red ink. It's black ink, and it's sloppily done.

I don't think we should let Joseph Smith off the hook for being accountable and responsible to **us** for being a virtuous man, for being a truthful man, for being a reliable man. But I don't think you answer those questions by an **appeal** to a fragment of papyri and what modern Egyptologists may be able to divine from a complex language that had migrated from hieroglyph to hieratic to demotic—and that, too, over millennia of time in which...

Abraham came along at the first intermediate period. These papyri? They were created in the Greco-Roman era. What...about eighteen dynasties later? After the influence of the Greco-Roman world? The *Book of Breathings* and the text from which this was drawn, the *Book of the Dead*, these are very, very Egyptologically late documents. There's nothing comparable to it in an existing culture—maybe in China; maybe if you go to Hong Kong, and you walk down the street in Hong Kong, and you take a look at all the advertisements that are on the billboards that are in both English and Mandarin (or Cantonese—I don't know what they're using on the road signs or their billboards there); and you take that as the measure of reconstructing something from one of the earliest Chinese dynasties. And you say, There was no McDonalds back then; it doesn't work. You're literally trying to bridge a gulf that is almost unimaginably foreign.

So, the earliest pictographic representations were done alongside a **story**. So, you get a pictographic representation, and you get a story that tells you what this picture is about. Can the picture be replicated to tell yet another story by making a few minor changes and then telling a different story? The answer to that is (obviously) yes, you could. It's not until later that you begin to insert into the text (in addition to the pictographic representation) additional commentary that's designed to explain what this particular one is telling you in this particular setting. But that doesn't mean that the representation hasn't been borrowed from another account or an earlier account or a different account and been slightly modified and adapted, in order to tell another story, based upon the same kind of pictographic representation.

The fact that I have concluded that Joseph Smith was a restrained man (in many respects, a very modest man), whose defense of what he believed to be the truth was fierce, but who recognized that there were a lot of people (including his own wife, Emma Smith) who had a better education than did he—

Joseph was like a sponge when he thought he could get truth or help from others, and he was meek and humble in that respect. But if God had revealed something to him, he was an iron-fisted, immovable man for the truth, personally and privately, just as the scriptures say concerning Moses. Moses was the meekest of all men. If you just read the dialogue from Moses (in Exodus), you'll see nothing but meekness in that man. If you'll read Joseph Smith's three documents in *A Man Without Doubt*, you'll see a meek man—**unbelievably frustrated** by some of the circumstances into which he was put, **searching** to find the right way out of the dilemma, **trying** to get God aroused to anger in the same way that the circumstances aroused Joseph to anger, but **submitting always** to whatever the will of God was for him. Ultimately, Joseph Smith left to go to be imprisoned in Carthage, knowing he would not come back from there (or at least expecting that he would not)—and commenting about how his life was no value to his friends, as he returned and he went back for the slaying.

Say what you want about those final moments in the life of Joseph Smith. He put himself in harm's way to prove his fidelity to his friends. He would not forsake **them** (as they claimed he was doing in **their** hour of need) and ultimately gave his life up. That's not the conduct of a con-man. That's not the way in which someone who's going to lie and cheat and steal and behave as an immoral exploiter of others would conduct their lives. Joseph, in my view, was not just a virtuous man, but he qualified as one of those who hath no greater love, because he went back and surrendered at the behest of his brethren—in part, with the hope that by losing **his** life, Nauvoo would be spared the slaughter that had gone on at Far West and Haun's Mill and elsewhere.

And so, when you ask about the translation issues and the controversy over the Book of Abraham, the bottom line/the real issue is: However the mind of Joseph was set on fire with the restoration text of father Abraham's account of his search, you have to decide that the content either is from heaven or it's a lie.

There was a series (it's now been abandoned, but it's a series that was begun at Brigham Young University), the first volume of it—the Book of Abraham series—the first volume of it was pretty good. What they did was take concepts that are included in the text of the Book of Abraham which were completely unknown in the Christian world at the time that the Book of Abraham was put into print. They had to be **unique** concepts. If you could already find them in the Bible or if you could already find them in what was available to the Christian world, generally, then those weren't included. They had to be **unique** ideas. They took and gathered the unique ideas that come out in the Book of Abraham (about which Joseph Smith would have known nothing), and then they looked into other material that exists (from diverse places) about legends or stories concerning the life of Abraham. And what they found is that there were **Hindu** traditions that talked about Abraham, that preserved some of the very same incidents that are only found in the Book of Abraham at the time Joseph published the Book of Abraham. They found there were **Islamic** texts that were similarly describing the same kind of event, the same incident that's unique to the Book of Abraham. They found sources that were in **Coptic Egyptian** texts. They amalgamated into one volume (it's a pretty big volume) all of the parallel accounts from the life of Abraham (in cultures from around the world or religious traditions from around the world) that Joseph Smith nailed on the head in his account of the Book of Abraham.

That approach does not defend Joseph Smith as a translator of Egyptian, because it has nothing to do with the papyri. But it does a pretty good job of defending Joseph Smith as a **revelator**, as someone to whom God could reveal light and truth and he could accurately record it—because echoes of the unique material in the Book of Abraham show up in the ancient world and in other cultures that date back nearly to the time of Abraham. So, the real question is, Do you trust Joseph?

**[QUESTION:]** Okay. Oh, here's one. This was from a kid, and I like this question. Why are there angels?

**[ANSWER:]** That's a great question.

*[Angels] are subject [to God], to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, ... declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ (Moroni 7:30-32; see also Moroni 7:6 RE).*

There's a system that was adopted before the foundation of the world that was designed to bring to pass the salvation/the resurrection of all mankind after we fall into the grave. That system requires a lot of things to come together in order to achieve the purposes of God. You might think that the purpose of angels (in some of the online extravagant claims that we read that people make) is to appeal to the vanity and the pride of those to whom they come.

But my experience teaches me that the purpose of angels is to, first, cry repentance to the individual—because every individual before God is in need of repentance. There are none of us who have gone through life, or who go through life daily, without giving offense—however unintended and however slight—we, nevertheless, give offense to our fellow man and to God. We excuse ourselves—we just don't measure up. The office of the angelic ministrant is to snap you back out of the fog of "indifference to the casualness in which you discharge your daily obligations" and to awaken you to the **peril** that each of us face if we don't repent and return to God. It's to make us soberly assess our own personal inadequacies. But their office isn't to get someone, somewhere, to pay attention to them and to try and be a better boy or girl. Their office is to invoke the salvation process, itself, for the benefit of mankind.

Those to whom angelic ministrants have come from heaven are given assignments to labor for the salvation of others. They use their own resources, and they wear out their lives and their time in pursuing the obligations imposed upon them, which include:

- the salvation of others,
- the crying of repentance to others,
- the bringing to pass the fulfillment of the covenants that God made with the Fathers.

If they're not laboring on an errand such as that, but they claim to be receiving "God and Jesus in their living room who came and told them all about this or that," I don't know who they're entertaining—but it certainly doesn't fit the model, and it certainly doesn't fulfill the covenants of the Father nor do the work that's necessary in order to prepare the people for the coming of the ~~world~~ [Lord] *so that the whole earth is not utterly wasted at His coming* (see JSH 3:4 RE).

Salvation for the souls of men is something that no one ought to be trifling with, least of all those who are vain and proud. And I don't care if that vanity comes because they think they're somehow specially chosen by some imagined encounter with the Great Beyond, or if they think they've been so careful in their study of scripture that they know better than all others because they can clearly see a pattern through their own study, labor, and effort. I don't care what you think the correct interpretation of the scriptures are or will be. It's fair game to look at 'em in whatever fashion you want to look at them. But when an angel from heaven **tells** you what God is doing—or when the Lord Himself declares **what and how** he intends to go about vindicating the covenants that **He** made with the Fathers—then there's no room to come up with a contrary interpretation. The fact is, your interpretation, then, is wrong. And the humble man and the searcher for light and truth will adapt what they understand from their learning and study to what it is that the Lord has declared. And what they will find is that if they'll conform to the word of the Lord, that their study and their learning is still of great benefit because it helps them to see things more clearly.

Scriptures are sometimes written, deliberately, in a way that conceals how the Lord intends to fulfill them—in order to let those who may mean mischief never arrive at the correct formula. And the proud and the haughty and all those that do wickedly are not necessarily

irreligious or not necessarily unpersuaded that there's a restoration that is taking place through Joseph—they simply will not **yield** to what it is that God says they mean; they will not **yield** to the work that God says He now has underway.

So, angels align with the work of God, and they help bring about the repentance of **all** mankind.

**[QUESTION:]** If Christ is the prototype of the saved man, is Mary the prototype of the saved woman?

**[ANSWER:]** Yes.

**[QUESTION:]** How did She earn Her place on the throne without having atoned?

**[ANSWER:]** Because She sacrificed and led the Lamb to the slaughter. She had a Lamb whose "fleece was white as snow," and She led that Lamb everywhere She wanted it to go. And She gave up Her Son and attained to the resurrection and laid claim upon Her body because She condescended to come here and to fulfill that work. Read *Our Divine Parents* (Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Gilbert, Arizona, March 25, 2018). I don't know if that question was asked by someone that hasn't read *Our Divine Parents*, but that talk addresses that issue.

**[QUESTION:]** [Chuckle.] This is a great question. It's probably one of the more important questions that someone came up with: The "name of the Lord," "believe in His name," "believe **on** His name," "do things **in** His name"—and in the Testimony of St. John, they lift the quote: "...what name is now yours." No one asked, What name is now yours? Can you help us understand the importance of the name of the Lord?

**[ANSWER:]** Yeah, uh, okay—let's put it into a bigger context. Hebrew (in the Old Testament form) lacked vowels. As a consequence of the lack of vowels, the name for the Lord had four Hebrew characters, the tetragram[maton]—which, lacking vowels, became unpronounceable. The pronunciation of that name was the **property** of the High Priest. And the correct pronunciation went from High Priest to High Priest—who would use that name in the Holy of Holies, in order to participate in the ordinances that were required there.

Because the name (we know the consonants, but we don't know the vowels [YHWH]) lacked the ability to pronounce it, when Jerome was working on the Latin Vulgate version and came to the letters, he rendered it "Jehovah." And there are a lot of people who, today, have supplied different vowels, and they render it "Yahweh." (I think the "Yahweh" pronunciation was the creation of a Germanic theological movement in the 1940s, and Yahweh came out of that—although the Germans may have borrowed it earlier from Yiddish or from Hebrew sources.) But the truth of the matter is that the name of God, like **many** Hebrew words, are late-in-time reconstructions of probable pronunciations of the Hebrew lettering, and they've gained common acceptance, at this point. But if you were to take someone who is absolutely fluent in speaking modern Hebrew and you were to take them



back and put them in a setting with/contemporaneous with Moses, even though they may be relying upon the same basic language, they may not even be able to communicate with one another because the pronunciations are so incredibly strange. “Strange.” “StrānGeh.” “StrānGee.” The word “strange”—how are you gonna pronounce that? “Strān Jee.” If someone were to say “strān jee” to you, would you know they intended to be saying strange? You’d think it was gibberish.

The modern convention of how we reconstruct pronunciations is—across the board, and I don’t care if you’re appealing to the most learned Rabbi breathing today—is **wrong**. It’s not correct. And I **know** that to be the case. So, having said that..

Jerome supplied us with “Jehovah.” It was early; and so, subsequent additions of Christian literature accepted the convention and used that term as a nomenclature, where anyone who’s reading the Bible knows the Personage that we are attempting to assign this identity to or this name to. We know Who we’re talking about. But (what the correct pronunciation may be, notwithstanding) we’re **calling** Him, “Jehovah.” And so King James’ translators, Wycliffe, others who rendered the... Martin Luther in his German Bible... They all adopted the pronunciation that had been suggested. So it’s just an agreed-upon convention. We know Who we’re talking about. We’re gonna use this as the Person about whom we’re talking.

Then others come along and think, “Well, this is the ‘vulgar on the street,’ common, ill-informed, uneducated name for the Almighty. But, surely, the Almighty deserves the dignity and the benefit of higher learning, and our higher learning suggests—after we lay ‘four years prostrate to the higher mind [and] got [our] paper [which set us] free’ (see *Closer to Fine*, Indigo Girls)—we now can say with authority should be ‘Yahweh.’ It’s Yahweh; that’s His name—ohmmmm—because only the uninitiated in the mysteries of our theological schools use the common and vulgar term ‘Jehovah.’ So, when you say ‘Jehovah,’ I know (from my vantage point atop the ivory tower) that I’m really talking to a Plebeian and a pedestrian and the ignorant who has not yet been initiated into correct pronunciations.” Well, it’s not Yahweh, either.

The name in Greek of Joshua (or Yeshua)—in Greek is Jesus. And the New Testament was either originally composed (or in it’s first translations composed) in Greek. And so, the name that we inherited, as a consequence of running all the stories about Yeshua (or Joshua) through Greek, is Jesus. And the status of being “anointed”—which is what Messiah (or Mashiah) means—“anointed.” I mean, it could have been “Joshua, the Anointed,” but it turned into “Jesus.” And the word in Greek for “anointing” is “Christ” or “Christos.” And so, Jesus became Jesus Christ, and that became the common vernacular by which the identity of that Person who came and taught the Sermon on the Mount, who lived and died as a Jewish teacher, crucified on a Roman cross, and raised the third day from the dead is (in our common language) referred to as Jesus Christ.

Now, you can say, “I would like to be more pure and use ‘Yeshua.’” Or, “I would like to be at least more Hebraic and call Him ‘Joshua.’” And, “I don’t like ‘Christ’—I like ‘Messiah’ or

'Mashiah.' I like that better." And as long as what you're talking about is the same person (the identity of Whom is fixed by scripture), I'm not gonna quibble over how you want to pronounce it.

But the fact of the matter is that in the restoration process, God (who condescends and who is humble enough to speak with men plainly, in plain humility, as one man talks to another) took absolutely no offense to the Book of Mormon and the modern revelations calling Him by the name "Jesus Christ." **I use** the name Jesus Christ, because **He** took no offense in that name.

When John the Baptist came and visited with Oliver and Joseph and conferred upon them authority to baptize, the only name he mentioned was "Messiah." *Upon you, my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the priesthood of Aaron* (JSH 14:1 RE). John's a good Jewish boy, and so he uses a Hebrew-based term rather than a Greek-based term. But it's still not the original Hebrew, pronounced correctly, because that's been lost. The idea...

(Well, I'm not gonna go there. That's a-whole-nother subject, and that's minutes that I don't wanna take.) The correct pronunciation of God belongs (in the **last** dispensation) as it belonged in the beginning: in the temple. And if there were ever a full restoration, that would be one of the things about which information would be granted, and we'd finally clear that up.

But for the present, so far as **I** am concerned, "Jesus Christ" is a perfectly-fitting name to be used in prayer in addressing the Almighty or in referring to Him. And if someone else wants to call Him "Yeshua," it's not gonna trouble me—because I know Who they're talking about. If they want to call Him "Messiah," rather than "Christ," that doesn't trouble me, either. If they want to call Him "Yahweh," I'm fine with that, too. But that doesn't mean I agree that they're correctly nailing the ancient pronunciation of the name (that they're going to some trouble to pretend they possess great knowledge about).

**[QUESTION:]** What does it mean when the Answer to the Covenant states to not forsake the house of Israel? (See T&C 158:11)

**[ANSWER:]** You know, the house of Israel occupies a very unique place in history. That is true not only of the Native American remnant of the house of Israel but also of the Jewish house of Israel. We are not to forsake them by ignoring them, by forgetting them, by failing to pray concerning them—people who believe strongly enough in the preservation of their culture. In the Native American sense, their culture was ravaged by apostasy before the arrival of European conquerors, devastated by disease that was imported, defeated in war waged against them, and then consigned to reservation property; and yet, despite all that, there are Native Americans who hold on to a culture that reaches back and has within it echoes of the very truths that we also find in the Book of Mormon.

Their highest and holy teachings resound with the same themes of light and darkness, creation by God, power in the heavens, accountability for the good deeds you do. They

reach more closely and correctly into an understanding that nature, itself, is an extension of God and the mind of God; and that harmony between man and nature is something that is part of their religion and should be, also, part of ours.

The Jews have persisted through centuries of persecution and slaughter. My own family line (when you get back far enough) includes a series of Rabbis. My last name is actually an Americanization of a German—it's an **old** German word, because the transition occurred in the 1400s—in German, the word meant “breath” or “spirit.” There's a Hebrew word that means “breath” or “spirit” that is the probable, original family-name that got converted into the Germanic (old Germanic) name or the old Germanic word for “breath,” which is, well, it's spelled “S-c-h-n-a-u-f-e-r,” which, when they migrated to America (that happened before there was a United States—my ancestors were here long before, more than a century and a half before this country was founded), it was too hard to pronounce, and so it got converted into something that they can pronounce here. At the same time, there were others who came over with the same last name, and their names got altered into other various forms, but the original name goes back to that *ru'ach*—the word for “breath”—it's what animated Adam when he was given breath; it's what the Holy Spirit of God is called in their language.

I don't think that how we decide to pronounce matters when we have language in scripture that—

I don't think you improve or show greater respect or show greater homage or honor to God by adopting a different form. I think you show greater respect for God—no matter by what name you choose to call Him—by your heed and your diligence to what it is that He asks of you. It is in the **doing** of what's requested that we show the respect that He asks of us.

**[QUESTION:]** Here's another one: Christ said that the gifts of the spirit would follow those who believe. The gifts are far too **un**common, even among us. Your ideas, please.

**[ANSWER:]** Well, one of the things that we are cautioned about is boasting about the gifts of the spirit that we experience. There have been a lot of spiritual/divine encounters/miraculous encounters/vindicated blessings that I have either witnessed or participated in or I know about. And I say very, very little about them.

One of the problems with significant signs is that when **that** is the focus—and not obedience and laboring to achieve what the Lord would have done—when the focus is upon signs, and we boast about 'em, you attract sign-seekers, including the adulterers who lust after such things and run from sign-giver to sign-giver. Christ constantly told those to whom He performed some miraculous work, See that you tell no man, and they would go out, and they would brag about it, and they would shout about it—and then the net result of that was that a lot of followers were attracted who were not attracted to the **work**. A lot of people were excited to hear some new titillating thing, but they weren't willing to roll up their sleeves and sacrifice. They were not willing to sell all that they had, give to the poor,

and come, follow him, as he asked the rich, young man on the road that he was traveling toward Jerusalem, even though, had the rich, young man done that, we would probably all be talking about him today in a name and not in a category. He relegated himself to merely a category because he was unwilling to step out of that category, have his name known to God and to us by the sacrifice that he made in order to follow the Lord.

The fact is, that however appealing you may believe the things of God to be from what you read in scripture, when you begin to live them, you realize every single one of them lived under a strain—a burden. Those words of Moses in early Exodus help illustrate it. Nephi's lamentation about all the trouble that they had (and all the suffering that they did and what they had to endure) was so significant that he can't even explain all the troubles that they passed through. Joseph Smith's life was filled with compromise by his friends; treachery by those that should have stood by him; betrayal; loss after loss; economic circumstance that brought about trouble after trouble; advisers that told him if he would do this, that they would do that, who then failed to keep their obligation to him.

So, there are signs. They do exist. I have witnessed many of them, but I find no value in talking about or appealing to the minds and hearts of those to whom signs are appealing. I would rather keep them and ponder them in my own heart to try to understand—and then to arrive at the point where it is possible, using the scriptures, to teach the truths, just as Nephi (who would not reveal what he'd encountered in a heavenly vision) used Isaiah, in order to testify of the things that had been revealed to him. That's a good pattern. And so, I speak very little about some of the most important things, but I take them into account as I try to teach things that will bring us all to the **labor** of keeping the covenants of the Father.

**[QUESTION:]** Okay, so now I'm just gonna do something entertaining that reaches far and wide, and you can do with this as you see fit. Okay, who were the three wisemen who visited Jesus after He was born? Where did they come from?

**[ANSWER:]** Probably Magna. [Audience laughter.] I say that—I hope no one's from Magna!—I say that because I use Magna in a lot of my personal humor. I don't know—if I do this, someone's gonna be sorely offended. But Magna's a small town; it's a mining town. And it's suffered a lot because of mine tailings. And so, you know, there's kind of a perception that if you live in Magna, you're probably gonna have buck-teeth and three legs because your genetic makeup has been altered by the chemicals from the mine out there (that is now bigger than the mountain that it's been carved in).

So, I will occasionally use Magna in a self-deprecating way. Someone pays you a compliment, and you say, "Well, that's the rough equivalent of being the homecoming queen at Magna." [Audience laughter.] And I really, I mean, I'm saying this stuff, while I'm apologizing for saying it, but I have a perverse sense of humor in that way—and Magna suffers a lot, at my expense.

So, the three wisemen...

Okay, they didn't come from Magna. There's a lot of lore that got preserved that actually **can** be pieced together to tell a story. And I'm gonna tell one version of that story because **I like it**, and it appeals to me in ways that are evidence of God's mercy and caring and love for us. So, here is that story, piecing together a diverse group of legends and tales:

Before Adam was cast out of the Garden of Eden (into the world in which death would enter, and Adam would be obligated to succumb to that death), there was an anointing oil prepared in Eden itself that was designed to be used in order to help the Descendant of Adam who would come to crush the head of the serpent—that, once He was anointed, would equip Him to come back from the grave and be resurrected. And that was entrusted into Adam's care before he was cast out of the Garden, as something to be preserved and handed down until the time that the Messiah comes. And as circumstances would have it, that got passed from those that had the responsibility, down through the generations—until finally, Melchizedek turned it over to father Abraham, who, in turn, handed it down through his lineage. And subsequently, there was a line—entrusted not only with possession of the anointing oil that came from Eden but also knowledge about the signs that would be given when the moment came for the oil to be delivered.

And so it was that the sign was given. They recognized and interpreted it correctly. They went to the place where it had been stored by their ancestors. They retrieved it, and then they traveled to find Him who was born the King of the Jews. And upon finding the family (with a sign that signified—from above, according to their understanding and interpretation of the signs—that this was the child, this was the family), they delivered the gifts, which were, in turn, used.

But the oil for anointing was kept. And that oil was handed down, until finally, the moment came when the Savior intended to go up and to provoke His crucifixion. And preliminary to that moment, Mary (the mother) instructed Mary (the consort of Christ) in the manner by which this was to be done. And so, He was anointed—in preparation for His death and His burial and His rising again—with what had been set out and kept (originating in Eden), to be used in order to complete the process of qualifying Him to return again, to have strength in the loins and in the sinews, and the power to rise again from the dead and to lay hold upon all of the faculties of the immortal, physical body.

And so, He was anointed—at the end—with the oil that had been entrusted, originally, to Adam and handed down with an obscure and small body of believers (who were dying out and who were older—and the last of their tradition, it seemed). But the Messiah came, and they discharged the obligation; and the blessing was able to be given, and the Savior was able to rise from the dead. And so, He opened the way, then, for the return from the grave of **everyone** who has faith on His name and accepts (on condition of repentance) the terms to have His atonement applied to us.

Now, I know we're a little bit early, but I'm tired of talking, and I'm really looking forward to the closing hymn, which I understand is going to be as good as the musical number in the interlude—which was absolutely wonderful.