

Project Zion Podcast

Episode 80: Different Philosophical Approaches to Religion.

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Hey everybody, welcome to another episode of Project Zion Podcast. This is your host, Josh Mangleson. For this episode I am going to be speaking about another episode that I listened to recently that I will reference the post so you can go back and listen to the actual episode that I will be referencing quite a bit in this episode. And it's an episode of Radio Free Mormon.

For those of you that don't know, Bill Reel has a podcast called Mormon Discussions and a sub series on that podcast is called Radio Free Mormon. It's an anonymous man that runs this podcast and one of the episodes, episode 8 of Radio Free Mormon, caught my attention. It's titled: The Amazing Contradicting Joseph Smith. In it he lays out kind of a philosophical approach to religion that Joseph Smith had. You can determine whether it was the good or a bad thing, but it made me start thinking, having grown up within the Latter-day Saint tradition, within the LDS Church, and then going through a faith crisis, faith transition into the Community of Christ, it kind of helped think and put into words, some of the philosophical differences that each of the two churches share.

I know people hate comparing things; take it for what you want. If you don't want to listen to this episode that's fine, but for others this may be helpful in just hearing me talk about some of the philosophical differences that each of the religion, by and large, take. Not every single member, obviously, but, I would say the majority of the members take, between the two. And I'll say this, if you think I am speaking negatively of the LDS Church, what I'm going to bring up, they take as a positive. And they see my position as the negative, so it just depends on what philosophy you subscribe to. You're obviously going to think the philosophy that you lead your life with or the philosophy that you bring to your religion is going to be the way you should approach things.

In this episode, he brings up what he calls a religious mindset, or a science mindset when you are approaching religion. I don't think his terminology is super spot on. I've been trying to think of better ways of phrasing the wording that he brings up within his episode. I understand what Radio Free Mormon is trying to articulate by using the terms religion and science, I just don't think they are the best serving terms to explain what he is trying to articulate, because, not all religion is dogmatic. Joseph Smith was not using science. Science is a methodology of examining evidence and that is not what Joseph Smith was doing. To quote a phrase that Jan Shipps has used, what Joseph Smith was doing was extra-rational. So, science is not the best term as well.

For me, what I think he's trying to say, is having a scientific-minded approach to religion or a religious-minded approach to religion, is what I would call a pre-enlightenment philosophy versus an enlightenment philosophy. Of course, it's hard to reduce things to just a dichotomy,

there's a lot of things after the enlightenment: modernism, post-modernism, etc., but for just the sake of making it simple, I'll just say pre-enlightenment, versus enlightenment, which he calls religion, or science. In this vein of thought, for him, a religion-mindset is somebody that has creeds. Somebody that is dogmatic in their thinking. They believe that they have the absolute capital T truth. They have statements of belief that are factual and anything that would deviate there from would be prone to err in the sense that because of what they have is absolute, they need to stay there and it cannot change. Their doctrine cannot change because their doctrine is factual.

You see it within Catholicism. It's the infallible Pope. From Protestantism it's the inerrant Bible. From Mormonism, it is kind of the same thing; it's not inerrant Bible per se, but it is inerrant revelation. Inerrant authority. So it's kind of a mix of both. That is what he would call religion-mindset when approaching religion. I would say it's pre-enlightenment.

Why I bring up pre-enlightenment is because religion, before the enlightenment, just in general with society, people had no concept for progress. They had no concept for change. And, even though during the decades and centuries that they were living through, they were in fact changing, they had no way of comprehending it. So, when you see, like medieval paintings of Mary and the baby Jesus, they anachronistically paint Mary or Jesus with the type of clothing that they would be wearing because they had no concept that in different eras and in different times things were different. So, they would paint Mary and Jesus with the exact same clothing that they would wear, because what they wore was something that was always worn. They had no concept that clothing styles changes throughout time.

Things were just different back then from now. Like, now when you move into a house you'll buy a new kettle to make tea, whereas in their era they would just simply just pass down the same kettle from generation to generation. The kettle that the great grandmother used, you would be using. And then when the enlightenment started to happen, a lot of things started to change. The concept that we could progress was a concept people started to take to heart. They didn't think everything was just foreordained to be exactly that way; they didn't think that God had consigned to people to a certain state. They understood that if they put their own best efforts forward they could make society progress.

There were limitations to the enlightenment, obviously, and that's why we've moved on philosophically from the concept that we can possibly even know absolute truth at this point. But, during the enlightenment the concept that they could gain certainty about things, was very enticing for them to move forward and to move away from old time held traditions that kept them bound in certain ways of thinking. No longer was just your Pope or your Priest the authority of thinking on the matter. They approached reality a very different way. They thought they could approach it through reason, through using their own mind. Enlightenment is somebody that would say, we're not there yet, we can learn new things and we can progress.

So, with this episode, and I want to bring this up, because I think it is useful for more than just one reason, and another reason I want to bring it up, those that don't know, within the strain of the LDS Church, there's quite a few individuals that are moving toward a movement called Neo-fundamentalism. And in this there is something about current leadership that people that have a

neo-fundamentalist strain of thought, they don't like what the current leadership is doing, or leaderships throughout the twentieth century or wherever it may be, it may be from Brigham Young coming out west, there's something that they don't like and they think has changed, and change is a negative thing. And they would hold to Joseph Smith as producing the absolute truth.

The one thing that you have to realize, coming from an LDS background, is the LDS Church, the leaders do see themselves, when they take up what they call the mantle of leadership, whether that be a prophet or an apostle, they think that their job in that seat is to keep the doctrine pure. That's their main job. Keep what Joseph Smith revealed pure, don't let it be diluted, don't let it be confused, don't let people bring in different things and make a mess of it. They need to keep the doctrine pure. They, themselves, subscribe to a pre-enlightenment philosophy, that they already have absolute doctrine and that they just need to keep it pure. And so what neo-fundamentalists see is that things did change throughout all of Mormonism, that there is no doctrine that hasn't changed and that these leaders must have done a poor job keeping the doctrine pure and that we just need to get back to what Joseph Smith did.

But, within this episode, and the reason why I'm referring back to this episode, and I'd like you all to listen to it, "The Amazing Contradicting Joseph Smith," is to realize that Joseph Smith himself changed. He contradicted himself. And he was open about it and he was ok with it because I think he didn't subscribe to a pre-enlightenment philosophy in regard to religion. He didn't think any of his revelations were absolute. He didn't think that what he was doing would be the end all be all. And, one of the ways that on Radio Free Mormon that he brings up that you know that that's the case, is the very first thing he does, before even a church is organized in 1830, is he dictates the Book of Mormon. You would think that if the Book of Mormon were absolute, and that was the sure sign that you was a prophet, that he would just go forward the next fourteen years, and preach from the Book of Mormon, essentially. These are the new truths that we have, this is the restoration. But, in reality, that is further from the truth. That's what we would expect from Joseph Smith if he had a pre-enlightenment philosophy towards religion. That what he was producing was absolute. In reality, though, he never went back to the Book of Mormon again. Not, to preach from it. We know he must have worked from it once or twice for the new editions. But, never did he preach from it again. He moved on and was doing other things. Other thing that he continued with contradict the Book of Mormon quite fundamentally.

And so, within this episode of Radio Free Mormon that he did, of "The Amazing Contradicting Joseph Smith" he brings up seven points throughout the life of Joseph Smith that demonstrate Joseph Smith contradicted himself. The reason why he brings this up is, whether you value a pre-enlightenment, or you take an enlightenment philosophy, that God is working line upon line, precept upon precept, then you can know what it is to be valued and maybe what could be part of your value system as well in approaching religion.

If you were to look at both approaches, you'll see, especially if you bring up science of the enlightenment, like Radio Free Mormon does, you'll see which one has really won out. People that have a certainty based thinking will say, "well, science, they go with every wind of idea and they are blown to and fro, they've been wrong so many times..." They will point out all the weaknesses as they see it, (weaknesses of science), that it doesn't seem like science can ever approach the truth.

One of the scriptures that is brought up quite a bit is one that is found in Paul, “let their effort learning and never come to the truth” - science would be that in that regard. And yeah, science is wrong quite frequently, but if you were to look at the last four centuries, science has won out the argument time and time again when it’s put up against religious belief. So, for example, Galileo, he looks out with a telescope, the prevailing doctrine of his day is that the earth is the center of everything and he sees Saturn and he sees the moons orbiting Saturn. Ok. Well, moons are orbiting something else, clearly the earth is not the center of everything, if something is orbiting something else. Science won out. We now know that the earth is not the center of the universe.

You could say science’s strength is that it learns from its mistakes; it looks at evidences and evaluates things and it also tries to falsify itself. Anybody can put up a propositional statement and try to find things that will prove that proposition true. And any statement that you can come up with you’ll always find something that will support your statement as long as you cherry pick and you look hard enough. But the strength of science is that it tries to falsify itself. It finds anything that it can throw at its own hypothesis to prove itself false. If it stands up, at anything you can throw at it, you have to look at it with probability and just determine with more and more probability that we are on to something.

I know that people’s nature, they like certainty. I know why people come at religion from a pre-enlightenment philosophy, that they have the absolute truth that they can hang their hat on and they can sit comfortably back and save themselves from having to overly think about too much. I realize when people are hearing this, the nature part of them, coming from a long line of evolution, they like certainty, because certainty can be a security against the unknown. And by that I mean like, if you think of hunter/gather types, way back when, if you could try to figure out what is the best way to move forward for my tribe, for my family, for myself, to survive, and not only just survive, but to thrive – then that certainty would be a security for all. And people have brought that certainty within religion into certain creedal statements, certain formulas, that they have thought of that they think they can really hang their hat on. So, I get why people approach religion that way.

With that said though, even though I understand it, I do want to point out that when you’re working from just responses to your nature, when you’re using religion as a security blanket, and you’re hugging onto your religious claims and you make your belief system, something that not’s ultimate, ultimate; something that’s not absolute, absolute – and you approach religion with certainty, I think that natural response of wanting to do that works against the purposes that God has for humanity because you use religion as a battering ram against other people which ultimately divides you. It’s an us versus them mentality. In the Book of Mormon, in Mosiah, it states that the natural man is an enemy to God. To update the language I would say, when people respond to their religion using religion as a security of wanting certainty, that nature can get in the way of God’s purposes of wanting to unite humanity and bring people together.

Another reason I wanted to bring this episode up, is because I heard, growing up, the few times that I did hear about Community of Christ, one of the polemics that I heard is that Community of Christ at this point is pretty much just in line with main stream Protestantism. That they just believe the same things Protestant churches believe. And when in looking at it in regards to pre-

enlightenment philosophy versus enlightenment philosophy of a church that says they have an errant Pope, infallible scripture, or inerrant revelation or true authority, or whatever you want to call it, that is more in line with Protestantism than is taking the position of progressive Christianity that we're just trying to get back to the teachings of Jesus Christ. And we have lots of things we can learn and we learn along the way as we go. That nothing that we have is absolute, that we can really hang our hats on per se. Being in this position we can learn new things more readily as we go and we can learn from our mistakes more readily, than just continuing with mistakes for centuries.

So, while Mormonism – the beliefs are very different from Protestant beliefs, what they believe may be different, but the way they believe is the same. And within Community of Christ, I feel like it's not entirely this way. When Community of Christ says that we are non-creedal, it's about as true of a statement as it can get, while still maintaining enduring principles or enduring values that we hold as a community that can bind us together, while not dogmatically holding to certain statements or the way we phrase language or anything like that. And then the next thing is while there are many members in Community of Christ that still espouse a pre-enlightenment philosophy towards religion, or espouse certain beliefs that look very Protestant, like the trinity, or whatever else that looks Protestant in belief, you have to ask yourself how many Protestant religions do you know that have any scripture outside of the tome of the sixty-six books found within the Bible? And are continually adding to their canon of scripture? How many Protestant churches do you know think that they are part of the sacred story and that their story is valuable and can be written down as scripture and added to their canon? I don't know too many of them. So, the philosophy of progress, the philosophy of continuing revelation within Community of Christ is very different from the philosophy of hanging our hat on the Bible as inerrant and an end all be all to what God has to say to the world.

So in this way, like what Radio Free Mormon talks about, if you don't believe new revelation can overturn what you previously believed, then you don't actually believe in continuing revelation. Something that just confirms everything you already know, is not revelation. So, when you hear a lot of critics and apologists attacking the restoration movement, more specifically the LDS Church, you know they are both attacking the same thing. They are attacking the pre-enlightenment philosophy that they have the absolute truth and that they have perfect factual doctrine. But if we were to set that aside for a minute, and look at a few ways that Joseph Smith changed his thinking, then we can realize that even if Joseph Smith changed, what approach makes more sense.

So a few statements on Joseph Smith and how he hated creeds, and when you hear the word creed, don't think of just like the Nicene creeds or specific creeds, creeds in and of themselves are statements of belief that people take as absolute truth. So, this is found in *The Words of Joseph Smith*, pages 183-184: "I never thought it was right to call up a man and try him because he erred in doctrine. It looks too much like Methodism and not like Latter-day Saintism. Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be kicked out of their church. I want the liberty of believing as I please. It feels so good not to be trampled." In *History of the Church*, volume 6, page 57 "Discourse to the Saints" he also said "I cannot believe in any of the creeds of the different denominations because they all have somethings in them I cannot subscribe to. Though all of them have some truth, I want to come up in the presence of God and learn all

things. But the creeds set up stakes and say hither to shalt thou come and no further, which I cannot subscribe to.”

So now, I'm just going to reiterate the seven points that Radio Free Mormon brings up in ways that Joseph Smith changed mind as he went. And then I want to just talk about that a little bit after I get through the seven points. And, obviously if you are working within the realm of Joseph Smith's belief, you're going to think some of these things are actual translations from different people. I take the approach that pretty much everything that came from Joseph Smith comes from Joseph Smith's own mind. And, so for example, in the Book of Mormon, you can see some of these enlightenment philosophies popping up that I've been bringing up this whole time. Part of enlightenment is that people don't value tradition for tradition's sake, as if tradition is absolute. And you can see this being brought up in the Book of Mormon that, as a negative, that we shouldn't follow the tradition of the fathers.

So, number one that he brings up is the Book of Mormon contains the fullness of the gospel. And we see, in many ways, how Joseph Smith added to what the fullness of the gospel actually meant, that's not actually found in the Book of Mormon. Things that the RLDS never subscribed to because they moved back from everything that Joseph Smith was doing in the Nauvoo era. So, baptisms for the dead, temple work, the three degrees of glory, (inaudible). There's a lot of things that was added to the Mormon belief system after the Book of Mormon, not found in the Book of Mormon. Yet if you read the title page of the Book of Mormon it says it contains the fullness of the everlasting gospel.

Number two - nature of God. In 1830, Book of Mormon, Mosiah, and these are the LDS versifications, I didn't take the time to figure out the exact versus that they would be in the Community of Christ versions. So, nature of God, Book of Mormon, Mosiah 15:1-4, this is Abinadi before Noah: “And now Abinadi said unto them, I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.” God himself should come down. “And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son – The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son – And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth. And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God...” this is verse five “...suffereth temptation and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people.”

So, within this chapter you find something that sounds very trinitarian. Albeit it's got some of the frontier modalistic aspects to the trinity that you would find prevalent in Joseph Smith's area of the Burned- Over District. But, it's very trinitarian that God and the Father and the Son are the same being. Like just in verse four it says “and are one God.” And that's another aspect about the Book of Mormon that a lot of people in the LDS Church don't realize, is that the Book of Mormon has more statements that can be taken as trinitarian than even does the Bible. The Bible, just having gone through Trinity Sunday, has very few scriptures that even occur in it that sound trinitarian. There's one in Matthew chapter 28: 16-20. There's another few verses at the end of 2 Corinthians, I believe it's chapter 13, and that's about it. But no one in the Bible that were

writing within the Biblical times had a concept of trinity, yet, in the Book of Mormon we find pretty straight forward trinitarian statements.

So this is 1830 on the nature of God, you find trinitarian statements within the Book of Mormon. But by 1835 “Lectures on Faith” lecture 5, so this is part of the canon in the LDS Church, and it was removed in 1921. So, lecture 5: “There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things – by whom all things were created and made that are created and made, whether visible or invisible; whether in heaven, on earth, or in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space. They are the Father and the Son: The Father being a personage of spirit, glory and power, possessing all perfection and fullness. The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle...” tabernacle means it has a body of flesh and bone. “... made or fashioned like unto man, or being in the form and likeness of man – or rather, man was formed after his likeness and in his image. He is also the express image and likeness of the personage of the Father, possessing all the fullness of the Father, or the same fullness with the Father, being begotten of him; and was ordained from before the foundation of the world to be a propitiation for the sins of all those who should believe on his name; and is called the Son because of the flesh – and descended in suffering below that which man can suffer, or in other words, suffered greater sufferings, and was exposed to more powerful contradictions than any man can be.” “And he being the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, and having overcome, received a fullness of the glory of the Father – possessing the same mind with the Father; which Mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son; and these three are one, or in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things; by whom all things were created and made...”

So, it’s still trinitarian in a sense that there is only two of them. And, one of them is a spirit, and that is called the Father. One has a body of flesh and bone, that is Jesus Christ. And then the Holy Spirit is just their shared mind. So, the third is not even a real third. It’s just a shared mind. It is pretty nebulous as far as what the holy spirit means.

And then, by 1842 you have section 130 in the LDS tome, but this, this is not even a revelation, it’s just a teaching, that was later added to the LDS Doctrine and Covenants, of Joseph Smith. So, in verse 22 it says: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.”

So by 1842 after 1835 “Lectures on Faith,” now God has a body of flesh and bones, just like Jesus Christ. So, does Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, as he calls it, is now like God the Father in the “Lectures on Faith” in 1835 where it is a personage now but just a personage of spirit.

Three – salvation for those who died without the gospel. He just brings up a bunch of verses in the Book of Mormon where it states that those who die without the law are saved. So, if I were to read a few of these: Mormon, 2 Nephi chapter 9 verse 25-26 states “Wherefore, he has given a law; and where there is no law given there is no punishment; and where there is no punishment there is no condemnation; and where there is no condemnation the mercies of the Holy One of Israel have claim upon them, because of the atonement; for they are delivered by the power of

him. For the atonement satisfieth the demands of his justice upon all those who have not the law given to them, that they are delivered..." So they're saved. Mosiah 3:11 "For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned." So they're saved.

But by 1832 in Doctrine and Covenants 76, where you get the three degrees of glory, suddenly it's different. They are not saved as those who died without law. Saved would be thought of as, I mean, they subdivide what salvation means, into three different degrees of glory. I realize that saved would have been previously understood as the celestial kingdom - as a highest form of salvation, not like a subordinate salvation. So the way that Joseph Smith contradicts himself is by the time section 76 comes up, and here's in verses 71 and 72 "And again, we saw the terrestrial world, and behold and lo, these are they who are of the terrestrial, whose glory differs from that of the church of the Firstborn, who have received the fullness of the Father, even as that of the moon differs from the sun in the firmament. Behold, these are they who died without law."

So now, in 1832 they are not just saved in the form of what we would have thought of salvation as returning to the presence of God, now they are consigned to a lower glory. Not celestial glory, terrestrial glory. Second best. Just four years later, Section 136, [transcribers note: this is actually section 137] Joseph Smith has a vision, and within this vision he sees his brother Alvin who died in 1823. Who died before the church was organized. In verses 6 and 7 he sees Alvin in the celestial kingdom; somebody who died without law. Here is verse 6 (and 7): "And he marveled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed his life before the Lord had set his hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of sins. Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me saying: All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God;" So if he just had the desire, God would kind of fill out that person's heart and would know that they're actual celestial kingdom; they're not terrestrial kingdom now as stated in [section] 76.

And then by the 1840, and later, you have baptism for the dead. So like, it's not just enough to have a desire, you're going to have to be preached things after you die. You have to accept it, and then you have to have somebody do the work for you of being baptized vicariously for you. So Joseph Smith is just changing throughout, every year it seems like, on how he approaches how salvation works. And, I'm going to get back to all of this by the time I get done, because Community of Christ obviously didn't continue forward with a lot of this stuff.

Number four – eternal nature of God. Now in Moroni 7:22 it states God is everlasting to everlasting. That's a pretty Protestant view of God. That God always was, and always is and always will be. But by 1844 in the King Follet discourse – before Joseph Smith died he refuted that idea, that God was everlasting to everlasting. And, he puts up this proposition that God, because now he is teaching that God has a body, a tabernacle, a body of flesh and bone, that was also resurrected, and also was alive just like we are living our life right now. And like God has a God the Father and that brings us to the next point.

Number five. In the Book of Abraham, it teaches that God is the most intelligent. And if you want to look up all these, it just says that these two facts exist. That there's intelligences, there's one more intelligent and another until you go all the way up to the most intelligent, and that's God. However, towards the end of Joseph Smith's life, Sermon at the Grove, we find within The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pages 373, he's refuting what he translated about Abraham. Now he's putting-- you could say, oh well, he's just bringing more working knowledge Abraham had. However, if you take the understanding that the book of Abraham's done actual translation of anything, and the one way we know that the Book of Abraham is Joseph Smith's thinking, and not anything ancient that came from a prophet thousands of years ago, is the astronomy that's found within the Book of Abraham comes from Joseph Smith's own backyard. Astronomy that's been since refuted with the new understanding that came through Albert Einstein and others.

But, in this, he, on the Sermon at the Grove, he knowingly contradicts what Abraham was said to have stated. He says "I learned a testimony concerning Abraham, and he reasoned concerning the God of heaven in order to do that, he said he, suppose we have two facts that supposes another fact may exist. Two men on the earth, one wiser than the other, would logically show that another who is wiser than the wisest may exist, intelligences exist one above another, so that there is no end to them. If Abraham reasoned thus, if Jesus Christ was the son of God and John discovered that God the father of Jesus Christ had a father, you may suppose that he had a father also." So then you get this long chain of Gods all the way back. Gods without end.

Our God, over us, is not the supreme being, not the most intelligent one put forward in the Book of Abraham. It's a long line back. Or to phrase another kind of funny, it's turtles all the way down, for people who have an idea that the world, we're just living on the back of a turtle. It's like, well, how's the turtle held up in the immense of space? Well, there's a turtle on the top of another turtle. And, what's underneath that turtle? Oh, another turtle. And underneath that turtle? Another turtle. And so the phrase is turtles all the way down. Same with Joseph Smith reasoning here, in 1844, it's just Gods all the way back. So, God, our father, also had a father. He also had a father. He also had a father, he also had a father...it's Gods all the way back. There's never a beginning.

Ok. So, point six. And this kind of goes along with Joseph Smith and how he changed his views on the celestial kingdom. So, in section 76 that I brought up, celestial kingdom is the highest kingdom that one can attain. But, if we go to section 130, and this is in verses 10 and 11. It says: "Then the white stone mentioned in Revelation 2:17, will become a Urim and Thummim to each individual who receives one, whereby things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms will be made known; And a white stone is given to each of those who come into the celestial kingdom whereon is a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. The new name is the key word."

But going back to verse ten of this Urim and Thummim, or white stone, that each person gets. "Whereby things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms will be made known." If you're in the celestial kingdom, how can you know of a higher order of kingdoms, if the celestial kingdom is the highest? By the time this section came out in 1843, the celestial kingdom was no longer the highest, it was just in a line, just like God, or turtles all the way down. There's kingdoms all the

way back in this unending pyramid scheme of salvation. And we're just in a long long line of something that's been going on for a very long time.

Ok. So, seven – he brings up his polygamy. Obviously in the Book of Mormon it denounces polygamy in Jacob 2:23, and by the time he reveals section 132, that's turned on its head. It's a contradiction. So, those are the seven points.

Some thinking on this – now that I'm in Community of Christ and I don't really think of Joseph Smith much on a day to day basis, I think that once the bulk membership of Nauvoo came west, there were a lot of people that were dissatisfied with what they had seen happen in the later years to Joseph Smith. They had themselves a pre-enlightenment philosophy toward religion. And if you even look at Joseph Smith's tenure-ship as prophet through those fourteen years, you'll see a filtering through members that really struggled with how he changed all the time. So like, the Whitmers, and other people that were there at the beginning, they're largely not there at the end. And the same with like Kirtland era, as while [indistinguishable] while the people were with Joseph in Kirtland, were not there at the end. And there's just this constant filtering through different people as Joseph kept progressing in new directions and contradicting himself in the things he had revealed before. Things that were actually canonized into scripture. He had no qualms whatsoever of contradicting it later on.

So the people that stayed back, a lot of them didn't like what was happening towards the end. And by the time Joseph Smith III took the rein, they had already moved, in large regard, back to a Kirtland era of doctrine that Joseph Smith had done. So they had already taken a step back, unpeeled some layers of the onion that Joseph Smith was doing, as necessarily correct.

And so while a lot of the members that constituted the early reorganization may have had a pre-enlightenment philosophy as far as approaching what Joseph Smith revealed. And like needed to just shed back some of the layers, of - perhaps Joseph Smith went off his rocker and got things wrong towards the end of his life. Maybe if they took that stance, maybe it was still beneficial in the long run. Because even if they did it with the wrong mindset, if you do take it, and enlightenment mindset, within the realm of science, if you put something forward that can't be supported, you back away from it. And this would be called the progression through unlearning.

If you want to think about it with the metaphor of rock climbing, sometimes when you are going up a rock face, and you can't see any way up from the route you've been taking, sometimes the only thing you can do is to come back down and take up a different route. You can't continue forward within the vein of thinking, or within the constructs that have been put forward, you have to let go of those constructs to move forward.

So, even though a lot of the early reorganization members probably took a pre-enlightenment philosophy towards their religion, and moved to the [unintelligible] back to an earlier stage of the restoration within Kirtland, it was ultimately more of a blessing because then they weren't as much in-boxed within a system of thinking later on. By the time the twentieth century rolls around, mid twentieth century, the RLDS really starts moving towards embracing things that are going on within the larger culture. They start taking on more of a mindset that we don't have all truths yet. That we can continue learning new things. So some of the best revelations, in my

mind, have come in the last fifty years in RLDS and to Community of Christ. And I think, in the last fifty years, in a sense, Community of Christ as re-caught the vision of restoration. And that we have an enlightenment philosophy; that we can learn new things, we can progress, we can move forward. And I think this is best evidenced in a lot of things that have been going on. The ordination of women, in certain countries the full acceptance of LGBT within the last few years. And in this way, you would think if Joseph Smith was OK moving away from what prior Joseph Smith had revealed, then a church that is truly prophetic, at some point, would move fully away from Joseph Smith.

I don't want to undermine what happened early in church history, if you really like that time frame, I think Joseph Smith was very inspiring and very uplifting to a lot of the people that were contemporary to him. But, to understand that if a church is truly prophetic, and that eventually a church would move away from its founding prophet as it learns new truths, as it moves forward into new cultures, as it moves forward into new times, and new challenges.

If you think that you are taking the task of keeping the doctrine pure, that you just need to keep what Joseph Smith revealed pure, then you really haven't taken up the mantle of being a prophet. And I think that's probably evidenced, why so many people followed, initially, James Strang, after Joseph Smith died. So, it's said that roughly around 20,000 of the members came out west with the twelve apostles under the head of Brigham Young, but nearly 12,000 – 12,000 followed James Strang because in a lot of ways he mimicked the same caricatures, same things that Joseph Smith was doing, he had charisma, he's coming out with new revelations, etc. The fact that some many people followed James Strang can kind of demonstrate that people were looking for the prophetic mantle to be passed and decided that the mantle being taken up by just keeping what the previous prophet pure, is not really taking up the mantle of being somebody that's leading the church in new revelation, new truth and progressing forward. And you have to ask yourself if that is what the mantle means is just to keep the old doctrine pure. What are you keeping pure? 1830? 1832? 1835? Kirtland era? 1842 – 44? Nauvoo era? You can't nail Joseph Smith down to a specific time; he, he is the - a moving target. He was never consistent like through these points that I've brought up. So trying to keep the doctrine pure has to be questioned – like what doctrine? What era?

So, if it's a fool's errand to try to keep something pure and take that pre-enlightenment philosophy to hear that we have the absolute truth, we just need to keep it pure, if you are to take that to hear, you'd have to ask yourself, when in the timeframe do you lock down on. However, if we are to take the philosophy that Joseph Smith was working from, an enlightenment philosophy, even though we've moved away from him, the fact that we are still non-creedal, in the Community of Christ, the fact that we're still receiving new revelations that burst open our understanding from anything that we understood before – for example, ordination of women, and the ordination of LGBT and allowing them to be married, that can burst open our understandings and we can come to new understandings of things and how we can move forward. That is more faithful to Joseph Smith than just trying to keep anything that he did uncontaminated and pure.

Here's another thing that I think is different about Community of Christ and the LDS Church, in that we don't just see the president of the church as being the only one through which we can ascertain new truth. Some of the new understandings that we have in Community of Christ is that

we are a prophetic people. And as it has always been, as been the people of the church, that has even brought new light and understanding to the leaders of the church. There's a French philosopher by the name of Jacques Lacan [transcriber note: Lacan is most known as a Freudian psychoanalyst rather than a philosopher] who writes the word symptom as [sinthome] "saw ohm." He writes the word symptom, in a way that would be pronounced "saw omh" and that's the same way you would pronounce holy man. Saint man. And he describes that sometimes the symptoms can be a truth that speaks for us when we can't speak that truth. If we're willing to listen to the symptoms that we have. In this way, the symptoms, le saw ohm, as he would have pronounced it, a holy man, a prophet, are symptoms, could be what shines the light into our darkness. So, a lot of us, when we have symptoms, we think of the symptom as the problem in and of itself, but that's not the case. The symptom is what reveals that there is a problem. The problem is something else. If we address the symptom, sometimes we can look back and find what's causing the symptom, and that way the symptom itself, in our community, if things are not going very well in certain regards, we can find what's causing the symptom and be able to move forward.

And so if we're bringing up LGBT issues within contexts of Canada, United States, and a few other nations, a few books were written and people were able to go over the symptoms of what the LGBT experience was for members in the church, that came from that perspective. And taking that into light, were able to move forward. Listening to their stories, and being able to sympathize with them from where they were coming from. Looking at the symptom became the prophet in which we were able to move forward and correct that issue.

So I think that's another thing that Community of Christ does – we look at our symptoms. We're not perfect at it. We still have a long way to go. We are a church that doesn't think we have absolute truth, we don't believe we're the one and only true church. We strive to be A true church. I think that's how we approach our faith. In that we approach it IN faith, that if we are open, God can lead us in new directions. If we can set aside our insecurities, and our need for certainty, that God can use us as a vessel to bring about God's purposes in our world today.

Thank you for listening to another episode and I'll catch you next time!

The views expressed in this episode are of those speaking and do not necessarily reflect office views of the Latter-day Seekers team, or of Community of Christ. The music has been provided by Ben Howington. You can find his music at MormonGuitar.com.

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