

## Seminary Graduation Remarks

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

Centerville, UT

May 15, 2022

I was thinking about MY parenting: A voice comes from the kitchen that says, “Reagan’s trying to kill me,” and I yell, “Reagan, don’t kill Carson.” It’s pretty charitable. It’s pretty good. That’s kind of the way that whole thing works, with me anyway.

Nature is full of symbols with meaning.

(Yeah, yeah, okay. It’s like you have to eat a snowcone in order to use this microphone. Hello, hello.)

[crosstalk about the microphone]

(Yeah, okay. Just yell. You see what you can pick up because I’m gonna abandon you... No use for you.)

Nature is full of symbols. The most obvious, frequent, and repetitive symbol that you can find **everywhere** is the difference between the light and the darkness. When the sun is up, you can see stuff. When the sun is not up and the moon is not up, you can’t see stuff. If you go into a room and there’s no outside window, or it’s dark at nighttime and there’s no light, you can hurt yourself in the dark. Light and darkness are everywhere—testifying to you about the difference between truth and error, comprehension and confusion, what’s right and what’s wrong, what’s true and what’s error; it’s just THE biggest symbol of all in nature.

Right now, it doesn’t matter where you go or what you look at, every single institution in this world is in the process of losing light, losing grip on true principles, and sliding into increasing error, confusion, disorder, disorganization—and it doesn’t matter if the institution you’re looking at happens to be businesses or governments or churches or civic organizations. It doesn’t matter what it is. Right now there are unrelenting voices advocating the cause of confusion, unrelenting voices advocating for destruction, decay, and overthrow—everywhere.

One of the places that should have been **safe** from this nonsense—this crusade to overthrow everything—has penetrated into the public school system, advocating sexual confusion so that: You might be a boy, or you might not be a boy; you might be a girl, or you might not be a girl. But for heaven’s sakes, the one thing they want to advocate now is the overthrow of the family—because the one thing which sexual confusion will result in is the destruction of a happy relationship that produces a stable family inside of which children are produced and raised with an understanding of the difference between godliness and ungodliness, truth and error. Don’t let yourself get sucked into that effort that is deliberately aimed to try and achieve a specific result. The specific result is the destruction of the family. And you have been targeted in order to achieve that result. It exists

everywhere. You're either a boy, or you're a girl—and your ultimate destiny is to be either a father or a mother. Don't ever lose sight of that. That is what God ordained in the beginning.

One of the things that has puzzled me and caused me to study long and hard in the Scriptures is the question of:

- WHY...when God says, “How oft would I have gathered you, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not,”
- WHY...with God trying to gather people together and protect them (like a hen would protect her chicks),
- WHY...when the purpose behind the gospel is Zion—and there have been multiple opportunities in which God has interjected Himself into contact with **us** to try and bring that result about,
- WHY have we only seen Zion on two occasions? One was at the time of Enoch, and Melchizedek brought a city about that was also taken up into Heaven. (However, in truth, Melchizedek secured that covenant before the flood, and so he's really a subset of the city of Enoch—because rather than get caught up into Heaven before the flood, with a covenant He remained behind. But he gathered a city, and the city included those that were not antediluvians. And so you can say that it was twice.)

But God intended to establish Zion every time He interferes with, speaks to, interrupts, and creates a new dispensation of the gospel. Why doesn't it happen? Why is it that Zion fails? (Zion "flees," but more often than not, Zion fails.) Why didn't we have Zion at the time of Jesus Christ? Why didn't we see Zion at the time of Joseph Smith?

Well, one of the things that struck me about that first group of generations in which they did have Zion was the account of how things were organized.

(Boy, there's some important things in this material that I don't want to just gloss over in pursuit of the point that I want to make.) Here's an interesting little thing about the record:

Adam does not record his own baptism. Adam is focused on something altogether more cosmic than that, so he passes over the events that involve his baptism. It's actually generations later (when Enoch is speaking in vision and recounting things that had happened generations earlier) that Enoch records the account of Father Adam's baptism—which tells you that sometimes as you go through the record, things are non-chronological. You have... If you... If chronology really matters to you, you've got to go back and straighten all that out—because the record is gonna preserve the important data points in the experiences of the people involved but not necessarily preserve them in exactly the way in which they unfolded. Okay?

So, going back to the time of Adam and Adam's record:

*The gospel began to be preached from the beginning, being declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice...*

Okay, those two things go hand-in-hand: angels get sent forth to prepare people, and then after they are adequately prepared, God's own voice begins to speak to them. Angels do a

preliminary work. This is discussed in Alma later about how the work of the angels is to prepare people in order to receive something further. But the first step, in order to have **faith**, is to have the ministering of angels (which occurred in the case of Adam in the record that Adam is giving us). "...and by his own voice," meaning that then God comes into contact with him,

*...and by the gift of the holy ghost. And thus all things were confirmed unto Adam by a holy ordinance, and the gospel preached, and a decree sent forth that it should be in [all] the world until the end thereof. And thus it was. Amen...*

So at the time of Adam, he gets preached to him the gospel, which at the time that this is taking place, Adam's mind (in making this record) is so caught up with other things, he doesn't even bother mentioning that he got baptized; Enoch will fill that in later. But I guarantee you that at this point, with this ministration taking place at the time of Adam, that he was baptized. But what he got was confirmed unto him by an holy ordinance, which is just mentioned lightly and skipped over. I've connected that holy ordinance in Genesis 3:13 with a line that I've drawn down into the next thing, which is verse 14. And I've drawn a line between "by a holy ordinance" and "this same priesthood"—because there's something going on here.

*By them [and] their children were taught to read and write, having a language which was pure and undefiled. Now this same Priesthood which was in the beginning shall be in the end of the world also. (Genesis 3:13-14 RE)*

Something went on to confirm upon Adam, through a holy ordinance, something that will later be referred to as "this holy priesthood," which is going to show up again at the end of the world. Okay? So the very first Zion begins with Adam, and then I write down the list of the names: Adam, and then Seth, and then Enos, and then Cainan, and then Mahalaleel, then Jared, then Enoch, Methuselah, and then it'll go to Noah. But those names are mentioned in Genesis chapter three. And what you have in that list of names is a series of father, son, grandson, great-grandson—and you've got one in each generation.

So the original organization of the very first Zion was **familial**, meaning it was a family. It was **patriarchal**, meaning it descended from father to son to grandson. **And** it was **dynastic**, meaning that it stayed inside one family (father-son) line. That's how the original worked. There are a lot of advantages to that because in that setting, what you've got is an intimate connection between the people. You've got a family unit, which can be one of the greatest sources of solidarity and connection—but it can also be one of the worst sources of contention and animosity. So you've got your pluses, and you got your minuses.

So, when you read about the very first one, one of the first things that comes to mind is, "Oh, what we might need if we're ever gonna achieve Zion is a holy family." What we need is, like, how about if the Lord establishes a name to be held in faithful remembrance from generation to generation upon whom a patriarchal position is conferred, and we know the identity of that fellow—and we learn in January of 1841, the Lord attempted to do something like that by conferring upon Hyrum the office of Priesthood and Patriarch to be held in faithful remembrance, which kinda sorta happened until the conflict between

Spencer W. Kimball and Eldred G. Smith resulted in the elimination of the office of Presiding Patriarch to the Church, and Eldred G. Smith was made Emeritus, and then (as David Christenson interviewed Eldred G. Smith), he did not confer anything upon his son. And the LDS Church altogether abandoned the office and the ordination that had begun with Hyrum and had been passed down to LDS Church Patriarchs until the time of Eldred G. Smith. And with his death...2014? With his death in 2014 came an end to **that** abortive effort to try and create an orderly manner in which it would be possible to establish Zion—'cuz the one thing that's apparent is the only time we've ever had it, we had it as a consequence of this kind of a relationship.

So, you guys have been studying Ether, the book of Ether. I go to the book of Ether, and I say, Aha, here we have, at the very beginning of the book of Ether, you got the brother of Jared; you've got the Lord coming to appear to the brother of Jared; and you've got, once again, an opportunity in which the Lord is saying, "How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chicks under her wings." And so, we now have—potentially—a new dynasty in which we can achieve Zion. But if you've read the book of Ether...

Well, let me just read a little bit of how that **dynastic, patriarchal** establishment worked. You can go to Ether chapter 3, beginning at verse 11. And this is some of the goings-on between the potential patriarchal leaders that could take them into Zion.

*And it came to pass that Noah rebelled against Shule the king, and...his father Corihor, and drew away Corihor his brother, and also all his brethren, and many of the people. And he gave battle unto Shule the king, in which he did obtain the land of their first inheritance; and **he** became...king over **that** part of the land. And it came to pass that he gave battle again unto Shule the king; and he took Shule the king, and carried him away captive into Moron. And it came to pass [that] as he was about to put him to death, the sons of Shule crept into the house of Noah by night and slew **him**, and broke down the door of the prison, and brought out their father, and placed him upon his throne in his own kingdom. (Emphasis added)*

And that didn't sound like Zion. It's patriarchal. It's dynastic. It's familial. It's treacherous. It's ugly. It involves continual killing and violence, ambition. And as you read the account in Ether, generation after generation, until finally, they arrive at the point that they completely destroy themselves in a genocidal warfare. And **that ain't Zion**.

Section 139 of the Teachings and Commandments is a part of the letter that Joseph wrote while he was captive in Liberty Jail, and he's talking about, at this point, the abuses—not the abuses that the government was imposing on him, not the imprisonment and the guards and all the rest of that, the governor disobeying the Constitution, the outrages of what was going on in the society at large—he's writing about the church. It would be the fault of aspiring men inside the church that put him into prison, that even surrendered him into custody. When he got taken into custody, he was surprised and didn't know; that was why he walked out of Far West unarmed. He thought he was going out to negotiate, but treacherous men inside the church conspired to deceive him and lead him out to be surrendered. And he was taken captive, and he was put in prison. And all of that stuff that was going on both inside the government of the state of Missouri and, more importantly,

inside the church, weighed on the mind of Joseph when he wrote these words, and they are **only** about **religious** abuse. They're **only** about **betrayal and treachery by your fellow believer**. Look at section 139, beginning with paragraph 5.

*Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen, and why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson — that the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the Powers of Heaven and...the Powers of Heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, [it's] true, but when we undertake to cover our sins or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion, upon the souls of the children of man in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the Heavens withdraw themselves, the spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. ...ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, ...to **fight against God**. We have learned by sad experience that [it's] the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen.*

*No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood; only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned, by kindness and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul. (T&C 139:5-6, emphasis added)*

Joseph was not concerned about the government and the soldiers and the court system that unjustly held him in prison. He was concerned about the fact that the religion that was being restored was being corrupted. The religion that he was trying to establish—that would bring about Zion—had turned into a bunch of aspiring, manipulative, dangerous men who thought they had a little authority, and therefore, with that authority, they could abuse, exercise control, compulsion, and dominion, and get other people to follow what they insisted be done, abrogating the agency which men are all too eager to surrender to the hands of those that want to abuse them. They willingly permit the abuse.

So, “Joseph, the Lord was willing to gather them like a hen would gather the chicks under their wings, and they would not. And Joseph, you're sitting in Liberty Jail. You **know** they won't. You've got a church that's been corrupted. When you get out, you can go to Nauvoo and try to elevate the people and preach—but it's gonna repeat itself. And ultimately, in Nauvoo, you're gonna get killed by the same inside conspirators occupying positions of authority inside the organization. The same thing is gonna happen again.”

But Joseph did something really interesting towards the end. It didn't get preserved **much**—except as a kind of confused footnote that only lingered until the time of Wilford Woodruff, and then it just got thrown on the trash heap. And today, it's occasionally visited by Mormon scholars in BYU Studies and other places—Mormon Dialogue—usually dealt with in a way that makes kind of fun of the whole thing, like, “How weird was this?” You can even find an allusion to it in *Rough Stone Rolling*, where Bushman talked about how

Joseph's ambition was “familial plentitude in the eternities.” That was how Bushman described it. Joseph was doing things not because he was a (as Bushman would put it) some kind of lothario (meaning a womanizer, someone that was always looking to seduce women). Bushman said that wasn't what Joseph was doing there at the end. He wasn't a lothario; he was looking to try to achieve familial plentitude in the eternities by sealings, which later in the vernacular that got adopted by the Brigham Young-led group in Utah meant **marriage**, which meant **polygamy**, which meant all kinds of **corrupt teachings** based upon that. And that's another day and another story.

Joseph was trying to use the authority that had been given to him at the end not to reinforce the church. He essentially walked away from the church. He rode across the Mississippi River on June 23<sup>rd</sup> in a skiff, sent for his horse so that he could just leave. He was headed west; he was gonna go somewhere else and start over. And he was gonna do that in a whole different capacity. The new capacity (and one which he began mentioning for the first time in October of 1843) was to create a family by adoption. Okay?

In the first generations that brought us Zion, it was **familial, patriarchal, and dynastic**. And **it worked** because of the righteousness of the men involved. But in the hands of the unrighteous, a familial, patriarchal, dynastic system for organizing people can create hell on earth and ultimately end in genocide. But with the cautions that are given to us by Joseph and the experience that he had (first, in Missouri, and later, soberly assessing the people around him in Nauvoo), he created something that **potentially** allows for the organization of a righteous society **that is familial, that is patriarchal, but that is non-dynastic**—not confined to a single line of men but encompasses any righteous man by adoption and by sealing into an imitation of that order that existed in the beginning.

Now, I have used, for convenience sake, the word “man” and “patriarchal” and “he.” But if you go back and read the talk that I gave about our Divine Parents, there is no such thing as a patriarch without an associated matriarch. And if you study that further, what you will learn is it's not the man who even chooses the next in authority, the next one upon whom status is conferred. That's entrusted exclusively into the hands of the matriarch. It is the Mother who ordains **that** succession.

Well, in that T&C 139, there's a comment that Joseph makes in passing. This is in paragraph 12 of 139: *There are many teachers, but perhaps not many fathers*. He doesn't elaborate on that. Take the comments that I've given today, go to that paragraph 12 of 139, and look at that aside comment that there are many teachers, but perhaps not many fathers, and let that sink deep in your mind to consider what that might include.

Then there's a...about the only talk that Joseph Smith ever had written out in advance, which oughta tell you how important this talk is—there's a talk that Joseph gave that appears as section 140 of the Teachings and Commandments that I want to read from beginning in paragraph 5, and then I'll conclude.

*Now, the purpose in himself, in the winding up scene of the last dispensation, is that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the preceding dispensations. And again, God purposed in himself that there should*

*not be an Eternal fullness **until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together in one**, and that all things whatever that should be gathered together in one, in those dispensations, unto the same fullness and Eternal glory, **should be in Christ Jesus.***

*Therefore, he set the ordinances to be the same for ever and ever, and set Adam to watch over them, to reveal them from Heaven to man or to send angels to reveal them. Hebrews 1st chapter, 14th verse: Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be [the] heirs of salvation? These angels are under the direction of Michael, or Adam, who acts under the direction of Christ.*

*From the above quotation we learn that Paul perfectly understood the purpose of God in relation to his connection with man and that glorious and perfect Order which he established in himself, whereby he sent forth power, revelations, and glory. **God will not acknowledge** that which He has not called, ordained, and chosen.*

*...This then is the nature of the Priesthood: every man holding the presidency of his dispensation and one man holding the presidency of them all, even Adam.*

*...The ordinances must be kept in the very [same] way God has appointed, otherwise their Priesthood will prove a cursing instead of a blessing. (T&C 140:5-12, emphasis added)*

You see, in the beginning, all things were confirmed unto Adam by an holy ordinance, and the gospel preached. Adam had to receive that fullness of understanding before he went out to preach the gospel because there were things about the pattern which don't emerge into **clarity** until Adam understood all things. And that same priesthood which was in the beginning is to return again at the end of the world, also. And that same clarity that was entrusted into the hands of Adam **will again be restored upon the earth with the same clarity to allow for a connection**—by Adam's permission, it will be restored, under the direction of Christ who presides over it all, for the purpose of having the end agree with and fit together with the beginning, in which all things get combined together.

And so, at the very moment when the greatest effort to bring darkness and confusion into the lives of all men and children, there will break forth a light—clearer, brighter, comprehending more, revealing more, and establishing again that same gospel and priesthood which was in the beginning. It is going to return. The world is not worthy of it. Therefore, it necessarily must be housed inside sacred space belonging to God in the form of a temple, which is the reason why (in the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant) the Lord makes mention of a coming command to build a temple.

God's purposes will not fail. His effort is equally relenting with the effort of the adversary to bring about darkness. And I don't care if it appears as though darkness covers the whole face of the earth, and there's but one spotlight in one small corner. That will be enough to begin the overthrow of the kingdom of this world and the powers of darkness that rule here. It will be the beachhead from which our Lord will launch a victory that will be total, that will encompass the whole Earth. And from that tiny beginning, it will spread until Zion fills the whole of North and South America, as Joseph Smith described it. He didn't live to

get there. He didn't have the right people listening and giving heed and diligence to the things that were taught. How oft will God gather together people like a hen gathering chicks under her wings? Apparently, He will keep doing it and keep doing it until, finally, some group of people decide that they will rise up. Hopefully, that will include some of you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.