

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 with Charmaine and Tony Chvala-Smith. Hi, Charmaine. Hi, Tony.

Tony Chvala-Smith 00:43

Hi, Carla. Good to be with you. Nice to be with you, Carla.

Carla Long 00:47

And if you are listening to us, then maybe you should stop and go watch us because this is a video podcast today, because we're gonna be showing you something very, very interesting from Community of Christ history. Hmm, I should say RLDS history. This is definitely RLDS history. Not Community of Christ. Um, this, but it's so interesting. It's something we're going to talk about is the preaching chart. And, um, I'm gonna let Tony and Charmaine describe it because they have, well, they're, they're basically itinerant preachers who walk around with this preaching chart all the time and talk about it all the time.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 01:21

Now don't be misleading our listeners.

Carla Long 01:26

I can't help it. That's just what I do. So, Tony, Charmaine, can you just start by talking to us about the preaching chart? What was the purpose? Like, why do we have one, all that stuff.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 01:37

Right. So, this, this, and then if you can see, this is a preaching chart. It's probably about, I don't know, 10, 15 feet long. It's cloth. And it's painted scenes on it. And this would have been the audio-visual, you know, high end audio-visual of about 100 years ago. Um, and these preaching charts were something that most denominations used. They were, of course, customized to their theology. And, um, and this, this one is a pattern that was used in, in the RLDS church for quite a while, and it could be customized a little bit, too. So, we find some differences in different, of these charts, but they would have been used in what was often called cottage meetings. So, uh, somebody's interested in the church. They come to

somebody's house, or, or the missionaries go to their house. And they might put this up, this chart up. And slowly, week by week, take them through the different pieces of it. It could also be put up in a church or, uh, in the 1920s, maybe in the Grange Hall or the local auditorium that was being used for a preaching series.

Tony Chvala-Smith 02:53

Township Hall, any place that, uh, RLDS missionaries could, could get to.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 02:58

And this would be put up and it would be the topic of a week's preaching series. Every night, people would come and they would be walked through a different part of it so that by the end of the week, you would see the whole of RLDS theology before you and you would know that you completely understood it. Um, whether you agreed or not, was a whole nother issue. But, uh, but that's how it was used. And, as I said, lots of denominations used them. Uh, there'll be some things on here that would be, you'd find in many Protestant, um, denominations' preaching charts. Um, but this is one of several that we have in the archives here at the Temple.

Tony Chvala-Smith 03:41

And we know for example, that Adventists use charts of this type, uh, quite a bit. Um, and once Charmaine and I were doing, doing a class in, in South America and we're given, we were given a Quechua hymnal that was kind of the shared Protestant Quechua hymnal that our church members use there. Quechuas a, an Incan language. And lo and behold, on the front of, on the front of the hymnal, no connection to Community of Christ, there's a design that looks pretty much like this, so.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 04:11

It has the, the narrow path leading up and the wide path leading down to a place where you see over, beyond the horizon flames, you know. So, that was, it was pretty clear what, where that path was leading.

Carla Long 04:25

Oh, man, that wide path always sounds like so much fun to me. Go ahead.

Tony Chvala-Smith 04:29

And in a little while, I'm going to lead us all down that wide path which is one of my strengths. So, this particular design, we know comes from at least 1912. And the, there's a name on the chart, G. F. Weston, Independence, Missouri. Weston, Weston was one of the people who originated and designed these charts. And, so, people, missionaries could, could send to, to G.

F. Weston for a chart, either a finished one or a not finished one that they could finish (Right.) and they could tweak lines.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 05:02

And you could color them yourself. Or you could have them already, you know, finished and beautiful.

Tony Chvala-Smith 05:07

And, and one time in a Community of Christ theology class in our seminary, uh, we were going through this chart and one of our students who had been an art major as an undergrad said, I know that art style, That, that is, that is kind of like the, the Barnum and Bailey Circus poster art style of just after 1900. And once he said that and you looked at it, uh, sure. (There, it's there. You can see it.) It, it did, it did look exactly like those, you know, archived pictures I've seen of Barnum and Bailey posters. So, it's pretty cool.

Carla Long 05:41

That is very cool. Like the, the two ways, right there, down there at the bottom, that looks very circusy. Very circusy to me. Interesting.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 05:48

It does. And one of the things is that, again, as Carla had, you have mentioned earlier is that this is not Community of Christ theology today. But it was, this represents a theology that was present in the church for, from a, say about the 1890s until about the 1960s, maybe 70s. In fact, there is a congregation that still has a preaching chart like this on their wall in Ohio, and I'm afraid they may actually use it in times of worship. So, (And also I should) as a whole, (Yes.) this doesn't reflect, it, it reflects in very few ways today's theology in the church. And we'll, we'll try to point out some of the, that those elements that are still, that are still the questions we're trying to answer in the church today.

Tony Chvala-Smith 06:47

And I'm just simply going to add that I joined Community of Christ in 1975. I was a, I was a college student. I was a young adult. I was 18. And what, what I learned about when I joined the church, then the RLDS church then, was a series of slides, a slide present, series of slide presentations called the Go Ye and Teach slides that, that seventies and missionaries used. And, so, those slides, those missionary slides, actually were a kind of a newer edition of this chart. So, the first time Charmaine and I ever saw one of these charts, uh, at church headquarters from the archives, I pretty much knew everything that was on it because I had learned it in 1975 as my introduction to the church. Uh, but, to repeat what Charmaine said, we do not introduce people to the church with this kind of theology today. This is an introduction

to, uh, uh, Community of Christ 1.0, if you want to do that, like, a long time ago. We are now in Community of Christ 5.0. (If you want to do it that way. Yeah.)

Carla Long 07:49

I really enjoy the math, um, analogy. So, thank you for that. I might even say it's Community of Christ 0.5, but let's just, let's just agree to disagree. I'm okay with both. So, I don't know if you want to go ahead and jump into the preaching chart because, you know, I feel like you've given us just a little taste and I think we're very excited about this now. So, I know. So, let's, uh, let's just jump into it and show me that boring, narrow way. And that exciting broad way and all the other stuff that has, that's in there.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 08:17

You bet. Okay, so first, let's move out of the way so that you can get a sense of the whole. And then, there we go, get to see the whole of it. And then we'll start, we'll focus in on different segments of it and try and give you a sense of what was it that the church was trying to say when, when they would be highlighting that part of the chart. So, we're going to start over here. And, there we go. So, there's two, I'm just going to bring it here, there's two elements that would have been very, very important when this part of the chart was being explored and it probably would have been explored first. And, there we go. So, there's two things that would have been, um, beginning places and one would probably be up here with the nine spiritual gifts and officers of the church. And the way that this would have been approached, would have been for people to open up their Bibles and look at the scriptures. This is, there's scriptures everywhere on here, look at the scriptures and see what are the, the gifts of the Spirit that should be visible in the church? And, so, they go through and read them and then they would, the missionary would say, or the seventy would say, So, what church do you know that has all these gifts of the Spirit? And usually people would say, Well, I don't know. And they'd say, Well, our church does. And then they would say about different officers in the church, different, uh, priesthood or kinds of leaders? And they would, again, go to Scripture and say, What does it call for here? What was the early church like? And what church do you know that has all of these offices? And, again, the answer would be, Well, well, we do, of course. So, this points us to one of the very first questions that this chart is attempting to answer. And that is, How can you tell that this, the RLDS church, is the one true church. And, so, they're already setting the foundation. Uh, it's biblically based. It has the right, the right expressions of the Spirit and the right officers. And, so, then the next place to go would be to give people a historical overview of God's work in the world.

Tony Chvala-Smith 11:04

Alright, so you can see right here on the chart, these circles, and this circle has Adam and then Noah, then Moses, and then Christ. And with the circles, you'll see in the middle, or at the top of them an, a, a number 1369. And then over here, a circle that has 11 on it. So, this, this is a

device called dispensationalism. And there are other types of dispensationalism besides this one. The standard, the standard evangelical Protestant one was and is a, a seven, a seven dispensation system. This was a 12 dispensation system. And by dispensation I mean, what I mean is dispensationalism held that human history was divinely, uh, pre, pre-directed into, uh, seven or 12 dispensations. Alright? And so, in the old RLDS theology, these dispensations were characterized by a covenant. So, over here's the Adam and Eve, uh, the first dispensation and the, they, the, uh, RLDS missionaries also would, would refer to these as hours. There's 12, 12 hours, the 12 dispensations equal 12 hours. And, uh, of course, because it's the latter days, we are in the 11th hour. So, in the first hour, here's Adam and Eve and God makes a covenant so they taught, with Adam and Eve in the garden. And then you see this little, uh, dark circle underneath. And each of these covenants has a dark circle underneath. So, what that represents is a falling away. So, God makes a covenant with Adam and Eve. They mess up. They fall away, in, in, in essence, it, it breaks the covenant. Then there's Noah, right? Noah, after the flood, uh, they interpreted things that happen to Noah afterwards as a breaking of the covenant. And then here's Moses in the sixth hour. And, of course, we know that Moses, Moses took the tablets, according to Exodus, and broke them and that was the Israelites having broken the covenant. All right? Now, this was important in their theology because here in the ninth hour, this is the nativity scene. This is Christ. Christ comes in the ninth hour. Uh, this is the ninth dispensation, and stop. What did Christ do? Ah, well, now this is back to where Charmaine started. The main thing in their Christology was that Christ came to build his church. They constantly quoted Matthew 16. Upon this rock, I will build my church. And so, by the way, you will notice there are no crosses on this chart. Uh, that, that should cue you into how different Community of Christ theology is from this old RLDS theology, but the main thing Christ came to do is build a church. And that takes you back up to the offices up here and, and that Christ created the New Testament Church. And then what happened? Well, there's a circle right there, that the original Christian Church fell away. Was, this was their theology. Now you're looking, Carla, you like numbers, so, you're looking there. You see that number? 570. (Yeah.) And this is not a bingo number and this is not a lottery number, right? This, this is a little bit of, of funky RLDS math. (Oh, good.) So, an old RLDS missionary who, at one point he eventually left the church. His name was Daniel McGregor. And Daniel McGregor was very much influenced by other kinds of dispensationalism that were out there and Daniel Gregor, uh, created a little system that lasted in the RLDS church until I learned it definitely in the 1970s. And it went like this. So, when did the original Christian Church finally fall away? Well, Daniel MacGregor assumed that you would find the answer in the Bible. And he went to the book of Revelation. And in the book of Revelation, he, he read a, about the woman who was clothed with the sun and he assumed that the woman was a symbol of the church and that she fled into the wilderness for 1260 days. Right? Charmaine's gonna adjust here. So, here's the woman in Revelation 12, clothed with the sun. And Dan MacGregor said, This is the true, this is the true church. It fled into the wilderness for 1260 days. Then Daniel McGregor said, Well, other parts of the Bible would, would tell us that, that symbolically a day equals a year.

So, it must have been 1260 years. And, so, he, then he, then his math went like this. We know the true church was est, was reestablished in 1830. And, so, if we subtract 1260, that must be the actual date when the original Christian Church fell away.

Carla Long 16:15

Wow, that was a lot of jumps. That's a lot of jumps for Daniel McGregor to make, a lot. (. . .)

Tony Chvala-Smith 16:21

But you know what, if that's Daniel McGregor and in the mid-20th century, Elbert A. Smith was repeating this and missionaries that Charmaine and I heard growing up were repeating this, right? (And nothing really happened in 570.) And by the way, uh, nothing really happened in 570 if you understand this new Christian, Christianity, except there were there were struggles with the Lombards in Italy. That was the basic thing. But, but this, this was a device. This was a device to buttress or prove or establish that we were the true Church and that everything else was descend, was descendent from the Roman Catholic Church, right? The Roman Catholic Church, uh, in, in McGregor's view, the Roman Catholic Church is fully established in 570. That's the end of the early Christian church. And then what you have underneath it here is, as, as RLDS folks would say, even in the 1880s, and 90s, they would say, these are the daughters of the great whore. (Ah, yes.) Lutherans, Calvinists, Church of England, Methodist, Baptist disciples, all that, they would say, all these other churches are descended in some way from, from the Catholic Church, um, and so they, they are, they are the churches of men. Uh, back up there at the top where the woman was right next to her, there's half a woman so that the half a woman represents, represents the churches of men. The whole woman represents the, the true church. And, so, basically, this is, the, the, the missionaries work with this pattern: covenant, falling away, covenant, falling away. Jesus starts the new covenant and there's a big falling away. But notice how they connected everything, every, everything to, that Jesus did was a, about the church. Um, and so Community of Christ theology today would be quite, quite different focus than that. So, then you, you go over here, this is the 11th hour. And, I, I don't know, I hope you, hope you can see, because it will give you a sense for what was really important for these people. Joseph in big letters.

Carla Long 18:27

I mean, that circle is way bigger than Christ, Noah, Moses, and Adam. Joseph's circle is huge.

Tony Chvala-Smith 18:33

Joseph's circle is huge and there's the two personages, uh, rather grotesquely depicted in, in that circle. And, of course, uh, you know, in 1912, when this chart was first devised, and before when the theology was being preached from it, these folks did not know that there were

multiple versions of Joseph's grove vision. And the only version they knew of was the 1842 account that has two personages. They did not know that the earliest account was a, was an experience of Joseph being encountered by Christ. And that was it. So, but that, so they depicted the two, the two personages. That's the beginning of the restoration of the true church. And then, Carla, if you, a, a, after every covenant is formed, what happens? (They fall away.) Right. And so off the 11th hour, there is a big falling away.

Carla Long 19:29

Wait a second. Does this falling away have anything to do with the state where I live? It feels like it does.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 19:35

It just might. It just might. And you, you will get a really good idea of the theology of the church in this point. As far as how is it dis, kind of distinguish itself? Um, you know, RLDS was a small group compared to a much larger group that had gone west and that were well, well known or well, are seeming notorious for many people. And, so, one of the goals, not only is, is it to tell that you're the one true church, but to kind of disassociate with other groups that you might be confused with. And, so, this was a really important part of this part of their story was that Joseph brought a fullness of the gospel, the truth, and that then there's this falling away. And there's a, a figure there, I don't know how much you can see, uh, with women, multiple women around.

Carla Long 20:37

It looks like a man with a lot of ladies behind him.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 20:40

Yeah, yeah. And they're playing with his hair and all kinds of things. So, yes, and you'll see down below the LD apostasy. Because, uh, at this point, um, early on, the 1890s, through probably the 1930s, there was still a tendency for the RLDS to call themselves the Latter Day Saints. And so, so this is Latter Day apostasy. But it was clear for RLDS folks to know that this was about the Mormons who had gone west, who had known the truth, had experienced the Spirit and then had turned from it. So, uh, in their theology, that was, um, that meant you were pretty much doomed if you knew the truth and then walked away from it. And you can see that this line, um, this line goes right down to the lake of fire and brimstone, which was

Carla Long 21:42

Yeah. There's no escaping that line. I mean, it is a big black highway straight there.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 21:48

It is. And, so, this was a way to let hearers, uh, hearing about the church for the first time to know who we weren't, as well as who we were. And that was all part of the trying to answer the question, How can we tell that this is the one true church? Uh, and, in this case, that we're not Mormon. That was a huge part of RLDS identity both determining, um, helping others determine that we weren't Mormon, but we weren't also Protestant. So, we were something else in between those two. So,

Carla Long 22:23

And we were perfect.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 22:26

Obviously. Obviously. So, then I think where we would probably want to go next is to the question, So how does one live, um, righteously? How are we to live in the world? And that's where we will get into the two paths, the narrow path and the broad path. And I'm just gonna move this over here. There we go. Alright. So, I guess since Tony wants to take us down the broad path, I get, I get to tell us a little bit about the narrow path.

Carla Long 23:03

I think that that is true both to your personalities as well.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 23:09

So, we're, we're this whole series of sermons or two or three sermons probably on how do we live righteously? How do we live in right relationship with God and, and the covenant that we're a part of? And, so, it starts here with natural birth. So, everybody is born. And,

Carla Long 23:30

Oh, which has nothing to do with, like, taking an epidural or anything, right? So, of course, of course.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 23:34

Or not taking it. Yes, exactly. Not. Yeah. Um, probably they didn't have that at this point.

Carla Long 23:42

Probably. I hope not.

Tony Chvala-Smith 23:43

You, what you, what you needed, Carla, back then was a good stiff shot of lukewarm Postum. Not coffee. (Gross.)

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 23:53

So, what we have is, then, it's, this is, this is showing the way to live properly. So, the next thing here is there's two men holding a baby and this is two things here. One is blessing, so baby blessing. And above is cradle roll and SS for Sunday school. So these are the ways that you start out by shaping, supporting babies, children into the life of the church and into life with God. The next is somebody on their knees and it's representative of repentance. And then after that, someone's sitting there and that's godly sorrow. So, becoming aware of, of praying and becoming aware of your sinfulness. And then if you look up, you'll see that there's guideposts and there's charity and hope and faith and faith is a finger that is pointing you up the narrow pink, pretty pink road here. And then you'll see that there's other fingers. And these are the (Six principles) six, six principles of the gospel. And they were the subject of many, many, many a sermon and preaching series. So, faith, repentance, baptisms, uh, by water and fire, laying on of hands. And then further up, we'll see the first resurrection and eternal judgment. So, these are things that are pointing us. So, we had natural birth here, we have spiritual birth here, and this is, um, baptism, eight years old baptism, confirmation. And then we come to the part of the path that is, uh, populated by the fruit of the Spirit. So this is about how do you go on into, well, it says here, Going on to perfection. But now we're at that point where there's a narrow path and a broad path. And now that you're eight years old, and you've been baptized, now you have these choices before you. And this is, this, we don't see this on many of these charts. It says, 12 years and it says, Girls say no. And, I mean, wow, that just says so much about so many things. I think it should say, Boys don't ask. But, so, so at this, this is our point where, I mean, I think they got that right. You know, you're 10, 12 years old, you're having to make some difficult decisions, and what looks and sounds right, may or may not be. So, uh, so

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 24:15

And, and that, Charmaine, you and I have both counseled at junior high camps of 12 to 14 year olds, and definitely, definitely there's a way down.

Carla Long 26:59

Amen, amen.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 27:01

So, you see the fruit of the Spirit: virtue and knowledge and temperance and patience and godliness, brotherly kindness, charity, going on to perfection. And again, all kinds of scriptural references to prove that this is based in the Bible. And you have people going up the path and they're picking some of the grapes from this, the arbor of the fruit of the Spirit. And this is, we'll see, there's a First Nations person replete with a bow and arrows. Uh, you'll see somebody carrying a flag that says LDS, which is what I was referencing earlier that they still considered themselves Latter Day Saints, the true Latter Day Saints is what they would often say. And then you get to the end of life, and that's natural death. And then what happens from there.

And from there, you go to Paradise, which is a, a waiting area, until the first resurrection, and the, and Christ, uh, being caught up with Christ, and then the 1000 years, then the millennium. And so if you keep on this path, that's what's going to happen. When you die, you go to Paradise, that first resurrection, Spirit and body will reunite, you'll be with Christ and then you go into the 1000 years. And then, make sure you can see this. And then celestial glory. And starting at about here, you'll start to see, um, some restoration scriptures being used. You'll see Alma being used, the reference for Paradise. You'll see Doctrine and Covenants being used for Christ's first fruits, and then Doctrine and Covenants, um, up in the, uh, celestial glory. So, that's, that's the easy, truest path, the most secure path to celestial glory is that. But you'll see that underneath it, there's a, a yellow line. And this is what I would say is a, another one of those questions that was often asked, which was, Well, what about people who act like they're good Christians and, actually, may be better people than we are? But they don't know Christ, or they're not, probably they would have said more first, they're not part of our church, because our church was the one right way to, to follow Christ. So, the question was, Well, well is, is God merciful? Is God just? These people lived the best they could. What happens to them? And, so, this yellow line is honorable men of the earth. Or members not valiant who died without law, meaning they were church members, but they didn't really follow all the rules. And, but they were part of the right church. So, where do they end up and they end up in that middle glory,

Tony Chvala-Smith 30:34

terrestrial glory

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 30:34

terrestrial gro, glory.

Tony Chvala-Smith 30:36

And, and back there in Paradise, it looks like they have, uh, bleacher seats in Paradise, is what it looks like that. (Nice. Nice.)

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 30:42

Yeah, they're there in Paradise as well. But, um, yeah, there's not as much happ, there's not as much happy going on. And, so, they, then, are in terrestrial glory. So, this is another one of the questions is, What is the nature of God and how does God judge people? And the recognition that, um, there were a, a good number of people out there, who didn't, who were part of the church, but obviously, lived as though they knew the, the truth or the fullness of the gospel. Alright, so, Tony, back to the broad way.

Tony Chvala-Smith 31:27

It pleases me to quote lines from a song, uh, Goin' down party time, my friends are gonna' be there, too. It's an AC/DC lyric for those who are interested. And that's where we're going. So, way back up here, you know, when the path divides, this is the broad path that leads down to the prison house. I'll say something about that in a minute. So, there's a scripture quote here, This is a way that seemeth right unto man, a man. Uh, King James quote. So, where, whereas the pink path up there is the path if you stay on will lead you to celestial glory. This is the, the broad way that Jesus warned about. And what you see when you look at the, the, the drawings on here, you see people, a couple places, you see people holding large bags of money. So the, the pursuit of wealth, uh, and greed are ways down, uh, are, are ways away from the gospel path up there. Alright, there's people taking a drink. There's people going to saloons. There's people dancing, people, uh, cavorting in all kinds of ways. Here's right here, a guy sitting on a chair. It's called the stool of do nothing.

Carla Long 32:44

Oh, my gosh, I want a stool of do nothing in my life, right now? (No, yes.)

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 32:51

Which, which shows that the, uh, the whole sort of theology, philosophy of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps had been integrated into the theology of the church?

Tony Chvala-Smith 33:01

Well, exactly. And what you what you see is, is Anglo Saxon American Protestant culture is every, seeping out everywhere on this chart in terms of what makes for a good person? Right? Right. So, now, as you, this, this, this way that goes down, up there, you had the fruit of the Spirit, down here, you have these thorns, and you can get trapped in them, right? Emulations, variants, hatred, sedition, heresies, and so on. (Witchcraft. Ooh, how exciting.) Right. And, so, but you know, where you had the, the six principles, those, those hands and fingers pointing up, here, you have hands pointing down. They include lying, deception, card playing, (Oooooooh.), dancing, revelry, and murder.

Carla Long 33:46

Feels a little bit of a, a not a great equality to equate card playing, dancing and murder. I mean,

Tony Chvala-Smith 33:55

Well, it depends on who's dancing. I suppose.

Carla Long 33:58

That's a good, no, excellent point.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 34:01

Yeah, dancing might be closer to murder than we think, but

Tony Chvala-Smith 34:03

The RLDS, RLDS people, uh, did not play cards. That, uh, 18, 1870s, 80s, 90s, 19, early 1900s. That was considered, that was considered, uh, that could lead to gambling, right? Um, and going to dances was forbidden. It was not until maybe the 1980s when it was even possible in most places for senior high kids at a camp to have a dance. (Wow.) So, um, so this is, this is the broad way down, and you can fall off the pink path up there, um, by not going to preaching, by not going to school. Um, if I were creating this chart, I would, I would say texting under the table will lead you off that. Right? So, going to theaters and saloons. Actually in our rules and resolutions, Resolution, I think it's 297, but you can check it out, there's a revel, resolution passed by a general conference in the 1880s or 90s, which, which basically says, the practice of going to saloons can lead you, lead to being disfellowshipped from church. (Wow.) So, um, what else is there? Uh, you don't take the sacrament, you neglect the poor-- that's a kind of an interesting one--you don't pay tithing. All of these things will lead you, drag you down to the broad way and the broad way, well, when you die, your Spirit here goes into the place called the pit or the prison house. This was a, this was a very distinctive feature of reorganization preaching and, and was, you know, it, it, it offered, it offered a different way to think about the afterlife than lots of, lots of both Protestants and Catholics would have typically thought about it. The prison house basically was where the spirits of those who, well, who were following the broad way, or who had fallen off the, the good way and had not turned, turned back. Uh, this is where you ended up in death, and it was not so much a place of punishment, as a place of teaching or instruction.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 36:19

So, this is another question that this chart is trying to answer. And that is the question. Well, what about people who, whose exposure to the gospel was through some other church? Um, or who, who never heard about Jesus or never heard about the church? Um, what happens to them? So, it's, again, that question about is God just and is God merciful. And, so, it's, it really embraces the idea that people who never had a good first chance to hear would have a second chance to hear the good news of Jesus or the knowledge of the church. And, um, and they have 1000 years to get it right. And, and those who, who do, who choose hope, rather than despair, and I think you can see both of those there, (. .) those who chose hope, they can then go up that pink path. And that pink path leads you up to that same path that the honorable men of the, of the earth or members who aren't valiant, um, are on and they will experience the millennium, the 1000 years.

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:35

Christ will raise them for the millennium is what the number two is for. First, Christ will raise the first fruits. And then those who are Christ's at His coming they, this is from First Corinthians 15 and the, these, these preachers interpreted that as two different stages.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 37:49

Yeah. This is also an, uh, something that lots of denominations did. They were trying to use all kinds of passages from, uh, Revelation, uh, to, to plot out exactly what was going to have, happen after everybody dies, and, and final judgment and all of that. So, there's a lot of that in here that we could get into and we probably won't too much. But, but the, there's people that can go from that ti, place of, of teaching, the pit or prison or teaching house, it was sometimes called, and, um, have then a chance to be part of the millennium and then they can enter into terrestrial glory.

Tony Chvala-Smith 38:24

Right. So, what, where the, where it goes next then is to, we'll call these, these are the final events of eschatology, of, of end time things as the church taught it then. So, there's the little, the little season where, where, uh, in, in the book of Revelation, Satan is released and and creates a problem on Earth. Uh, and then there's the second resurrection. Uh, there's judgment. Uh, Satan and his angels are thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone. And what's really interesting in his theology is that even at the very end, the rest of the dead, there, there are, there are lots and lots of people who didn't, who didn't get into the bleacher seats during the millennium, but who will be raised to telestial glory, the third of the glories at the very end. And, so, I sometimes refer to this theology, and you can trace it back to Joseph Smith Jr. It's kind of a modified universalism. That is modified in the sense that nearly every human being in the end has some kind of glory. The, there's, there's very few who have nothing. Those, you know, Satan, Satan's angels, and then those who heard the truth and then totally denied it back to the pipe. Uh, they're the ones who are thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone. And, uh, so, this, this theo, this, this theology, uh, had a kind of generosity about it, at least more than the standard, than the standard, I'm gonna say, other Protestant theologies, because I think this is basically a Protestant theology on its own, but an, a story for another time. But, but in other words, most Protestant theologies taught heaven, hell undifferentiated. And this had a much more differentiated view that was very, very attractive to people like the young missionary, the young man, John Cornish. John Cornish, one of the things that made him join the church, uh, in the 1870s was, uh, hearing, hearing that there might be hope for his beloved mother who had never been a baptized Christian, uh, hear this from Reorganized missionaries. And he says in his autobiography that, My, my heart warms toward God. Right. So, the idea that God was fair and just and, and would be kind towards, uh, his late mother who was a lovely person, but who was not a baptized Christian. That appealed to, to John Cornish. So, there's quite an appeal about that.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 40:43

I think Tony has mentioned it, but you'll see here the figure of Christ opening the prison door, and then you have, you'll see that there's several people who are going up this path, um, to, to telestial glory. Um, but you, you'll see that there's really only one person who's going down into the lake of fire and brimstone. And, so, this is really the sense that there really will be very few who, uh, would choose to not be with God or to receive God's love, and, and presence.

Tony Chvala-Smith 41:20

So, Carla, that's a, that's a walkthrough of what's on the chart, (Yes.) only kind of chart there, that there was or is in the archives. I mean, there were, there were charts that focused on single parts of this whole thing. Like, there's a, there's one very, very popular chart that has a picture of a church building with the cornerstone being Jesus Christ and that, that one is solely on the Church of the New Testament, as, as they called it then. They, they weren't quite yet ready for or aware of the idea that in the New Testament, there's not a church, there's churches, there's different communities with different structures, and so on. They weren't, they weren't there yet. But, uh, that one was very, very popular for a long time. And still widely taught when I was a young adult.

Carla Long 42:03

So, you can't tell me that people who may have been listening to this, young people may have been listening to this preaching chart, and going, Wait a second. I can go on the broad way all the way down and I can have so much fun and do whatever I want and then still get into heaven? Hmm.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 42:21

So, I think that's a really important distinction to make, um, is that this is not about heaven. And (Hmm.) that's one of the things that we really need to acknowledge that there isn't, I mean, it's one of those differences in RLDS, um, theology of this time. It's not just about heaven and hell. Uh, the glories are something really, in some ways, different from what other Protestants would be talking about as, uh, as heaven. There's, it's not like there's this cut off line. But the, for your friends you were referring to,

Carla Long 42:59

Yes, other people. Not me, of course. Other people.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 43:02

Uh, but (. . .) still have your 1000 years of, of having to go back to school. So, that might be a deterrent.

Carla Long 43:10

Uh, I like school. But

Tony Chvala-Smith 43:13

Carla, what, what if school, though, we're 1000 years of a class from Tony and Charmaine with the same kinds of tests you had to take from us?

Carla Long 43:21

Well, maybe I'll just try and be a better person. (Easier.)

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 43:26

And this is, you know, this is a really good example of, uh, like propositional faith. One that is determined by having the right list of beliefs. And this would have been common among many Protestant churches of the time, is, you determined, you distinguish yourself from other denom, denominations by how your list is different than theirs, how your list is righter than their list. Um, but you can see that here, there's a right way. This isn't a time when most Christians believed there was only one right way to follow Christ to, to get it right. And, and here, it's defined by being in the right church, therefore, then having the right set of beliefs that that church would hold and the right expectations on how you live.

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:17

And you know, uh, our old RLDS ancestors sang in their hymnody about a perfect system. They believe this was a perfect, a perfect doctrinal system, um, that had no loose ends in it. Well, that came to be, uh, that came to be a problem in the 1960s and 70s. But one of the things that it's interesting about the chart is that I, when I look at with a theologian's eyes, what I see is, I see a, a visual of a whole systematic theology. (Yeah.) Right? A systematic theology, you know, uh, you know, John, John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, in, in, in many respects, it's a systematic theology and it, it, it covers everything from creation to consummation, uh, salvation, the Christian life, what is the true Church? Who is Jesus Christ and why does he matter? What is the atonement, all that stuff? A, a systematic theology covers all those based, and, bases methodically. And, so, this, this was a systematic theology. Here's the problem with systematic theologies, even though I, I work on them. A systematic theology is not the gospel. It's an interpretation of the gospel. And it's really, really easy with a system like this to start confusing your map with the territory. (Yeah.) And, so, um, that, and that happened here. This, this was not treated as an interpretation of the gospel. It was treated as the gospel. And, so, in the 1960s and 70s when new experience and new knowledge and new approaches to scripture began to raise questions about this, people, people who had, uh, you know, lived and breathed and eaten this chart for 100 years, were really, really, uh, upset about it because you weren't just playing with a theology or criticizing theology. For their, from

their perspective, you were heading down that, that, that sewer pipe there, because you were, you were, you were denying the true gospel. So, that was, that's, that's always a problem with systems, theological systems. And they, they deny, they deny that actually Christian faith starts as a relationship. It's, it's relational at its heart, not, not propositional.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 46:33

Yeah. And so, you know, this, this is our LDS church and for almost 80 to 100 years, this is representative of the theology. And as Tony said, you know, in the 60s and 70s, when the church really was feeling called to, um, let go of some of these absolutes, um, to trust God in some whole new ways, as a, as a church, as a denomination, it was very unsettling, very disorienting to many people because if, if you're not sure that you're going to celestial glory, why bother? You know, if you're not the one true church, then, um, then why all this hard work? Um, and for, for seventies in the church uh, missionaries, um, they were in a quandary because it's like, so what do we teach? What are we bringing people to? How do we tell them who we are as a church if we're in this time of flux and this doesn't really work for us anymore? (Yeah.) So, with the four questions that we talked about that this chart is trying to respond to is, how can you tell that this is the one true church? How are we to live in the world? What about the afterlife, and as I said that it gets all complicated there at the end and we sometimes call this the preaching, the, the plumbing chart because of all the ups and downs and

Carla Long 48:05

Like Chutes and Ladders. (Yes it is.) (A little bit.)

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 48:08

Um, and then the, the other question that came up several different ways, Is the God we believe in just and merciful? (Sure.) And so those were the questions of that time. But I would say that the questions of our time, um, are much different. And, so, we're not looking for an absolute list of what are the right beliefs? Or what is the, the one right way to live? Instead, the, the question that has emerged, especially in the last 20 to 30 years, is, What does it mean to follow Christ? And, and how do we follow Jesus in a pluralistic world? (Yeah.) In a world where there are other followers of Jesus who might uphold very different things than we do. Um, how do we understand ourselves in that array of people who know Christ, who are trying to serve God, um, some whom we may agree with and some we may not agree with (Sure.) Um, how do we not pretend that we are the only ones who have relationship with Christ or know God? And then the third question is, How do we receive, find, or help create the kingdom of God on earth that Jesus preached, that Jesus demonstrated? And, so, you can see how that's an open ended question. Um, not we already have it and too bad for the rest of you because you don't, you know, our question today is, you know, this kingdom of God that we might have called back in our beginning Zion, we might have called the peaceable kingdom. Um, but it's still that thing that we can sense and imagine that God is calling us to and Christ as our guide to. So, to

come, you know, these would be, I say, the, the questions that guide our theology today, in many ways.

Tony Chvala-Smith 50:13

And, and things that guide our theology today are, are whole different approaches to Scriptures, uh, to the history of Christianity, to tradition and so on. This, this chart shares with pretty much all low church Protestantism at the time and even Catholicism, a sense that the Bible is a collection of inspired Instagram posts from God. And you have to arrange them in the right order. Right? If you, once you, once you arrange them, the church that arranges them in the right order, ie our church's order, has, has figured it all out. Um, there's no sense of context, no sense of interpreting scriptures in, for their time and place. Um, there's no sense that scripture often disagrees with itself on things, right? And so, so this, the, the way, as a theologian I'd say, the hermeneutical assumptions of this chart are, are very, very, uh, literalistic and in, simplistic in a way. Uh, it fit the con, fit the time well, but we can't interpret the Bible in this way today. We just know different things. So, um, another thing is that to go to the kingdom of God, it's really surprising that on this chart, there's nothing about Zion.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 51:34

That's right. I was going to ask Carla. And that's the last one of the pieces. What is missing from this chart that would be crucial for our theology today?

Carla Long 51:45

Yeah, I totally noticed that there was no Zion and no church camps. But church camps is deep in our theology, deep, deep, deep. But definitely no Zion. I thought that was very odd.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 51:58

And, and the other piece that is there's nothing about love. The word charity is used, but here, it really (Right.) is more about, um, generosity, giving, compassion, but not necessarily about God's love. (Yeah.) (Interesting.) And Christ is only there in a manger and then to create the church and then in the first resurrection, but the Christ is not the focus of what, why we're doing what we're doing, or how we know that we're right, except that, you know, Christ came to establish our church, you know. (Wow.) It's, yeah, so

Tony Chvala-Smith 52:35

And there's the word grace, of course, nowhere appears on the chart. And it nowhere appeared in our theology at that time. In fact, older editions, older, uh, RLDS editions of The Book of Mormon did not even use the word grace in the index in the back, even though the word is used, you know, dozen or more times in the Book of Mormon. So, no, there's no, there's no grace, there's no cross, there's Jes, Jesus makes cameo appearances at the beginning and end. And, and actually, in some respects, God is kind of a distant land, distant

landlord of this, right? It, the, the assum, one of the assumptions of the chart, it's very what we call anthropocentric. It's all about us doing the right stuff, going in the right direction, having the right knowledge, having the right doctrines, having the right practice. You, it's, it's all up to you. And the idea that, uh, no, we need a lot of grace on this journey that's not really present on the chart.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 53:28

Right. And another piece of this, and you'll see that, you know, along the pink path, and all the things that can draw you down, and those fingers at the bottom, you know, lying and dancing and things, this is a very rule based, very law based. And that's how you know that you're right with God is if you're doing the proper outward expressions of what it means to be a, a good church member. Um, there's not a lot of, there's nothing here about the inner journey and looking at being honest with ourselves about some of our own struggles and, and things like that. And, you know, consequently, you know, there were people who cared more about looking like they were on the pink path and actually being on the pink path. And, and that created a lot of, um, tragedy, actually. Because, you know, if you were a priesthood member, and you weren't doing the right things, then you were, you had a lot to lose. (Yeah.) And so looking like you were doing the right thing, even if, you know, even if you were abusing your children or your wife or even if you had some, um, add, addictions to alcohol or things like that, you couldn't be honest about that because, um, appearing to be on a pink path was as important as actually, um, doing everything, being there and doing everything.

Carla Long 54:57

Sure. Absolutely. Oh, wow.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 55:00

A lot of secrecy and deception, um, that was very harmful to people.

Tony Chvala-Smith 55:05

And, and also along with that another casualty was those, those church members who never felt good enough, even though they did all this and believed it. And they never felt like they were enough. In fact, when I was a new member of the church back in the mid-70s, there was a, a beloved priest in congregation back there who took his own life. And I think, I think in retrospect, what I know now from the whole experience would be that there was, what we would now call, some untreated mental illness there, but there was some significant depression. And when I asked about this, this man, one of the things that came out was that he just never, you know, he, he, he was called to the office of Elder and he just never felt like he could live up to it. (Wow.) So, he, so in other words, he was, he was burdened constantly by guilt of not being able to do this stuff. And so you have, you always have to ask the casualty question about your theology. Right? What kinds of personal or interpersonal casualties might

my theology create for others? (Yeah.) Right? So, this, this was a real perfection chart. I mean going on to perfection. But what if, what if?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 56:17

What if you needed help to deal with an issue in your life? Well, you couldn't, you know, it was, it was difficult to seek help, because it would, it would, uh, make you look like a failure it, within the church. And so, but that's, you know, difference between rule based and principle based, which is where, where we would be today. And I, and one of the things, I think, I would say is that in Community of Christ, um, this whole last part, this whole last part about, you know, what happens after you die? And exactly where do you go? And how do you be assured that you're going to be in celestial glory, or that people you love, are going to be in celestial glory, which, again, was another way in which a lot of abuse happened because, you know, somebody's saying, I'm pretty sure I'm going to celestial glory, but this child of mine is not, is acting up. And they bet, you know, that kind of holding that over their heads. And probably the kid is saying, I don't want to be in the same place as you. But anyhow, I can't say that outloud. But, anyhow, so, um, but this, I would say that in the last 40, 50, 60 years, we've basically said, because we've become more Christ centered, because we've become more, we picked up the Trinitarian part of who we are, we have said, You know what? The Christ that we know in this life, the love of God that we know in this life, the Spirit, and its gentle, and sometimes really strong ways of moving in our lives. We trust that that is the same Jesus, the same Spirit, the same God, that's on the other side of life, beyond this life, and that we can trust, that loving God. We can trust that God who's, more than anything, wants all of God's creation to be in God's presence. Um, and, so, our, we've let go of the need to have to prescribe and describe exactly what happens after we die. And trust ourselves to this God that we say that, that, um, whose greatest desire is for us to know that we are loved, to share love, to be part of that kingdom of God that Christ was, was trying to demonstrate and teach about. So it's, it's freedom.

Carla Long 58:53

Amen. My goodness. That's awesome.

Tony Chvala-Smith 58:55

You know, there, there are some instincts on the chart that are still present in the church that are good. For example, this chart is concerned about poverty, it's concerned about the, the, about greed and the pursuit of wealth for its own sake. Right? And, so, that's still, that's still a social justice concern. We ought to be concerned about poverty, only now we ought to be able to see it differently as not just, not just because somebody didn't work hard enough. But there are whole structural issues that create a large poor class in any country. Right? So, so that concern about poverty, the concern, there's a concern about community. I mean, not, not tak, not being, not taking sacrament, meaning not, not being a communion service that, that can

drag you off the path, a good path here. But also, we might say, what's behind that is an instinct about the importance of community for our formation and our journey, right? And to be reminded that we're loved all the time.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 59:49

And, and I think another part that is consistent, though we would never say it this way now, but is that, that God is a God of many chances. (Oh, my god.) You know, we aren't the, we are not the determiners of our, um, of our reality, you know, that there were people on that broad path who maybe never heard the gospel in a way that was acc, was accessible or, uh, inviting. And they had another chance. God wanted to give them a chance to, to know about Christ, about the church, whatever. But that God kept finding ways to keep inviting people back. And I think that's really important.

Carla Long 1:00:32

That's really beautiful. You know, another way, I don't know if this is, uh, what you would say or not, but, you know, like you said, there's a Native American or indigenous person on the narrow path. Um, so hopefully, we were a church that, you know, we're open to diversity and we were okay with everybody got to go on there not just white people.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:00:53

Yeah. Yeah. I hope that's, that is the case there. One of the really interesting things about many of these preaching charts is that there are no notes accompanying them as to what people would have said or preached or taught in, as they're kind of unpacking it. And so, this one, we, from Tony's and my backgrounds, we can pretty much guess how people would describe them. But, um, much of this was oral. This is a, a sign of a, an oral culture passed on from generation to generation, uh, with a few pictures to help along the way.

Carla Long 1:01:34

Yeah, and it's pretty pictures. Really pretty.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:01:37

The closest thing I know of that would be like a text behind this particular chart is Israel, not Israel Smith, um, is, um, Restoration: a Study in Prophecy from the 1940s. Um, I'm having a mental block. The presiding evangelist, Elbert A. Smith. Elbert A. Smith wrote a book called Restoration: a Study in Prophecy that in many ways, uh, has, you know, (some of these) what, some of this stuff in it in printed form, but, yeah, there's no, uh. RLDS theology for so long was just so oral, so story based, so personality based, um, that when we started shifting to a more, uh, text based model in the 1960s, like the book Exploring the Faith, people were like, What is this?

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:02:29

What, we have to slog through this ourselves? There's no pictures in the book.

Carla Long 1:02:37

I love a good picture in a book personally. Uh, well,

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:02:40

Let me sum it up for you. Believe in Jesus and don't dance.

Carla Long 1:02:44

And keep your hands off the cards. Well, this has just been fascinating. I really enjoy getting another look. I've already seen this before, um, a couple of times, but get, seeing another look and maybe understanding it in a different way even, um, this preaching chart, and thank you so much. And I still really, I think I'm gonna have to do some research on and to find a stool of do nothing because that still sounds like a really good way to spend my time. A stool of do nothing. (A little vacation in the middle of the day.) Yeah. I mean, actually, aren't we like, asking, seeing if people will do some stools of do nothing (. . .) we talk about spiritual practices in some ways, I mean, so we've changed that in our theology as well. (There you go.)

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:03:26

Well, actually, Carla, church people in this time and place really, really, tried to, tried to keep Sunday work free, right? They called it the Sabbath (Right.) and, uh, I've heard stories from earlier eras of you didn't want to mow your, if you live where there was a lot of church people you didn't want to mow your lawn on Sunday because somebody was going to say something about it. So, I guess they had their own legalistic stool of do nothing you, that was Sunday.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:03:28

Oh, right, right, right. You're stool of do nothing only pulls out on Sunday. Got it? No problem. Uh, well, thanks so much you two. This has been fascinating. Really, really cool. I enjoyed it a lot.

Charmaine Chvala-Smith 1:04:03

Well, thank you for asking. This is something that we, we like to share, um, but we always preface it with this is not the church, this is not the church's theology today. And we've taken this chart with us around the world, actually. And the first thing we'll say is, just don't remember this. Don't, don't try to recreate this, just, but this will give you an idea, because there are still church members for whom this is, this is actually the ground floor of their theology. And other things may have changed, but some of this may still be, um, at work there. And, and that's, you know, that's fine. It's just that that will be helpful for people coming to know Community of

Christ, uh, right now is that to, to recognize that this may be at play in the lives and hearts and minds of, of some members of the church. And that's, that will help explain some kinds of reactions that people may have. (For sure.)

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:05:04

But, but, Carla, don't try this at home.

Carla Long 1:05:11

Oh, you two. You always know how to entertain. Thank you so much for this.

Josh Mangelson 1:05:21

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