

**KUTV Interview**  
Denver C. Snuffer Jr.  
June 15, 2015

**QUESTION:** I know your name, but in case any producers do this, could you say and spell your name for the record?

**DENVER:** It's Denver Snuffer, D-E-N-V-E-R S-N-U-F-F-E-R.

**QUESTION:** You've been an attorney how long in the Salt Lake area?

**DENVER:** Thirty-three years. Actually, it's 2015, so thirty-five years. Thirty-five years now.

**QUESTION:** And prior to your excommunication, how long had you been a member of the LDS church?

**DENVER:** Forty years to the day.

**QUESTION:** You were excommunicated on the day...?

**DENVER:** Yes. I was baptized on September 10<sup>th</sup>, and I learned of the excommunication forty years later on September the 10<sup>th</sup>.

**QUESTION:** And what year was that, the excommunication?

**DENVER:** 2013. Yeah, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1973 to September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

**QUESTION:** Interesting.

**DENVER:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Interesting timing.

**DENVER:** Serendipitous [laughter].

**QUESTION:** You're... I am sure you are aware of the meeting that was held in Boise over the weekend. Elder Oaks went up there with Elder Turley.

**DENVER:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** What do you make of that?

**DENVER:** Apparently there is some concern in the Boise area justifying that level of attention by church leadership.

**QUESTION:** What do you think prompted those remarks? I mean, they were pretty specific.

**DENVER:** They were, and I was mailed a recording by email of the meeting almost as soon as it ended. I listened to it, and I understand why people are saying that this may be in response to some of the things I've said, but it's such an ill fit. What they were talking about and what I have written or spoken about are like two ships passing in the night. They're really not a good fit with the things I've written. So, I have questioned whether that's intended to be provoked by me or if it is, instead, something that is provoked by local things happening in Boise. I know there are a lot of people that have been rebaptized. I know that there are people that are blogging in the Boise area and talking about meetings that are taking place up there and fellowships that are forming. The baptisms are not under the auspices of the Church, and the fellowship meetings are being held without church sanction, and I think that the Church, for some reason, feels threatened by that. I don't think they **need** to feel threatened by that but apparently they do and this is, I think, in response more to **that** than directly trying to respond to anything I've said or written.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, obviously your name wasn't mentioned in the whole...

**DENVER:** Wasn't.

**QUESTION:** ...in however many minutes that meeting went on, but...

**DENVER:** Hour and six minutes was how long my recording was.

**QUESTION:** Right. Who do you think, though, that there... I mean, Elder Oaks brought some very specific questions and criticisms of the Church and responded to them, many of which you've brought up. I mean, who do you think he's referring to when he says, "Some say..."

**DENVER:** It could include me, but it certainly includes others. There are a lot of questions that have been raised about Church history, Church teachings, continuity of leadership... I'm not originating a list of issues. I'm taking issues that exist, and I'm trying to deal with them in what I hope is a constructive way, but certainly I try to deal with them in an **honest** way. Some of the answers make the institution of the LDS Church look less-than-candid with its members, and some of the answers to those questions, I think, make the LDS Church look very good. But whether it cuts for or against 'em, I'm trying to deal with the very same issues that the Church is dealing with,—and the Church is having a lot of problems dealing with—but I'm trying to do it without regard to whether some authority says it is this way or some authority says it is that way. I would like to try to get to the bottom of the issue and discuss it in a way that is candid and forthright and does the best job that I can do of marshaling the information to come up with what I think is the best conclusion.

**QUESTION:** For those unfamiliar with what you've spoken about or talked about, what is the crux of your positions that you've spoken about that got the Church (obviously) upset enough to excommunicate you?

**DENVER:** One of the things that I think is obvious from early Mormonism and from the canon of Mormon scripture is that beginning with the Book of Mormon and the teachings of Joseph Smith and the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, there has always been this emphasis upon the salvation of man through the knowledge of God that they obtain while they're here. Knowledge of God includes—according to Joseph Smith and, for example, D&C 93:1—it includes coming into His presence, and that is, in the Mormon vernacular, referred to as the Second Comforter. It was surprising to me that in the talk that Elder Oaks gave, that he dealt with and was dismissive of the idea of a relationship with God, including the Second Comforter.

The first book I wrote was titled *The Second Comforter – Conversing With The Lord Through the Veil*, and it lays out the teachings of the Church, the scriptures. At the time that I wrote that I was a member in good-standing. Subsequent to writing it, I was called to be on the High Council. It was, I believe, an orthodox statement of Church belief. I submitted it to Deseret Book for them to publish. They took seven months to evaluate it, and when they were done, they had no criticism of the book. They just expressed—in a discussion that I had with the head of publishing—it was too sacred a subject for them to feel comfortable publishing under the title of Deseret Book; but they encouraged me to go get it in print, which I subsequently did do.

**QUESTION:** So you've got to wonder, if Elder Oaks brought up, say, that point, that this meeting was, at least in some respects, responding to what you've taught.

**DENVER:** May have been, may have been. Certainly dealt with a subject that, in my view, is foundational to the Restoration, and I was surprised that Elder Oaks was dismissive of it. I don't think that that can be **justified** if you go back to Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants. It is possible to justify that with **later** policy changes that were made (and he spoke about policy changes that the Quorum of the Twelve govern themselves by). I suppose that if you put anyone into that position they abide by the policy. I'm not in that position. And I'm interested in trying to get to the bottom of what was the religion restored to accomplish? What are we supposed to be doing **with** it? I don't think we can ever do enough with it, frankly.

**QUESTION:** Do you feel that in the last—what? Two years?—almost-two years since you were excommunicated that your following has increased? Decreased?

**DENVER:** Well, I don't know that I have a following. I know that there is a group of people that is discontent—for a whole host of reasons. Many of them are discontent about issues about which I don't care, and I don't agree. There is a progressive and liberal agenda that would like to see the Church take on more social popular issues.

**QUESTION:** How about the other end of this?

**DENVER:** I don't care about that. I don't think that the social issues matter. I think that what matters is: What is the religion attempting to do, and what is it attempting to cause in the lives of its adherents? That, I think, cuts across all of the social issues and ought to be a more foundational question. We ought to be able to agree on what the fundamentals are even if we have **vastly different** political points of view. And so, I don't think I have a following. I think there are a lot of discontent people. I try to articulate what it was that the Restoration was originally intended to accomplish **and look like**, and I believe there are a number of people that look at what I have written and the source material that I draw from and who reach the same conclusion. No one has to accept anything that I've said, and I don't want a following. What I'm trying to do is get to the bottom of the truth, and if it persuades someone, then fine; we're in agreement. If it doesn't, then I'm interested in hearing the disagreement. I'm interested in hearing what the contrary view is.

But I believe that there is more discontent, I believe that there is more alienation, and I believe that there is more disaffection in the institutional Church today than there was two years ago. I think there will be more two years from now than there is today, but I don't think that is driven by an individual—not by me. I think it's driven by a whole host of things, and the primarily responsible party is the Church itself because they are doing an inadequate job of dealing candidly and forthrightly with questions. They ought to be more open. They ought to be more willing to put things out there that actually reflect where we began, in some cases in stark contrast to where we are today. I think it is perfectly fine for them to account for the gap between where it started and where we are today by saying, "There were a series of decisions made; this is the person who made it; this is why they made it; and that's why we look so different today than we did back then." But to say we are a continuous preservation of exactly what was there before... There've been too many changes. I was a member for forty years, and it was not the same church in 2013 as the one I was baptized in in 1973.

**QUESTION:** You've got a website, right?

**DENVER:** I do, yeah.

**QUESTION:** How many people check that out?

**DENVER:** I had a blog; now I have a website. At the blog, it had about a three-year history, and there were about three-and-a-quarter million—3,250,000—visits. The website, I don't have the same...

**QUESTION:** Analytics?

**DENVER:** Yeah, the same analytics. But I know that it's averaging about 8,000 separate visitors per day and about 75,000 page views a day. However, apparently a lot of people **do**

think the Boise event was related because I looked last evening, and there's been a spike. There have been over 10,000 a day and...

**QUESTION:** Since the meeting?

**DENVER:** Since the meeting, and it's been running about 17-18% new visitors. Now it's running over 20% new visitors, so apparently there is a lot of new visiting going on.

**QUESTION:** I guess, really, my final question is: You had spoken in Boise, right, during...? Help me understand... You did sort of a lecture circuit?

**DENVER:** I gave a series of ten lectures that constituted one talk, delivered in ten different forums. The first...

**QUESTION:** Before your excommunication?

**DENVER:** The first talk was given in Boise, Idaho. I received the phone call as I was driving to Boise, Idaho on the morning of September 10<sup>th</sup>. The stake president called me on my cell phone. He told me on the morning of September 10<sup>th</sup> that the decision was to excommunicate me. I gave the first talk that evening in Boise.

**QUESTION:** So you... That was where, sort of where your lecturing began?

**DENVER:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** I guess, what my final question, really, would be: What do you make of Elder Oaks choosing to go to Boise to address these subjects?

**DENVER:** Not much, but if he then goes to Idaho Falls, and then to Logan, and then to Centerville, and then to Orem (which was the order in which I started the ten talks), then I'll make something of it. But the fact that he went to Boise, I think, is a reflection. That... I have learned, for example, that there were 24 people baptized on a single Saturday morning in the Boise River. Those were Latter-day Saints renewing baptismal-covenant-making between themselves and God. They didn't intend, I think, by that to depart from membership in the LDS church, but they did intend to reconfirm their commitment to the Lord, and I think there's been some activity up there. There's been a blogger who was excommunicated who was in Boise, and he's a fairly well-known blogger. He's talked about his excommunication. I think...

**QUESTION:** And the rebaptisms, just to be clear, you've talked—advocated—for that as well, correct?

**DENVER:** I have, and I believe there's Book of Mormon precedent for that. The President of the Quorum of the Twelve, Boyd Packer, lamented in a General Conference talk that the Church had done a good job of distributing the **authority** of the priesthood, but the Church

had not done a very good job of distributing **power** in the priesthood. One of my talks... I used the example of Alma and Helam from the Book of Mormon, in which **Alma**, who had been ordained in the absolutely corrupt court of King Noah (he was ordained precisely because he was one of the priests that would be wicked with King Noah), decided that he was going to repent, and he was gonna renew his covenant. Before baptizing Helam, he prayed and asked God to give him the power to baptize. It was poured out, he baptized him, and despite the fact that the ordination was defective (from an institutionally corrupt place), the baptism was honored, and both of them received an outpouring of the Spirit.

In the talk, I suggested if you are unconvinced by your original baptism, have someone renew their priestly ordination by petitioning to heaven to give power to them. When the power is given, then go out and get baptized again, this time not just by the authority of the priesthood but also by the authority of heaven—the power of heaven—to renew a covenant. And I... In that talk, I suggested **anyone** (whether they're Latter-day Saint, RLDS, Community of Christ, FLDS, Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian—it really doesn't matter—Catholic...) renew the covenant of baptism as a sacrament between you and God and then attend whatever church you will. It's just that the Church, apparently, feels so proprietary over their right to supervise ordinance-making that they're not happy with people being rebaptized, even if they're willing to serve faithfully in the Church thereafter. I don't...

**QUESTION:** You were excommunicated, then, officially for apostasy? Am I in error or is that...?

**DENVER:** I was told to withdraw the publication of a book titled *Passing the Heavenly Gift* and to not go on the ten talk lecture series. I attempted to withdraw the book. It was problematic. There were contracts in place—decided I wasn't gonna breach a contract; the book was not taken out of publication. I went ahead, and I gave the talks. The official reason that I was given is that I refused to withdraw publication of *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, and I had to not go on the ten talk series. If that constitutes rebellion, insubordination, apostasy, I don't know... But I've never received from the Church a substantive objection to the content of the book. We talked **about** it.

One of the complaints that—in discussions with the stake president—that got articulated was that I was denigrating the past presidents of the Church. I pointed out that I really didn't take a position, and I really didn't denigrate. I quoted from diaries. I quoted from talks. I quoted from journals. The most critical person was the **mother** of Heber J. Grant—

Heber J. Grant recorded in his diary that his own mother was accusing him of caring more about business than caring about the members of the Church. That was his mother talking about him. And so, he recorded it (and I believe that it was an honest journal because he recorded criticism), I took his own journal and put it into the book, weaving it into a narrative about the presidency of Heber J. Grant. I do not believe I denigrated Heber J. Grant. Either his mother or he (in recording what his mother said) denigrated him. I reported it as what he said about himself to help me understand him and, quite frankly, is

giving him credit for the candor of his journal. I think his journal is a reliable source. When you do something or say something that makes you look undesirable in your own record about yourself, I think you're being honest, and I think Heber J. Grant was being honest. And I commended him for that.

I don't think the book denigrated anyone. I think it quoted people; it quoted their diaries; it quoted their journals; it set forth the events—and I think, quite frankly, members of the Church having a problem with Church history who read the book to try and solve their dilemma are **benefitted** by the book, are **benefitted** by its contents. Members who are unaware that there are a host of historical issues encounter a discussion trying to solve them by discussing them candidly, and it could be upsetting if you've gone through life with your eyes closed. But the Internet... Eyes are being opened in a lot of quarters. I believe many of the men who were responsible from the top-down for my excommunication from the Church are going to have children, grandchildren, they're gonna have in-laws, they're gonna have friends who, going through a faith-crisis, would have been well-served if they took *Passing the Heavenly Gift* and they gave it to them and said, "Take a look at this, and see if it doesn't aid you in your crisis of faith." That was the intention of the book; that's why it was written. That's the effect that it had. I had many letters that said that was the effect it had, but they were uninterested in that at the time of the court.

**QUESTION:** Just to wrap up, when Elder Oaks said, "Beware of false prophets," do you think he was including you in that?

**DENVER:** He never provided a definition of "prophet," unless the definition that he provided was someone that got sustained by a body of saints. If getting sustained by a body of saints is the definition of a prophet—ergo, every single person who has not been sustained must necessarily, therefore, be a false prophet under his definition... And I suppose I haven't been sustained, and I haven't asked anyone to sustain me, nor will I ask anyone to sustain me to be a prophet—because I believe the term "prophet" to be a sacred term, and it doesn't involve an audience, and it doesn't involve a vote. I believe it's not campaigned for; it's not elected. I believe God decides who is and who is not, and I don't think that the definition that has been provided by him would **match** Christ or Peter or Daniel or Isaiah or Nephi or Helaman. I don't think it would match a whole host of people. But yeah, in his vernacular, based on his definition, I suppose I would be included within the crowd of people. But just a few years ago, we were being **encouraged** to post on the Internet. So, you post on the Internet, and you deal with troubling issues, and they don't like the way in which you address the troubling issue... That means that somehow you are an opponent of them? I view myself still as a friend of Mormonism, a friend, even, of the LDS Church. Heavens, I'm a BYU graduate! I'm a Cougar! [Chuckle.]

**QUESTION:** All right, well, thank you very much for sharing.