

## 368 | Percolating on Faith | Enhancement Enchantment or Infusion Confusion

Project Zion Podcast

**Josh Mangelson** 00:17

Welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.

**Carla Long** 00:32

Hello, and welcome to the Project Zion Podcast. I'm your host Carla Long. And today you're listening to Percolating on Faith. But more specifically, you're listening about Community of Christ theologians. And today you're listening to three different theologians. We're going to talk about Harold Schneebeck, Donald Landon, and Robert Smith. I hope I got all of those, right, because I have been in Community of Christ my whole life. And I really don't know much about these guys. So I'm excited about learning that today. And before I introduce our dear and wonderful guests, I want to tell you the title that our dear and wonderful guests told me about, and they're going to have to explain this one because I don't even know what I'm saying here. So, the title of this podcast, the specific podcast is, are you ready, gentle listeners, Enhancement, Enchantment, or Infusion Confusion? And I cannot wait to hear more about that. Hello, Tony and Charmaine.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 01:27

Hi, Carla, welcome. It's good to be with you today.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 01:31

Nice to be with you, as always, and happy to infuse or confuse or enhance or enchant today. Whichever,

**Carla Long** 01:40

I'm hoping to be enchanted, because I have no idea what you're talking about. Obviously,

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 01:45

Those are all coffee metaphors. We'll get to them a little bit later.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 01:49

So, yes, we're, we're, we're going to be excited to talk about Schneebeck and Landon and Smith today very important figures for what becomes Community of Christ,

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 01:58

Right, we're at a point, and we may not hear it quite as much now, as we did say, a decade or two ago, but it's still a question we hear quite a lot when we're in congregations, or at reunions or camps and things like that. And for older members of the church, the question often is, I grew up in this church. How did we end up where we are? How, you know, how did we get here? This is so different and even kind of diametrically opposed to so many of the things I learned in the church when I was young. How did we get here? And so, what we're going to be talking about today is three authors who were kind of

that, uh, a pivot point, a point where the whole church made an adjustment, and lifted up some parts of its theology that had, I would say, gone dormant or hadn't been really worked on very much. But in the moment, it was heretical, on the part, for many people, their ideas, and perhaps the way they presented them as well, were very startling, and probably ground shaking.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 03:19

Oh, absolutely.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 03:20

Faith shaking for some people. So, it's a really important point and it's, and it's in the 1960s, the latter part of the 1960s, when they did their writing.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 03:32

So, so yeah, so this, these two these, these two books, Body of Christ, published in 1968, (by) by, this is Schneebeck's book. And then For What Purpose Assembled, the follow up book, in 1969, by Landon and Smith. These books were reunion material. If, so, this was at a time when the church published, actually Schneebeck's book was hardcover, public, published little hardcover books for reunion. And these then became Sunday school material in the year or years following the reunion. So, both of these books had very long shelf lives. In fact, in Community of Christ congregations that have libraries, you'll still, you'll still see copies of these books in, in the bookshelves, they're, they're collecting dust.

**Carla Long** 04:22

I remember actually, when I was in, I don't know the seminary with you or undergrad with you, and you said, if you're in a church and you see the Body of Christ, ask if you can have it, ask if you can have it, we will always take it. I remember you saying that?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 04:35

Well, and sometimes, you know, so usually what would happen was that a large number of these books would, would go to the reunion so Herald, the Herald House would send up, you know, a lot of materials that could be sold, but a big chunk of these, because this would be the adult Sunday school, the adult reunion class. And, and so I think the fact that there are so many in church libraries, I'm not, actually in people's own libraries, might be an indication of how people were not quite sure how to embrace it.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 05:08

Yes. (Or whether to) In fact, it would be interesting to look in church libraries and see if you can find old copies of Body of Christ, for example, and see if there are teeth marks in the book, or

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 05:21

comments,

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 05:22

or to see what, what comments very, very staid and respectable RLDS people in the late 1960s, might have written, no expletives I imagine which is sad. But I think, I think perhaps that, I mean, once in a

while, we'll get a copy in at the library that has a lot of very vigorous, angry scrawlings in it, which is kind, gives you a sense for how, how these books were received. They were, they, they, they really did rattle the cage of the church a lot and not only rattle it, but in some respects it threw open the door and had a whole new model of what the church could be. So they're, they're pretty revolutionary books, actually.

**Carla Long** 06:05

Well, we need to jump into them. I'm super excited to hear about them more. So, let's do some rattling in our cage, our own cage here. So, let's talk about Harold Schneebeck.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 06:14

Yeah, speaking of rattling the cages, Carla, let me take you back to the summer of 1968.

**Carla Long** 06:22

I'm, I'm sure it was a really great summer. I'm sure it was great.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 06:26

Well, I, I remember, I mean, I remember. I was, I grew up in the 60s. But,

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 06:30

You weren't in the church yet.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 06:31

I wasn't in the church yet. I don't remember church. I don't remember reunion. But I remember the, the revolutionary era of the 60s. And the, 1968, especially the summer, that was the, that was the year that the United States almost deconstructed. Last, last summer in the, the very legitimate protests related to Black Lives Matter, and, you know, a lot of people are saying, what's, what's happening to our country? It's like, Oh, no, no, this happened before. This happened in 1967 and 68, 69, during the Vietnam War, and in a variety of uprisings in American cities. It was (and civil rights movement at the end of the summer) 68, the spring of 68, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. Robert Kennedy was assassinated. 68 was the Prague Spring in, in Europe. A, a brief (. . .) Yeah, brief Czechoslovakian uprising against the Soviet Union. This was when the Vietnam War was, was the steady escalation of America's involvement in a war that we should never have been in, should never have fought and knew, nearly from the start, that we couldn't win. So, uh, the, the protests against the war, protests, civil rights-based protests, political protests of all kinds. We're heading right into the, the rise of the women's movement and then the rise of the environmental movement. So, 68 was, was a very, very volatile year in United States. And so I, you know, I tried to imagine what was it, what did, what did reunion goers want that summer? You know, (assurances I'm sure.) Yeah, oh, my gosh. I can imagine really faithful RLDS people going to reunions and camps that could hardly wait just for a week of peace and quiet. And lo and behold, the books, the book, the book they're going to study for the week is Schneebeck's Body of Christ, which is, which actually is going to deconstruct their vision of what the church is right in front of their eyes. And in a way, that's going to be very, very hard to refute.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 08:51**

So I think one of the things to know is, to recognize is that, you know, we'd had, we've talked about this a call the preaching chart, theology that we'd had since pretty much the reorganization in 1860 and beyond. And actually, these authors that, they think it's in the For What Purpose Assembled, talks about how once the reorganization got started and people divided up and went into congregations, that the church became domesticated, that it lost its sense of its effect on the world and became comfortable and inward looking in it's congregations. And then it was about bringing people into the church, so that, you know, they would kind of be like us. And so the inside the church was the focus, rather than making an effect on the world. And, and that's kind of where people were. You know, they'd had the were the one true church theology deeply, deeply ingrained for almost 100 years. And that was who we were. We were, you know. We didn't talk about salvation a lot, but the, the underlying feeling was that if you wanted the fullness of a relationship with God, you had to be part of our church.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 10:12**

And if you wanted to go to celestial glory.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 10:14**

Yes, that was the only way was to be part of this church. So we never said salvation by RLDS alone. But, but it kind of was that way. That salvation came from being in the right church. And, and that the one true church, and that sense of a bit of isolation, being a peculiar people, some people took that way far. Some really relished that and made that their goal in life, but, um, but these authors helped people start saying these things that make people first reactive and defensive. But for some, this was a breath of fresh air, or it was where they already were. They're saying, our church is not relevant in this time. We're all about us. We're inward looking and look at what's happening in the world. You know, doesn't God want us to be involved in making the world a better place? And so for some, it was this, this, Oh, my goodness. Finally, somebody saying what I'm sensing God is calling us to. But for many, it was like, How dare you? How dare you say we are not enough? How dare you say that we don't have the fullness of the gospel. And you're quoting these people from other churches, those, those apostate churches. You know, so some, that was kind of the context. You know, the church had been very comfortable. And there had been attempts to make changes, you know, Fred M., we talked about the social gospel. But that didn't take as deep root for most of the church as the preceding and, and the continuing idea of being the one true, one true expression of the gospel.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 12:09**

So if you think about in 1968, a lot of RLDS congregations in the United States, you know, some of them 80, 90 years old, who had been essentially saying the same thing since the late 1880s--We're the one true church. We have the right church order. We have the true priesthood. (We have the true prophet.) We have the true prophet. We were restored by Joseph Smith. We've got the right scriptures. We, and, and some of them would have said we we alone have the fullness of the Holy Spirit in the church. We have the gifts of the Spirit, which prove it. And so there was this sort of, like, that the church has like little conventicles, little colonies. And here's what, here's what leads up to Schneebeck's book. We've, we've talked before, Carla, with you about the how, how international mission in the early 1960s began to throw open the door with questions about Does that message that I just described, that 80-year old plus message, does that transplant to Korea? Does it transplant to Japan? Does it transplant

to other parts of the world? The answer the missionaries were giving was, No it really doesn't. It, it, so all kinds of new questions were coming in from the field about our theology. And so that led the First Presidency in the church in the early 1960s to start a series of studies related to the theology and history of the church. That led to a couple of things. Number 1, 1966 conference, a statement of objectives was read at the conference that the Council of Twelve pretty much had, had drawn up. Actually drawn up by, by Neff and Cole in the Council of Twelve with the presidency's approval, but in some respects the, it was Maurice Draper and Duane Couey who were, were, were (advocates) advocates. Yeah, that's a good word, advocates for that. So, you know, Charles Neff reads that statement. One of the things the statement says, one objective is we want to clarify the theology of the church and unify the members in the faith. Now, I, as a theologian, I hear that. I read, I read that and I think, That's, how, how did you ever imagine that what's going to happen in this church?

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 14:24

The dissenting church.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 14:28

Right, the church, the church that has (really good at that). Yeah, so, but that, that was one of their objectives. And in order to pursue the objectives, then, various headquarters groups began planning different kinds of events. One of them was the Joint Council seminars that, that leaders had with professors from St., St. Paul School of Theology in 1967, and then going into 1968. And the Department of Religious Education at the Auditorium was really very instrumental in making a lot of things happen. So, already when, when Schneebeck sits down to write this book in 1967, it's going to be published for the next year, there's been a lot of theological ferment happening at, among church leadership. And one of the things that people in the Department of Religious Education realized right away was that, that RLDS people have an almost, almost mythological, naive sense of the so called New Testament Church. Right? In other words, for 80, 90, 100 years, we've been re, reading our structures back into the New Testament and saying, Oh, look, the New Testament proves that we're the one true church. But there had never been really serious, systematic study of the New Testament to say, What was the church in the New Testament actually about and like? And so that's what Schneebeck does in this book. So, I don't want to call it a bait and switch, but it's kind of like, you know, an RLDS person reading the title, The Body of Christ, for reunion, they're thinking, Oh, great, we're going to talk about the church. And they already know, that, they already think they know what that's going to be about. And Harold's new book starts out with, Yeah, the church, the doctrine of the Church is really important to us reorganites. And then he says that, that would require us, if we want to take the doctrine of church seriously, we need to see what the New Testament says about the church. But now we have Herald Schneebeck, he's in the middle of his, what we would call a Master of Divinity degree study at Union Theological Seminary in New York. And he's all up on the latest biblical scholarship on the New Testament on, on New Testament ecclesiology, um, on the latest various kinds of theology and theology is of mission. And he, he then begins systematically in the book to explain very thoughtfully and carefully how in the New Testament, there's not one church. The church is a moving target. The, the Church of Jesus Christ,

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 16:56**

Plus the structure of the church is, is a moving target that (right) in some places, it's shaped one way with certain novices and another, it's another and there's there's not uniformity, until, um, 80, around 50 to a, 50 to 100 years later that there's, there's finally some kind of beginning uniformity among these little disparate churches all over the

**Tony Chvala-Smith 17:19**

And that's outside the New Testament period, too. (Yes.) And so, so, you know, he begins, he begins very carefully to analyze what the New Testament means by ecclesia, by church, so on, and shows that there's a diversity of, of views that the church was always evolving, changing, there's no original static structure. Jesus did not create an original static structure of the church with offices. And so on

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 17:42**

So if there wasn't one, we can't have it. It's not ours.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 17:46**

So that, that then literally not only pulls one of the, one of the pins out from under this giant RLDS Jenga structure. It takes the pin, and it says, You ain't ever use this pin again. So that's, so that's what they're encountering, as they read this book. And he's not mean or, or hostile about it. He's very matter of fact, and I think that would have been even harder. Because you can't, you can't write, you can't write it off as easily when it's so, so matter of fact. But then he says, what, what matters in the New Testament is how the community remains faithful to the Spirit of what Jesus was about. And so, the, the, the church is not a static structure. It's a community, a Koinonia, a fellowship of people who are trying to keep the Spirit, the memory of Jesus, alive, and what Jesus did and practice it in new settings and places. And so what was it that Jesus did, and then Schneebeck, this is going to sound like familiar territory to, Schneebeck goes back to Jesus's own mission. You know, the Luke, the Luke 4 mission, right? Release the captives, good news to the poor, etc. And, interestingly, schneeberg introduces the term Shalom, that is that what the church needs to be about, in whatever form, is the creation of Shalom. That means being engaged in society and community, dealing with, dealing with the struggles of people's everyday lives, dealing with social issues, political issues, and, get this, and being ecumenically involved. Oh, that's a, that's a difficult one in 1968 in the RLDS Church. So, he tie, he ties all of that directly into the message of Jesus. And, uh, essentially, essentially is creating a blueprint for what will become Community of Christ. I don't think anybody in 1968 realized that what was happening in that book was that the, it was like the archetype of the church we are becoming today. But that's what's going on there. And so the the reaction, the reaction of the book was quite volatile. Now, you need to know that the Department of Religious Education had planned for three summers of new books. Right? And so Schneebeck's was the first, and then that was going to be followed up the next summer and was followed up by For What Purpose Asembled, which was, the goal of which was to take Schneebeck's more theoretical, exegetical exploration of the New Testament and say, What, what does this mean for congregational life? Right? So I forget that it was going to be a third one, but they decided not to do the third one because the reaction to one and two is so, so severe, I think they decided that third summer, you know,

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 20:45**

Let's let it rest a little. Let's let them take it in.

**Carla Long 20:49**

That's right. Let's have a reunion that's full of games and fun so people want to come back again.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 20:55**

Affirmations of what you used to believe. Yeah.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 20:58**

So anyway, that, that's, that's a quick, quick tour of Body of Christ. It's, it's still well worth reading. I have criticisms of its, some of its theological assumptions. But I think generally, it's, it's a, a text that is now a classic text in Community of Christ. And I think, I think it's worth, it's worth reading still. So,

**Carla Long 21:19**

Because the way you described it, it sounds very similar to language that I use when I'm talking to seekers right now. You know, sometimes we get into a conversation about, well, what's the purpose of your church if you just don't want to get to heaven? Right? Because in (right), in Salt Lake City, we talk a lot about the plan of salvation for a organization here. And so I say, Well, our purpose is to live like Jesus lived and to do what Jesus did. And they're like, Huh, and that's what it sounds like Schneebeck was trying to say, too, so I, I use his language all the time.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 21:53**

One of his, one of his images is that the church, the church has to be a servant, a servant to the world, a servant to the community. That's 180 degrees opposite of the idea that the church is a place of refuge from the world. Right? So,

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 22:05**

So that somehow those who are in the church will get to judge those outside (. . .) and time

**Tony Chvala-Smith 22:13**

And Schneebeck's understanding of salvation is that the message of Jesus and the work of the church is to humanize people. That is, that is humanization, and this, this was a theme in a lot of 1960s theology. Um, some of this, some of this has vague (. . .) to me, it vague echoes of Bonhoeffer, but it's hard to find them directly in the book. But I think there's some Bonhoeffer language.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 22:37**

The social gospel, too, and it's definitely got some (right) reverberation there.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 22:41**

But the, the idea that what God wants is for human beings to live the fullest possible human life that they can live. To be human is a good thing.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 22:49**

To be as fully human as possible.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 22:51**

And what we live in is a world full of dehumanizing forces. And if the church wants to be a servant, and wants to do what Jesus did, wants to be, I'll say, a true church, it needs to be involved in those kinds of actions in the world that help humanize people, help them discover the depth of their own humanity. So that's, that's not about celestial glory. Unless, unless you're completely reinterpreting celestial glory as this worldly, earthly phenomenon of being fully human, which I think maybe Schneebeck was.

**Carla Long 23:24**

Well, I, I, I have a lot of gratitude towards Schneebeck. Absolutely. Like without him, we wouldn't be here now, it sounds like and so thank God for him. Thank God for his bravery. But man, I bet that he was torn apart.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 23:38**

Yes. Schneebeck eventually left church life. It was the, by the way, these were young adults, mostly. Not Landon, but

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 23:47**

Smith and Schneebeck are both young adults as they write and present this, this deepening challenge, a challenge to deepen their, the church's theology.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 24:00**

He, Schneebeck eventually went on to become an attorney, I think, and I believe was practicing somewhere in Minnesota. A few, a few older church members that we know had had contact with him from time to time, but he had essentially he, I mean, he essentially pulled out and Donald Landon of the Landon and Smith team, Donald Landon left the church in around 1970, 71 or so. The blowback on these figures and on the Department of Religious Education, and on some members of church leadership, was really, really harsh and severe. So,

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:41**

And Landon had worked for the church for over, around 20 years.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 24:46**

Nice. Yeah. 1951 he started working for the church.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:48**

That was set that was written. I think one of the things that was really hard for people, I mean, they couldn't really just dismiss what was, for several reasons, but one, you know, one is the First Presidency man, didn't mandate, but, but what would be a good sign? (. . .) I guess so, you know. What's the word in the, in Catholic things where, you know, you have, if you have a forward from the pope (put the imprimatur on it). I mean, basically the First Presidency says, Yep, this is what we're recommending. So, that made it hard for people to say, What the, you know. And so, and then the



second thing is that as Schneebeck and then later Landon and Smith, what they start doing is, I mean, Schneebeck is talking about who is Christ? What is Christ about? And what are we called to do? And they couldn't deny that. They couldn't deny what they were hearing because they recognized the echoes of that in their, in their own church. It's like, Yeah, this is here, we haven't really upheld it. And we haven't really been living by this. But it's here, and we can't just discount it as some wild idea. So I think there was like, you know, a genetic echo remembering that back in our beginning days, this was that radical call to discipleship and to community. And so they couldn't just write it off. So I think that was, that was part of it. And so that, this explains a little bit, the title, the enhancement, enchantment, or infusion confusion. And I'm thinking here about coffee, and how, you know, we do different things to, for flavors with coffee, right? So, you know, sometimes we, we roast it a certain way to pull out certain flavors that are inherent in that kind of bean. Or we might add oils or flavors to, to do again, the same thing to, we infuse it with something else to help bring out some of the flavors we want to, to draw attention to. And so we infuse it or we enhance it and it's still coffee. And it's still, the goal is not to make it not taste like coffee, though, some really bad flavored coffees do that, I think. But the ideal is not to not make it coffee. It's to enhance what's already there, to bring it alive, to show the quality of it. And so, you know, here's part of the church, you know, these writers and, and the Presidency to some extent, most, most extent, and many of the Twelve en, this is enhancing what the church is about. So there's this enchantment with, with that and saying, Yes, this is where we need to go. But on the other side, there's this confusion. Wait a minute. You know, you're saying that this, this is who we're supposed to be? How can that be? That doesn't taste anything like what I thought we were and what we're supposed to be.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 28:07**

It's as if you mixed peanut butter flavor with my coffee beans.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 28:10**

Some would say that. Anyhow, so that's the, the whole infusion, confusion. But yeah, it's, it's the same beans, you know, but it's how people are looking at it or tasting it that causes either a yummy sound or indigestion. And so, so that's the, that's the, the state of things, you know, and, and if you were to say what was, what were the enhancements that Schneebeck and Landon and Smith were trying to, to bring out of these coffee beans, I would say it's a renewed and much better focus on Christology, you know, who the work and nature of Christ, and ecclesiology, the work and nature of the church.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 29:00**

And the, and tying those together in a whole new way? (Right.) Yeah.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 29:03**

So, (yeah) that's, that's kind of the, and yet it took hold. It took hold enough that slowly but surely. And now, you know, I'm sure that Schneebeck and then Landon and Smith, you know, by the early 70s when there's been all this uproar, and even some, some well known church leaders are disparaging it. I'm sure at that point, they, they would have seen this just as a mistake. You know, that, Yes, they tried their best, but it wasn't the right time or, you know, it was never going to make a difference. I think they couldn't have seen how much difference, how much language they gave to members of the church, to, to church leaders, to pastors to start articulating, Who is this Jesus that's in all our sacraments, you

know, that, that comes through in, in every, every communion Sunday, when we have, you know, who is this? And why haven't we been lifting that up? And why haven't we been living that in the world instead of making our little cocoon here?

**Tony Chvala-Smith 30:19**

So if you want, I mean, if you want to understand the statement, Christ's mission is our mission, for goodness sakes, it's, it's, it's right on almost every page of Schneebeck and then in, in many respects Landon and Smith. So, the, the, there's this whole shift. You know what both books are still about the church, it's still coffee beans. And you know, if I had a critique of both books, it's, in my view, the Christology actually is too light in both of them. But there's, they're still really, I mean, I think fab, fabulous books. But my, my little criticism to the side, they're both about the church, only the, the, the focus, different, different textures and tastes of the beans are coming out. And something is, that's being played down, clearly being played down, is the, the Joseph Smith connection. So, um, a little illustration I like to use is that in the, the, the stained glass window in the East arm of Stone Church, there's a picture (explain what Stone Church is), so Stone Church is one of the, kind of like, they refer to themselves as the flagship congregation of the church built, and I think the building was started in 1888 or the cornerstone laid in 1888. It's, it's right across the street from the Auditorium and, uh, kitty-corner from the Temple. It's, for a long time it was, it was the seat of the Presidency. The Presidency, you know, delivered sermons and did stuff there. (Conferences were held) Conferences were held. It's a fabulous old church building. And so a congregation there. Big, big stain, stained glass windows. The East arm has a stained glass window and if you look at it carefully, you'll see there's a big figure of Moroni in the middle. And then if you look at the bottom, there's a picture of Joseph Smith on one side, and Jesus on the other. And they're pretty much about the same size. And it says a lot about the theology of the RLDS church in the 1880s, 90s, and up until, in many places, up until the late 1960s or beyond. It's about Joseph and Jesus. And Schneebeck and then Landon and Smith, are saying, No, it's about Jesus. Right? And whatever Joseph created, it, it has to change if it's going to be relevant in the modern world. And it, it, it can't be about him. Right? It's, it's that if, if you want, if you want to say the important thing about the church is that it be true to its origins, its origins are in Jesus Christ. It has to be true to what Jesus did, and said. Not to what Joseph did and said. And so you, you, you see then in these books there's, there's not what, there's not chapters about the restoration, or the, or the founding prophet. There's nothing about that. It's

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 33:14**

Or creating the original church,

**Tony Chvala-Smith 33:21**

Right. It's, it's about Christ, mission, fellowship, community, outreach, serving the world. And so it's a whole, it's a, you know, but it's still about the church a lot. It's still ecclesiology. So the, the, the good, the good old, the good old Colombian roast, there is still there. Right? It's, but it's, it's got all kinds of new textures and tastes and flavors because certain things have been put, I would say, in their proper place or played down, which, by which I mean the same thing. And a, a whole new image of the church is then lifted up. So, we have, we haven't really said much about Landon and Smith's book which is more, in some respects it's more practical. It, it's aimed at, alright, what's, what are we going to do on congregations based on Schneebeck and this is where they start off in chapter one, talking about how

the church has been domesticated. Right? That, that we're just too, too staid and comfortable singing about, singing about the good old days and singing about celestial glory and being the one true church, when there are racial issues, economic justice issues, issues of immense importance to the actual lives of human beings and the church is basically being silent about them. And so we are, we have become irrelevant to the world. So that's, so then they, they explore ways the congregation can become, can refocus itself to reach out outside of itself, rather than stay inwardly focused. So, why do we meet? Right? For What Purpose Assembled is the title. So, two, two fun summers, Carla 1968 and 69.

**Carla Long** 35:10

It sounds like it. It sounds like it was a pretty rough time. And, but it also sounds like it was very timely. Like, even though you described what was happening in 1968 in the world, and maybe a little bit hard for people to hear, I don't know if people would have been ready to hear that 10 years before or 20 years before. Maybe we needed to get out into the world and hear that our message was not relevant. The message that us versus the Mormons was not relevant in Japan and Korea, because who cared? Right? So, it sounds like it was, it was at the right time even if it was very, very difficult.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 35:48

Yeah, absolutely. And I, and I think, I think a lot of theological voices before this time, like F. Henry Edwards and Arthur Oakman and, and Roy Cheville. They had, they had created stepping stones, whether knowingly or not, that, that led to this, led to this kind of thinking that was going to reshape the church. They at, they at least, certainly Edwards and Oakman re, had refocused a lot on Christology, on the relationship of, you know, who is Jesus Christ for us. And that certainly paves the way for something like a Schneebeck (Cheville) and Cheville, yeah, Cheville's modernizing of RLDS language and of functionalizing it. Now how does it work? How does this language function for us? And, you know, his, his attempt to update RLDS distinctives and give them a new kind of (twist)? Yeah, (actually a twist), a new Chevillian twist. Uh,

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 36:45

However, I think we could find within Cheville the conflict that is within the church. So, on the one hand, he's the one who's encouraging people to, to look wider and to, to, to use new language and, and apply it and to be more informed. But his actual reaction to these books, Tony was just reading this to me last night, his actual reaction is that he wrote a letter to the First Presidency and said, Why did you do this? This, these are not, not well written books. These are not substantive. These are not, I mean, and it's like, it was obviously, you know, not theologically where he would want to go. And he, you know, he'd been crafting his message for a long time. And this was not heading in the same direction. Actually, that's, that's something to note in the church's long history is that prominent voices, um, who, for a while, shape the theological direction of the church, uh, are often replaced by new theological voices that are taking a slightly different angle on this. So it's, it's kind of like we, we zigzag our way on our path. But those who have, um, provided theological instruction and guidance to the church often feel left behind as think these changes keep, these adjustments, keep getting made. And I think that was part of this, the situation for Cheville. But he really embodies that, that conflict about, What were we doing?

**Tony Chvala-Smith 38:31**

Cheville, Cheville's, I've read his letter to the Presidency about these books, and it's snarky at, but is completely unsubstantive. Right? He just (He's not talking about actual specifics). It's full of accusations that they're immature, these are imma,(. . .), immature, and if, if what these guys are talking about is where the church was, what the church is going to be, why should we even exist as an organization? Which, which is clearly stuff he's hearing from traditional members out in the church? But his answer to that would be, Why didn't you have me write these books? I have a mature theology.

**Carla Long 39:08**

That's really hard. It's really hard to be out in the field and out in the area and, and hear all of that because you as a minister, like as Roy was, you would have to defend the church or you have to say, You know what, you're right. So you have a decision to make, too. That's tough. That's a tough place to be.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 39:28**

Yeah, would be. And, you know, I think this is a, thinking about that, um, church employees, appointees who are at reunions and camps over and over again, I mean, some members could and did say, you know, this is what happens when we let our kids go to, you know, state universities or take religion classes or, you know, be involved in one of those apostate church seminaries, you know. And so, and to some extent, they're right. This is what happens when we, when people feel called to theological education, and they bring back and that's what these writers are doing, they're bringing back, language that helps us articulate what the call is and helps us critique what we're doing and saying or where we've become shallow. Or, or to help us hear where God may be calling us in, in this moment. And so, yeah, sending those kids off, it's gonna change everything but, but is, maybe that's exactly how God

**Tony Chvala-Smith 40:37**

And oh, by the way, this is why we have such things as penicillin and why when we go to the doctor when they're sick they don't put leeches on us. (Usually). At least where we go to the doctor.

**Carla Long 40:47**

Wow, theological education did a lot.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith 40:53**

So I think that the cool thing is that many of the things that these writers are bringing up, these theologians, they're new, but they're not really new. They're rooted in the depths of the Christian message. And then in our own tradition, but have been lost and overshadowed by some of our, our distinctives, those things that we had lifted up as making us more special than other people. And so it, it's, it had a humbling effect, too. It allowed us to hear the Christian message and recognize it in the other denominations around us.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 41:29**

What one, one thing that both books do that I think is very, very traditional RLDS is that there's a heavy focus on works. Right? That's traditional RLDS. That is both books, in effect, but especially Landon and

Smith, say, The church is only the Church of Jesus Christ when it does the things Jesus did. And I have a problem with that.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 41:56

There's still not a lot of room for grace in that.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 41:58

Right. And, and that's like saying, The only way you can be a Christian is if you're faithful all the time to Jesus. And it's like, well, if you trans, if you transplant that down to the individual level, that creates the very problem Martin Luther was facing in the late 1400s when he couldn't be enough and he knew he couldn't. And it created a total self deconstruct situation for him until he discovered that, Wait, God is a gracious God. So there's, there's, there's a great image of the church as servant and so on these books. There's not a lot of grace in them in my view. That's my, my reading of them. But they're trying to correct an abuse and sometimes when you're trying to correct an abuse you, you reproduce other abuses. So you have to, you just have to be circumspect about that.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 42:16

And that's why the theological journey is a zigzag. You know, it's adjusting as you go and correcting as you go.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 42:53

And that's why, that's why there's always job security in theology, Carla.

**Carla Long** 42:58

Amen.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 43:00

I didn't say, I didn't say a salary security. I said job security.

**Carla Long** 43:02

Oh, right. Right. Um, I do have a quick question about Robert. So Donald Landon and Robert Smith wrote For What Purpose Assembled. Was Robert Smith a Smith Smith, or was he just a Smith? No, as far as I know, he wasn't a Smith Smith; wasn't part of the royal family. He didn't have the bloodline or the genes as far as I know. Got it. Okay. Just want to check. I figured that I might get a few questions about that if I didn't ask.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 43:28

Yeah, he, he did a, he did theological study at University of Chicago. And he was the head of the Department of Campus Ministry at Church Headquarters. There was such a thing at one time. And, uh, so spent a lot of time on university campuses where there were RLDS kids and, and, uh, you know, working with them and working with youth groups and, or campus youth groups, and so on. So.

**Carla Long** 43:53

That sounds like a super fun job, like really.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 43:57

And so he really did have his finger on the pulse of the next generation and, um, was able to see how they were seeing the church, as they discovered a bigger world and wondered how, how does the church, can the church move forward in this world in any relevant way?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 44:18

So, you know what, in 1968, Carla, one of the top rock songs was Born to be Wild by Steppenwolf. And so that, I mean, what, how does that not describe reunion? He, he said, ironically, born to be wild. Those would have been, that would have been a wild reunion in 1968. So

**Carla Long** 44:38

I bet people did not even know what a wild ride they were in for. So this has been really interesting. Thank you so much for this step back and this look back at Schneebeck and Landon and Smith. And I think it's really important for people to know that, you know, sometimes, let me back up. Sometimes I, I feel like when people talk to me about Community of Christ, they feel like that we just were birthed into this lovely, wonderful church that we are right now. And it's hard to imagine what we went through as well to get here. And so I think it's super important for people to hear that there's been some really rocky times in the church. And there will be more rocky times in the church, as we understand who God is even more and even more. I believe President Veazey said not so long ago that we only have enough light for the next step. And we have to take that next step. So, who knows what's 10 steps ahead of us? Not us. We have enough light for that next step. So, anyway, there are rocky times. There will be rocky times. We are not perf, this perfect church even though sometimes people think that we are. I'm not kidding. Sometimes people here in Salt Lake think that we're a perfect church. I remind them very quickly that we are not.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 45:51

Tell, tell them we are a church in permanent labor contractions.

**Carla Long** 45:54

Oh, that would be, oh, that memory is too soon.

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 45:59

Don't tell anybody that. That's, that's a terrifying metaphor. Sorry.

**Carla Long** 46:02

It's too soon for me to remember that. Uh, well, thank you again.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 46:05

Yes, we're really glad we could do this.

**Carla Long** 46:08

Is there anything else you want to say about Schneebeck or Landon or Landon and Smith?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 46:12

Sometimes it's, sometimes it's, it's really costly to people to be on the forefront and to try to, try to create, create a vision of the new. It was costly for these three, three very distinguished and thoughtful people.

**Charmaine Chvala-Smith** 46:27

And I would echo that.

**Carla Long** 46:28

Yeah, it's not always easy to speak the truth that you have found. I, that's very true. Well, thank you so much for telling us this. Thank you for talking about this. I've learned a lot as usual. And even though I've taken your course and learned about Schneebeck and Landon and Smith before, I've learned even more, so I appreciate you two. Thanks so much.

**Josh Mangelson** 46:55

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