

Podcast Episode 90: Interview with Denver, Part 3

This is the third and final part of Shawn McCraney's interview of Denver Snuffer, which was recorded on October 8th, 2019 in front of a live audience.

Shawn: All right, welcome back. We were just talking, Denver and I. One thing we have in common (we have a lot of things in common, actually), but one thing is we never change our clothes! Thank you for that joke, Denver.

Part 3— Part 1: We heard about Denver's life through story, really. It was a lot of different, sort of chronological, a little bit disparate—but stories that led up to his conversion and baptism in 1973 and into the Mormon Church.

And then we talked a little about (in Part 2) about his getting married to his wife of all these years, nine kids between them and together. And then we talked about Mormonism and about sort of how he got the hook and yanked offstage a little bit. We talked about that in Part 2, so if you're just catching up with us today, we're—or tonight—we're gonna talk a little bit more specifically. And I am *begging* for truncated, succinct answers.

Now, this is a man of words, and he's eloquent and intelligent, so intelligent that the empty— He just says things in a way that really paints the picture, but our low-attention-span audience doesn't necessarily always get that. So, I'm hoping we can do this:

Now, I have four categories. These are the categories, Denver: *social issues, Mormonism, doctrinal basics, and Denver Snuffer*. 'K? So, you choose the category. I have about ten questions in each. That shows you how short you have to be, and I want to hear what you believe, think, teach, share on the concept presented.

Denver: Okay, what were the categories again?

Shawn: *Social issues?*

Denver: Nah.

Shawn: *Mor*—that would be last then—*Mormonism?*

Denver: Sure, let's do that.

Shawn: Thoughts on, first of all, *Joseph Smith*.

Denver: Misunderstood, far more personally insecure than people make him out to be; far more respectful and dependent upon Emma than the LDS tradition would ever acknowledge; and in many respects never felt comfortable with the role that he was assigned.

Shawn: Excellent, and the brevity almost makes me cry.

Denver: Yeah, I know. It does me, too. [Laughter]

Shawn: *Brigham Young.*

Denver: An ambitious man who managed to see, in the construct that Joseph bequeathed him, the potential for monetizing it (in what we would call today *monetization*); who successfully developed it into an empire of control and dominion that today reflects *far more* the Brigham Young version of Mormonism than does it reflect the Joseph Smith version.

Shawn: Translation for our audience: He's a dude that's fallen off a tree to make money.

Denver: Yeah, he's the first multi-millionaire west of the Mississippi.

Shawn: Excellent.

Denver: And he was a carpenter from New England!

Shawn: Right.

Denver: It's like you elect someone to Congress, and they come back—22 million in their pocket.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: How'd that happen? You make him church president, and he becomes a multimillionaire. How'd that happen?

Shawn: So, it's obvious, between Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, you see a lot going on.

Denver: Joseph Smith had a pending petition in bankruptcy when he died. Brigham Young died a wealthy man. Yeah.

Shawn: *Priesthood.*

Denver: *Fabulously* misunderstood. *Completely* misused by the Catholic precedent to subjugate and to control that left so indelible an impression upon the minds of the Christian world that that abusive view echoed down right to today. Priesthood in the form that Christ exemplified it is a call to *service* and *subservience* and not a call to...

Shawn: Be served?

Denver: Yeah, what we've turned it into. It (priesthood) is synonymous, in my mind, with abuse and, primarily, male abuse.

Shawn: Okay, so just curious— Just to take that out a little farther, do you believe in a priesthood which is based or exemplified in *service* that both men and women bear?

Denver: I've redefined the concept, and I—you don't read what I've written, so you wouldn't know this—but I've redefined the concept of priesthood as *fellowship*.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: I think women can have fellowship with one another, and that's a form of *priestesshood*. Men can have fellowship with men; that's a form of priesthood. Men can have associations with angels; that's a form of priesthood. And I think the way to conceptualize priesthood in its best form is as an *association* between sisters or an association between brethren.

Shawn: Fascinating, fascinating. *Water baptism*. (I have heard, just to let you know, that you do perform these, and I've heard, *often*.) So, water baptism.

Denver: Water baptism— And I've said that I think having a living ordinance should be done in living water, that you ought to go out into a river or a lake, a stream, a body of living water in which nature created it, not going inside a building in a tile font and be baptized. I think living ordinances should be by immersion in living water, and it ought to be in a facility that God created—to *remind* us that this is something intended to draw us closer to God, to be born again. Anytime you find living water, as you come out of the *water* from baptism, you see new *life*. You see the animal kingdom and the plant kingdom. I believe in baptism by immersion, and I think it ought best be done in living water.

Shawn: Okay. A couple things—one, I'm sure you know that the *earliest* church fathers believed in living water. In fact, that was one of the main things, but the question I have is can anyone do these? You believe in immersion. Can a teenager baptize a woman or...

Denver: Yeah, one of the things that I have recommended— In the Book of Mormon, there's this example of Alma who had been a servant in an unrighteous king's court. They're called *the wicked priests of King Noah*. He was one of the wicked priests. He gets converted by Abinadi, as you know. He goes out, and he starts his own thing. Well, before he performs a baptism, he prays, and he asks God for the authority to baptize, and he gets an answer that gives him the authority, in answer to prayer, to baptize. P

I've recommended before you baptize anyone, pray and ask God to give you the right to baptize and get from God, as Alma did, the *yea*, the *yes*, and then perform baptism—and yeah, anyone.

Shawn: So, authorize it. So, what you have done there, and I love this— C.A.M.P.U.S. stands for Christian Anarchists [Christian Anarchists Meeting to Prayerfully Understand Scripture], and I won't go into it, but I love the fact that you leave it in the hands of the person who says, *The Lord has said I can*.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: And you let them take that responsibility on because ultimately, it's between them anyway.

Denver: Yeah. In fact, the more you can push responsibility onto the individual, and the less you try to aggregate power to yourself— It's a toxin. It's a toxin to the person getting it, and it's a toxin to the person that is giving it. People need to be responsible to God directly.

Shawn: I love that.

Denver: Man.

Shawn: I love that. That's beautiful. *Sabbath day*.

Denver: Yeah. Dude, that would require an hour of talk to...

Shawn: Come on, you can summarize it!

Denver: We're commanded to keep the Sabbath day holy. I recommend that you do something on the Sabbath day always to remember God. If you find yourself in a predicament where, due to the circumstances of life, you're doing things that you would rather not do on the Sabbath, then do them cognizant in remembering God. You can serve God even if what you do on the Sabbath is work as a mechanic. Just do what you do for the benefit and the glory of God.

Shawn: Is the Sabbath day—and I don't want to belabor this— Are we talking about Friday night to Saturday night, or are we talking about Sunday?

Denver: That's the problem because that requires a long explanation, but...

Shawn: In you, does it matter?

Denver: I'm content with Sunday Sabbath. I understand why some would say it ought to be on Saturday. I believe that the answer to the question goes all the way back to the Fall and how everything got pushed forward. And I think Christ's resurrection on what had become the *first* day of the week was really restoring the early Fall...

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: ...because they didn't have the Sabbath at the beginning. They were kicked out of the garden. And then Christ's resurrection authorizes the celebration of the Sabbath on Sunday as opposed to Saturday. But look, keep *a* Sabbath day holy. Yeah.

Shawn: So, we could say you're Sabbath fluid.

Denver: I'm Sabbath fluid. [Laughter]

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: That sounds cultish.

Shawn: Yeah, well, we have gender fluidity. I figure we can have Sabbath fluidity.

Denver: Sabbath fluidity.

Shawn: All right. *Tithing*. Gotta give it to me straight, Brother.

Denver: I believe that you have a responsibility to care for yourself, to care for your children, to care for your wife and that the payment of tithings is not to be done before taking care of everything that's necessary for food, shelter, clothing, medical care, education; that whatever is left *over*, you tithe on that.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: You don't tithe on your gross.

Shawn: Got it.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: Appreciate that approach *far* better than the evangelicals in this valley who pitch the old LDS struggle: *And the Lord will bless you. Give us the money you would have paid on your electric bill.*

Denver: Yeah! Yeah! And God gave you the money to use for your *electric* bill!

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: And you're using it to support... Yeah, it just— It makes no sense.

Shawn: *Word of Wisdom*.

Denver: Okay. The Word of Wisdom was not given in defined terms. It was given in colloquial language. The Word of Wisdom had no meaning until the high council at Far

West interpreted what they thought the Word of Wisdom meant. At a *later* time, Hyrum Smith was asked about the meaning of the Word of Wisdom, and Hyrum Smith, respectful of the order of things, repeated what the high council at Far West had said.

I believe the Word of Wisdom actually *recommends* beer—barley drinks.

Shawn: Sure.

Denver: Mild barley drinks—what's it talking about? At that point, it meant beer. I believe that hot drinks are *not* coffee, tea. I believe hot drinks are what people at the time—we now identify this as an Indian word, *firewater*—I believe that what it's talking about are those drinks that when you take bourbon, or you take some hard liquor, and you drink it, it burns your throat.

Shawn: I've never heard of that.

Denver: I think the hot drinks is referring to hard alcohol. Wine in the sacrament is *commended*. It's the only liquid that's mentioned for use in scripture—wine for the sacrament; and I believe that beer is just fine. I think hard liquor is probably hazardous. (And a good friend of ours died from liver failure.)

Shawn: Sure.

Denver: And it would be very hard to accomplish that with beer, but you can certainly achieve that with vodka.

Shawn: So, would it be safe to say that you really don't appreciate hard alcohol based off the Word of Wisdom? But do you give the liberality of people who are participating?

Denver: It's a *word of wisdom*...

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: ...that is given, not by commandment or constraint. I think it's unwise, and I think I know from personal experience in my youth that hard liquor tends to make one act foolishly.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: Yeah. My father...

Shawn: Not me, but everybody else, it does.

Denver: My father and Wayne Water's father met for the first time after the two of us had been picked up. He, Wayne, was guilty of a DUI. I was just along for the ride, but, yeah, hard liquor will make one behave foolishly.

Shawn: *Russell M. Nelson.* And I have to put a rule on this. You don't get to say, "Quick!"

Denver: Yeah. No, look. I think he's the victim of a system that he inherited that he does not see any way to execute his role other than in conformity to the system that he inherited, and he would be *far, far* better off if he said the *system* is not the *gospel*.

The gospel is not necessarily confined. We do not need to be slavishly following an *order* of things. The truth will set you *free*, and tradition— In the Book of Mormon, tradition is a negative. *Every time* the word *tradition* is used in the Book of Mormon, it is used in a negative way except on, I think, two (and it may be three) occasions where it specifically identifies the tradition as being good. Otherwise, the default for tradition is always evil.

Russell Nelson is leading an organization that has been out of control, probably since 1890. And I picked that day because that was when the lawyer wrote Official Declaration 1 that Wilford Woodruff published in order to satisfy the Tucker-Edmonds Act [Edmonds-Tucker Act] and to extract the church from the loss of their property.

You can't serve God and Mammon, and right now a lot of hard choices *ought* to be made. Mormonism would thrive if they made the right choices, if they were willing to lay aside the traditions and the things that cultivate and curate the wealth. Forget about the world; the world's headed for destruction anyway.

Shawn: Ooh, we'll have to talk about that.

Denver: The more you hold on to that, the more disappointed you're gonna be at the outcome. But the things of eternal life—they'll be with you forever.

Shawn: Last one: *Communion*.

Denver: Oh! In the sense of the sacrament, *sacramental communion*, I believe that that ought to be celebrated every Sabbath (but as often as someone feels inclined to do so) and that it ought to be breaking of bread, the taking of wine. And I think that wine was intended to be part of the sacramental observance because a little bit of wine, for most people, will put you in a more meditative state, in a more reflective state.

We're very harried in our every day. Our minds are busy running from place to place. We have short attention spans. Wine has a way of slowing you down a little and letting your attention span expand a little, and your reflection become a little more deep. I think communion in that sense— I see no problem if someone wants to have communion celebrated as a sacrament every day. But I also think there's a communion between people, a fellowship.

Shawn: Okay, yeah.

Denver: Yeah, a sharing of ideas. There are a lot of things that everyone holds in common, and there are so many things that we can fight about. I don't think we please God when we decide, Ah, what we're going to talk about today is what we fight about. There ought to be a lot more (used to be!)— They invited ministers to come to the tabernacle and to preach in the tabernacle to a Mormon audience.

Shawn: D. L. Moody!

Denver: Yeah! Van Der Donckt, the chaplain of the United States Senate.

Shawn: Wow.

Denver: And B. H. Roberts!

Shawn: Wow.

Denver: They gave lectures...

Shawn: Did that happen there?

Denver: Yeah!

Shawn: That's where we get the...

Denver: Yes!

Shawn: ...Van Der Donckt?

Denver: Yes! That's from the tabernacle!

Shawn: On materialism?

Denver: Yes!

Shawn: Wow!

Denver: That's tabernacle! Yeah.

There was a time when Mormonism was confident enough that it would allow someone to come in and criticize. Mormonism today has no confidence to let a critic come in and criticize 'cause it *scares* them.

Shawn: This is an aside. I don't know your age; you look young but gray. But the question I have is: Do you remember the days when priesthood meeting (I was really— I was a kid, about eight), opening priesthood meeting was like a debate! *I don't like that candidate!* Another person would say, *Oh I...*

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: ...*I think he's great!*

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: They were *open!*

Denver: It was lively. See, what happened is that Joseph Fielding Smith and Bruce R. McConkie, his son-in-law, *wanted* to stabilize Mormonism. I think they were far less concerned with getting it right and far more concerned with just stabilizing it. They were opponents of that, and I loved that era.

Shawn: That was a great era.

Denver: That was fun.

Shawn: That *ends* your first category, Mr. Denver Snuffer! We have the *basics in doctrine, yourself, or social issues.*

Denver: Wait a minute. Are we going through all of them?

Shawn: Yes!

Denver: I chose one...

Shawn: This is interesting!

Denver: ...I chose one in the expectation that that would be it.

Shawn: Your expectations were incorrect, sir. [Laughter]

Denver: So, this is all double jeopardy. This is all— Yeah, we don't ring the bell and say, *Okay, you've made it to the end.*

Shawn: No, we knock three times, remember?

Denver: Yeah. Man. So, what was the first one 'cause we may as well do...

Shawn: *Social issues.*

Denver: That's the one I like least, so, yeah, let's go there.

Shawn: *Marijuana.*

Denver: It's funny. One of the fellows who was going to meet me here is not here because he has to harvest his marijuana crop. He has a license (this is weird, okay?). He lives in Utah. He's been licensed by the state of Utah to grow a crop of marijuana, which he has grown and is now harvesting because it's supposed to snow tomorrow, and he's gonna turn it into CBD oil that's legal. And how weird is that?

Shawn: It's weird.

Denver: I mean, seriously. Look, I...

Shawn: Herbs?

Denver: ...I think—yeah, I get all that—but I think smoking stuff is ill-advised to your lungs. (You know, edibles over in Colorado might be an answer for some people.)

I do think that there's therapeutic uses of a whole variety of things. I learned from a fellow whose daughter's in med school that one of the very first heart medications that they developed for blood thinning came from using a poisonous snake venom to adjust it for dosage that will allow the blood to be thinned in order to help heart patients prevent further damage. If snake venom can have a therapeutic use, then it's likely that just about everything in the hands of someone that knows what they're doing can have a therapeutic use. We react hysterically because someone abuses something without ever considering that maybe further use ought to be experimented with to find out where it fits.

This creation was fine-tuned by God who put man as the culmination of that creation, and everything—*everything*—was given for the use and benefit of man in the Garden of Eden. Now, he was kicked out. The *kind* of environment became progressively more hostile, but that doesn't mean that everything in the garden didn't exist for the use and benefit of man. We just abuse stuff.

Shawn: Like your views; I really do! *Government.*

Denver: The United States has one of the greatest governmental structures ever created, and it is populated, at present, by scoundrels and knaves and dishonest and just wretched individuals. *Fortunately*, we have egomaniacal leaders occupying all three branches of government which is exactly what the Founding Fathers anticipated would happen, and so, we get a daily vaudeville show.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: I mean, it's slapstick humor what's going on back in Washington.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: Are you telling me that that both political parties don't realize there's an immigration problem that could be solved? Why are we ignoring a problem when we're importing disease? Why can't someone that has a disease that would like to come here go through a system that welcomes them but cures their disease before they set them loose in the general public? Some people say, Well, we want to welcome them, and some people say, Oh, this is a danger; we have to have it regulated. Why can't we both welcome them and regulate it and do it in a way that protects the people that are here and aids the actual people that are coming in?

Our government right now is utterly dysfunctional, and we're the beneficiaries of that because they leave us alone.

Shawn: So, you have obvious ideas. Let me get more to the point on that one, government. *What is your thought on the separation of church and state?*

Denver: It was always intended that the state not be allowed to meddle in the church, but I think that churches were always expected to speak up and to have a voice. I think churches *ought* to speak up.

I think there are a lot of issues that affect churches and the values of the churches. And when you say that you have to gag the churches, then are the only voices that are permitted in the public discourse the secular voice, the atheist voice? Why is the atheist voice more pure and worthy of being heard than the religious voice if you're going to open up the First Amendment for everyone to speak? It just— It makes no sense. We've skewed it. Churches should be as vocal as they want to be. Atheists should likewise be as vocal as they want to be.

The only thing that shouldn't happen is that a government should not say, This religion is destined to prosper and succeed, but that one is destined to ruin in taxation. They should be hands off. The government shouldn't control that.

Shawn: Got it.

Denver: But if churches have the ability to win the political argument and to elect people to Congress that represent their views, churches should have the right to rally and to elect.

Shawn: With the continued support of tax-exempt status?

Denver: I think so because anytime you say you will forfeit your taxes in... The power— Oliver Wendell Holmes said the power to tax is the power to destroy. The power to destroy when it comes to churches— You really have to take a tax-free approach.

Shawn: Got it.

Denver: You just have to.

Shawn: Got it.

Denver: Otherwise, government can destroy it.

Shawn: I see. Excellent. *Abortion.*

I think I know what you're gonna say on most of these, but let's just get it on the record.

Denver: Yeah. I think you're taking a life.

Shawn: Okay. *Homosexuality.*

Denver: I think it is the— Ultimately, anyone who does not have children— I don't care what their orientation is. Having a sexual union between the man and the woman that produces a child, no matter what it is that drives your libido, is part of what it means to be human, made in the image of God, and to experience, in this life, part of what is our destiny.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: And, therefore, I understand that there may be people who find that challenging. Nevertheless, I think they will find greater joy and happiness in having and raising a child than they can in a union that will deprive them of that.

Shawn: Got it.

Denver: So, I mean, I don't want to throw rocks at anyone. What I would like to do is encourage them to contemplate the value and the godliness of the union of the man and the woman and the product of progeny.

Shawn: Got it.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: *Capital punishment.*

Denver: Because I have been a lawyer and seen innocent people be convicted, some— At least one fellow is in jail right now for a crime he did not commit that we're doing what we can to try and change that. I hate to have finality like execution when you have the potential for error. If you *know*; if the person confesses, I don't have a problem with an execution although if there's no proof to support his confession, and all he's doing is using you to commit suicide, I got a problem with that.

But there's a serial killer I heard about driving into work today. He's confessed to...

Shawn: Ninety-four.

Denver: ...ninety— Yeah, and he's got proof, and they found bodies where he said they'd find them. I don't have any problem with execution.

Shawn: That's no connection to blood atonement.

Denver: Oh, gol!

Shawn: I just have to ask! You got to clear up the mystique, Brother.

Denver: Yeah, Yeah. I think the whole notion of blood atonement is asinine. The Apostle Paul said he was guilty of murder.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: I mean, the whole concept was he committed a sin, but most...

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: Christ's blood can't reach, so we gotta shed your blood.

Shawn: Right.

Denver: Ah, yeah, that's nonsense.

Shawn: I'll just throw this one out there. We'll end it with that one. *Evangelicalism*.

Denver: A recent innovation, largely dependent upon the constructural framework that Martin Luther came up with, which itself was, in a way, to escape Roman Catholicism without, you know, trusting that Catholicism's excommunication of you will consign you to hell. I mean, evangelical views were inevitable, and I think they are supportable by the biblical text, but they are really recent. Here, the evangelicals are the only ones that got it right?

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: Then we've got like 1750 years of Christians that are consigned to hell because it didn't *exist*. I mean, look, given the chaos of what Christianity came to in the wake of Catholicism and Martin Luther and Knox and Calvin, evangelicals are probably putting a better face on the ruling of Christianity than most. And I have a lot— I harmonize with a lot of what the evangelical world has to say.

Shawn: Not on my list, but just between, you know, you and I, have you done much reading of Erasmus?

Denver: No! I should do that.

Shawn: Yeah, really interesting.

Denver: Okay.

Shawn: We have two categories left, my friend, and I know the one you're *not* gonna pick unless you want to get the pain out of the way. We can do *Denver Snuffer*, or we can do *the basics of doctrine*.

Denver: Well, let's do *the basics of doctrine*, and then— Aren't we out of time? [Laughter]

Shawn: No. I know you're hoping for that. We're not letting that happen.

Denver: I need to... [Denver gestures *stretching out* space between his hands. Laughter.]

Shawn: Yeah, you're good at that! All right. *God the Father*.

Denver: God the Father is clearly cross-culturally recognized as an existent male deity that, in Jewish tradition and in Egyptological depiction and in Hinduism, offered the promise of a redemptive God-Son who would come to rescue mankind from a predicament. P

And I think that God the Father in our current scriptures, biblical and Mormon, seems distant and disconnected; and yet, God the Son comes in and says, I do what the Father tells me to do. I'm a reflection of Him. I'm here as His, essentially, His surrogate. When you see me, you've seen the Father. P

And so, we have this disconnect between us and the Father that Christ was trying to disabuse us of to try and make the Father seem just as loving, just as sacrificial, just as kindly as is the Son. And we've lost that. P

One of the fascinating things that Mormonism has is that Christ in the Book of Mormon repeatedly refers to things He's doing as what the Father told Him to do; and in dialogue in the first books of Nephi (First and Second Nephi), the Father's voice is actually heard. I mean, Bruce R. McConkie, when trying to stabilize Mormonism, says that God the Father never talks to mankind except to introduce His Son. P

This is [imitating B. R. McConkie]... Actually, I think I can do that voice. *This is my beloved Son...*

Shawn: It's called... [copies Denver's gesture, *stretching out* the space between his hands].

Denver: ...*in whom I am well pleased; hear [ye] him*—Bruce R. McConkie (Matthew 17:5; Matthew 9:4 RE). But he's *wrong* because the Book of Mormon says,...

Shawn: Right.

Denver: ...in the first-person voice of the Father, a lot of things that aren't *This is my beloved Son; hear him* (Luke 9:35; Mark 5:5 RE).

Now, I could go on...

Shawn: You can.

Denver: ...about that, but they seem to be growing increase...

Shawn: Yes and no, quick yes or no. *A body of flesh and bones?*

Denver: Glorified body...

Shawn: Okay. Glorified body of flesh and bones?

Denver: Yeah, within...yeah! Look, when you talk about that...

Shawn: Denver, yes or *damn no!* [Laughter]

Denver: In order to know the biology of a resurrected being...

Shawn: You're killing me...

Denver: Yeah, okay. Yes.

Shawn: Okay, thank you. *King Follett Discourse. Once a man?* Yes or no.

Denver: Well, if you define Christ as God, absolutely, God was once a man.

Shawn: No, I'm not talking about incarnation through Christ. I'm talking about the Father. Yes or no, darn it! Come on! My mom is waiting for me for dinner! [Laughter]

Denver: Is your Mom still— Are you still living in a basement? What's up with you, Man? [Laughter] Is this religious gig so poorly paid?

Shawn: You think I would live in a basement? I live *here!*

Denver: Oh. Well, I hope they shut down the...

Shawn: It's the only time I get sleep.

Denver: ...the cabinet plant next door.

Shawn: Are you gonna give me one on that? *God the Father, once a man.* Yes, no?

Denver: I believe that God has made it possible for people, as is stated in Revelation, chapter 3, to sit on a throne as Christ sits on a throne with His Father; and that, as a consequence, the deification of man (which is an Eastern Orthodox preserved doctrine) is true.

In terms of the genealogy of God the Father, you know, we can go round and round on that without ever getting an answer...

Shawn: I don't want to go round and round.

Denver: ...in the King Follett discourse.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: But yeah.

Shawn: Okay. You're too wily of an attorney to know how to just manipulate the hell out of me, so I'm jumping categories, and we're going like this down the thing. *Are you a prophet?*

Denver: The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, so everyone ought to be a prophet.

Shawn: So, that would be a yes.

Denver: Everyone ought to be a prophet.

Shawn: Are you a prophet in the sense of the missionaries going door to door in, say, like unto Moses?

Denver: No, I don't have a podium, and I don't have a tabernacle, and I don't have a temple, and I don't have an organization.

Shawn: Less specifically. Do you receive revelation for people?

Denver: I receive revelation.

Shawn: For others.

Denver: Some people have thought what I had to say significant enough that they use it in their own lives.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: Do I have the ambition of trying to lead a group of people? If so, my ambition is to lead them to become prophets in their own right.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: All right, fair enough. The next one: *Satan*.

Denver: Because of a revelation, I happen to know that *Satan* is a title, and what it means is *accuser*. And we can be Satan, as Christ said to Peter, *Get thee behind me, Satan* [See Matthew 16:23], when Peter was trying to convince the Lord that he didn't need to go undertake the sacrifice; and I think Satan is a role any one of us can occupy as soon as we want to become accusers of one another. And you know that— The opposite of that is what Christ talked about, loving one another.

Shawn: Okay, so, it's more of a principle, concept, rather than an entity.

Denver: I think anyone can become an accuser...

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: ...and an adversary, and many people do.

Shawn: *Hell*.

Denver: I think there is such a thing as torment and regret, but I think that the inflictor of that torment is ourselves.

Shawn: So, not literal flames.

Denver: No, no, no, no, no, no pitchforks, no horned heads and pointy tails and...

Shawn: That's only the Mormons.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: Just kidding—total joke because people used to say we had horns. Geez, you guys at home— I know what you're thinking. Anyway, *have you seen Jesus?*

Denver: Well, yeah, and a little bit of a description of that is given in the book that I gave to you.

Shawn: Okay, good.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: All right.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: *Different from the angel or the angel...?*

Denver: Oh yes, yes, yes, yeah.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: *Are you the head of this dispensation?*

Denver: Well, the way you define *dispensation* requires that you understand the term. Do I have a dispensation? Has the gospel been dispensed to me from heaven so that I'm not dependent upon something including the words of an old book to know God? Yes.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: Does that mean that now I get to run a multi-national corporation? No. I'm doing my best to try and preserve faith in Christ at a time when, because of everything that's going on in our current environment that is so corrosive, it is increasingly more difficult for people to have faith in Christ. P

But I know He's real; and I know that He died for the salvation of a fallen world; and I know that He's going to come to judge it and redeem it; and that between now and then, faith is going to be increasingly more difficult to hold on to. And I hope to do what I can to have people preserve their faith in Him and stop squabbling with our fellow believers. Yeah.

Shawn: In the context of asking that question, Denver, ...that Joseph was the head of that dispensation, you know, where we have to pass through the sentinels, and you got to see him, Brigham Young, and all that. The question is: Can people enter into—and we're going to get to heaven next—but enter into heaven without your approval?

Denver: Yeah. Well, I would hope, yeah. I would *hope*.

Shawn: So would I, but you never know on this day. Some people might say, *No they've got to come through me*. I just want to know.

Denver: Yeah, yeah, that— To me, that's kind of a silly notion.

Shawn: Is it?

Denver: So, I mentioned before, Saint Francis...

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: ...and that the current pope took the name of Saint Francis, and that endeared him to me. Saint Francis believed in the Sermon on the Mount, and he wanted to start a Catholic order in which they *lived* the Sermon on the Mount. He was initially turned down because the pope didn't think anyone could do that. And so, he went out, and he got a group of followers, and they lived the Sermon on the Mount; and they came back, and he got his order.

When Saint Francis was dying in his final illness in the last weeks of his life, he said angels came and ministered to him, okay? Joseph Smith's older brother Alvin died. As Alvin lay dying, he was talking about the angels that had come into the room and were ministering to him.

Those two illustrations are what I believe happens with the Christian journey and the Christian redemption. There are a lot of people who live very good lives who, in the waning— When they were stoning Stephen (in the Book of Acts), Stephen is standing there in the final moments of his life being brutally slain, and he says, *The heavens opened to me, and I see the Son of man on the right hand of power* [See Acts 4:10 RE]. He beholds the heavens open.

These are the kinds of people that died with a firm expectancy that they have salvation because something occurred before they departed. A lot of people think that that's an event that needs to occur in the life of a Christian soul when they're 14 years old or 12 or 50 years. P

I think for most people, they *do* have that experience, but it's in the waning moments of life, and I think that a lot of people experience that here in order to have the right to inherit it there. And some of that last-minute babbling that you hear from the dying souls or the mentally-impaired that are talking about babblings that sound religious, there's something more going on. And I think God's mercy extends far and wide and is experienced by many, many souls outside of the confines of denominationalism.

Shawn: Totally agreed, and that's a beautiful hopeful thought that you have. *Second Coming*.

Denver: Ooh! An absolutely...

Shawn: That's a thumbs-up?

Denver: Yeah! It's an absolutely firmly predicted, inevitable event. If everything that was said in scripture concerning our Lord and concerning the prophecies that have been and

are being fulfilled are true, then, without any doubt, there will be a Second Coming; and Christ will come to take possession of this world that He created—*belongs* to Him!

Shawn: Right!

Denver: He'll reclaim it!

Shawn: Right! *Do you subscribe to the highest degree of the celestial kingdom? Are the three kingdoms part of your theological makeup?*

Denver: I believe in the idea of progression.

Shawn: Okay.

Denver: I believe in the idea of being *added upon*. Yeah. There's a lot more to that story than just— And the idea that you're gonna finish this world; and you're gonna depart; you're gonna arrive somewhere; and that that's where you get to, you know, build your condo on the beach and remain forever...

Have you ever read Mark Twain's short story and act, *An Extract from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven*?

Shawn: I don't believe so.

Denver: It's freakin' hilarious, and it's pretty good.

Shawn: I'll have to read it.

Denver: It's pretty good, yeah!

Shawn: A couple more, and we're done. *Are you a cult leader?* You have to have heard that from somebody.

Denver: Well, it's actually kind of silly when you think about it. Yeah. Look. I say what I say openly. I advocate in favor of faith. I advocate in favor of truth. I don't think that history should be skewed in order to prop up a false proposition. I think that sometimes the study of history is painful and requires you to come to a reckoning about what's going on or what went on. And I don't doubt that you can (if you define the term carefully enough) say that I lead a cult, or that you lead a cult, or that Mormonism is a cult, or that the Roman Catholic Church is a cult. But, in the sense that there's some kind of secretive...

Shawn: Right!

Denver: ...you know, sexually aberrant...

Shawn: Right.

Denver: ...criminally deviant—all of those things usually go with the idea of cultism—no, I try to be as open and as forthright and as forthcoming as I possibly can be.

I do speak very little about the miraculous and the otherworldly because I think it attracts the wrong kind of people. I would rather teach in order to have people have their own experience and to enjoy their own communion with the heaven. And then, they've got it for themselves. They don't need me talking that stuff up. I think talking that stuff up— It really skews people's perception of you, the way they interact with you, and it limits their own growth. *They* need to grow. Everyone needs to become prophets in their own right.

Shawn: Yeah.

Denver: Yeah.

Shawn: One last question with...it tags onto that last one 'cause...and then...thank you for answering it. It's— I *hate* it because you get called a cult leader if you do anything, *anything!* They just... *You're a cult leader!*

But, the question is: Typically and historically, we see that leaders of groups— They fall for gold, glory, or girls. That's, you know— We've seen that historically through almost *every* group, *almost* everyone. They fall for one of those.

And I don't think you're having a problem with the girls, and I don't think you're having a problem with the gold (at least as far as I know), but the *glory*— Are people allowed, that are in your group, to disagree with you and remain loved, and can someone— Like here, we have people who say, *You know, Shawn, you're crazy; I don't believe that.* You say, *So what, stay here.* You have that same approach?

Denver: Yeah! And, in fact, there are a lot of things that go on that I disagree with, and I just hold my tongue. There are things that get discussed that I know if I weigh in, I can get my way, and I think that's bad for me, and I think that's bad for them.

Shawn: Yeah!

Denver: I have a very different view of what Joseph Smith was, and what he accomplished than most ex-Mormons. I think the trajectory of Joseph Smith's life— He died at age 38 and a half. He was still a young man. When you go back to— One of the letters that you'll find in here is the one he wrote from Liberty Jail. You have this priesthood structure, control, hierarchy. You have all of this stuff being constructed in the religious development that Joseph Smith undertook.

Then you have things literally fall all apart at Far West. Three witnesses abandoned him; members of the Quorum of the Twelve abandoned him; members of the Quorum of the

Twelve signed affidavits that helped put him in jail. The hierarchy had been decimated by opposition and infighting, and he wound up in jail because of that.

He's in jail, and he's writing a letter, and in his letter, he puts something that completely reverses everything that had gone on before. *No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by gentleness and persuasion and pure knowledge* (See T&C 175:31; 139:6 RE).

Joseph Smith's ark, which tended towards the authoritarianism, began to be dramatically reconsidered during the imprisonment in Liberty Jail. What he wrote in there absolutely eviscerated hierarchical control, and when he gets to Nauvoo, and he gives the talk to the Relief Society in Nauvoo, he says, *You are depending too much upon the prophet, and you are darkened in your minds because you're neglecting the duties that devolve upon yourselves.*

Well, if we're students, and we're careful students of history, and we can see what's going on in downtown Salt Lake right now; and we know that *that's not going to yield* the kind of righteous, self-sufficient, self-confident Christian souls converted to a living faith that would go to their death because in their hearts, they harbor the conviction that what they're doing and what they're living is, in fact, pleasing to God—then you *can't*—you can't take away from people and aggregate to yourself the authority or the control.

The thing I try consciously (and that I've asked my wife, and *she* tries constantly to remind me of) is it is not a virtue or an advantage to be the one in charge. It's a virtue, and it's an advantage to be down laboring alongside and helping lift others. It's an advantage to try and teach and preach in a way that will make them better people for your having been there. And if you've managed to move people along so that *they* can reach a state of harmony that we would call Zion (or City of Peace), and you're not there, but you helped facilitate it, then you've done something for which God will give you what you're due, whatever that may be. You trust Him. You leave it in His hands. But to say, *I need to be the mayor of Zion* is— It's Nauvoo all over again.

Shawn: Sure!

Denver: Joseph Smith's experiment in restoration efforts to try and bring about the kingdom of God (the Lord's Prayer asks that His kingdom return) didn't work! It didn't work.

And the Book of Mormon says *this* land shall not have kings on it. I don't want to be a king. I would love to be a servant in the service of the Lord and to elevate others.

Shawn: I've really enjoyed this. I have a new appreciation for you as a person. And your thoughts—I think they're great. I think they're— If they are what you claim them to be— I always have to have that caveat 'cause I don't know you personally, but in terms of what you've communicated, it's been excellent. And I think you give people hope, and you seem to want to help them to stand on their own two feet, to know the Lord and walk with Him

in that way. And I really appreciate you taking the time, all this time, to do this. Thank you for...

Denver: You bet, and yeah, you'll probably figure a lot more out about me in those, particularly the essay books. And let's *not do* this again!

Shawn: All right! [Laughter] We will *not*. But I do have *one* favor: a message for the audience. That's the camera. They really want to see you, what you have to say.

Denver: Yeah. Look, there is absolutely no reason to be afraid of the truth. The truth will not harm whatever you're doing, and that includes what's going on in downtown Salt Lake. It may require that you change the nature of the message. But the truth will not harm you. The more of it that you can deal with...

We tend to think that the opposite of faith is hatred. It's not. The opposite of faith is fear. Fear is what produces a lack of confidence that produces evil and hatred—*fear*.

Stop being afraid of the truth! Christ said the truth shall make you free, and He meant that. It's true. You don't need to carry the burden around of trying to hide or conceal or mislead. Just be forthright, honest. And the fact that you're a weak man— All of the heroes of the Old Testament were weak men.

We don't lose our faith in God because David betrayed one of his generals, ultimately sending him off to be murdered in order to hide his adultery. We don't hide that. Our opinion of David is altered as a consequence, but our faith in God is not; the same of Peter denying the Lord— That is *not* evidence that Peter wasn't commissioned and sent forth with a message. It just meant that he wasn't as strong as he would like to have been, or perhaps that we would like to have seen him be. But none of us are, either.

None of us have ever been strong enough to carry the burden that was necessary for our own redemption. That's what Christ did for us. So, confessing your own inadequacy is simply another way of reminding us that we're all dependent upon the Lord. So be truthful!

Shawn: Praise God! Denver Snuffer, we will see you next week here on Heart of the Matter.

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