

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.

Karin Peter 00:27

Welcome to Project Zion Podcast. This is Cuppa Joe, where we explore Restoration history, and I'm your host, Karin Peter. So today is the second of 12 episodes in the series where we are engaging in conversations about the historical and theological journey of Community of Christ. Our resident panel members for this discussion are Lach Mackay and Tony Chvala-Smith, who are much known to our Project Zion Podcast listeners. Lach is an historian, Director of Community of Christ Historic Sites and serves on the Council of 12. Tony is a theologian who teaches scripture and theology at Community of Christ seminary and at Graceland University. So, in this series, we're following the development of the early church, and then into the Reorganization, and our continuing journey as Community of Christ. And we're looking at important church events in their historical and cultural context, as well as corresponding theological developments and their impact on the church, which all of that sounds like lofty goals, I hope that's what we actually are doing by the time we're done recording. So we're gonna go ahead and get started with this a second episode. And Lach, we're gonna start with you what is the historical period we're covering today.

Lach Mackay 02:02

So I want to start by just doing a high level overview, starting in about 1820. And finishing with the exodus from Missouri 1838-39. So I'll just kind of run through, again, a high level overview, and then we'll start drilling down and looking at some of the specifics. So I'm going to start today with what we often call Joseph Smith's First Vision. That's not what "The Vision" referred to in the 1830s. That was something different. But what we now call the First Vision. Although I'm starting there, it is not the foundational event for the church, although we would later make it that I understand the First Vision to be Joseph's personal conversion experience, where his sins are forgiven. Again, it would come something later and I think we'll have a chance to talk about that. For years down the road than the publication of The Book of Mormon. I'm kind of a fan of Robert Hollingers take on the Book of Mormon, and his Joseph Smith's response to skepticism. Hollinger, a Lutheran minister, argues that Joseph wrote it to convince Jew and Gentile that Jesus was the Christ, and that it was basically Joseph's defense of the Bible, pushing back against rationalism and kind of the Age of Reason. Followed by the founding of the Church of Christ, or first name of the church, April 6 of 1830. Probably in Fayette, New York, although there's an intriguing argument that that was really in Manchester, which the town line Manchester Township, Manchester and Palmyra are next to each other. And that line went through the Smith farm. So from maybe Manchester, maybe Fayette at the founding of the church, almost immediately, they're sending missionaries on what would be called the Lamanite. Mission. They're heading out into what is now Kansas to preach to Native Americans. Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Parley P. Pratt, Ziba Peterson. Pratt was particularly significant in this part of the story. He was a Rigdonite, a follower of Sidney Rigdon. And what was becoming the disciples of Christ movement.

Rigden had something like 17 congregations underneath him in Northeast Ohio, so really significant leader in that part of the state. So Parley P Pratt, a Rigdonite, on a mission for them. Encounters Latter Day Saint missionaries is converted and is sent on his mission to what is now Kansas, but Pratt convinces his missionary companions to stop and preach to his former mentor, Sidney Rigdon. In the Kirtland Ohio area and they have very significant success, converting more people in just a month or two in that part of Ohio that had been converted in six months in upstate New York. Really important. So I'm a fan of Steve Shields' effort to rebrand us, "The Smith-Rigdon movement". I don't think we can overstate the influence that Sidney Rigdon had on the early church. Those missionaries then continue their journey, make it out into what is now Kansas. There are other missionaries from other churches, of course, argue there. And it turns out that we were supposed to have a permit to be out there.

Lach Mackay 05:39

We have to backtrack a little bit to Jackson County and Independence, Missouri. I think we sent one missionary back towards St. Louis to try and get a permit from the Indian agent. The other missionaries start preaching and have some success. So suddenly, we have two centers of church activity, the people in New York had moved either to Kirtland, Ohio, where one of Sydney's congregations was or started moving to Jackson County, Missouri. So two centers of church activity in 1831 to 33. And this took me forever to keep straight that they're happening at the same time. I think people often forget that. So both happening at the same time. We ended up in conflict with our neighbors in Jackson County. We are New Englanders, they're generally Southerners. We were not fans of slavery, they generally were significant cultural differences. Each side thought the other dress funny and talk funny and acted funny. And that ends up in violent conflict. We are forcibly expelled in 1833, pushed into Clay County, Missouri. They initially welcomed us with open arms. But at some point, they look around and realize there are a whole bunch of Latter Day Saints in Clay County, Missouri. And if they start voting, they might well take over the political process. So the folks in Clay County convinced the Missouri State Legislature to set up Caldwell County, Missouri created for the first time. And it seems like there was this general understanding that it was for us that it was a Latter Day Saint County. And at the same time, Davies County, Missouri is created. And it seems again, like there's this general understanding that it's not for us. Back in Kirtland, we built a Temple, which we'll come back to, we had opened a bank in an attempt to turn land into a more liquid asset. The state legislature in Ohio was very fiscally conservative at the time, though. And they were refusing all charters all requests, with one exception for approval to open a bank. So we we open a bank without approval from the state that soon results in local newspapers running articles saying that anybody who even accepted one of our bank notes could be subject to a \$1,000 fine for illegal banking, at a time when a farmer in their family might make \$400 in a year. That's pretty painful threat. That bank fairly quickly fails. Sometimes we wanted to blame that on the banking panic of 1837. That's not what's happening. We're in trouble before the panic hits. And most banks reopen after the panic, we are not able to do so. Most members probably didn't lose a lot of money in the bank failure. But the fact that they lost any was a problem for many because there's this general understanding that this was the Lord's bank. How can the Lord's bank fail? So lots of dissent. Probably 50% of the membership leave, but maybe more importantly, 30% of the leadership later some of those would come back but significant problems in Kirtland, again, mostly internal. So those people start packing up and heading to Missouri. Over 500 leave in one day with what was called Zions, I'm sorry, Kirtland Camp, or the Port Camp. So people pack up and start walking to northern Missouri. At a time we had at least the perception was we seem to have filled up Caldwell County that

are spilling over into Davies and Livingston counties. And that again ends up soon in violent conflict. Seems to have roots in an attempt to prevent Latter Day Saints from voting in the first election and Davies County, Missouri. About 20 Latter Day Saints end up in a brawl with maybe 15 Missourians. We make it to the woodpile first, unfortunately this this is not a peace church story at this point. We arm ourselves with clubs, and we seem to get the best of the Missourians. One of my favorite quotes and all of Latter-day Seekers history comes from that event, a guy named John L. Butler, a mountain of a man says that in that role, "I never struck a man the second time." You didn't have to. And he says, "As I struck them, I knew they would soon accept the gospel. These were true believers."

Karin Peter 10:12

Oh my.

Lach Mackay 10:14

Yeah. That escalates into the 1838. Mormon more in Missouri. We, as that progresses are forced out of DeWitt and Livingston County. We apparently, unfortunately had faster horses than those who were pushing us out. They were saying we're gonna go to Davies County and drive you out of there as well. We got to Daviess county first and sacked Gallatin. So, I want to point out that we didn't start the conflict, but we wholeheartedly participated once it began, and did some pretty awful things. That kind of culminates with the Battle of Crooked River, where we, I believe this is an inadvertent attack the Missouri state militia thinking they're a mob, which is treason, of course, that results in the extermination order from Governor Boggs. He didn't mean leave or will kill you. He means leave or will forcibly remove you. Just a few days later so quickly that that word of the extermination order hadn't reached northern Missouri yet. But that what sometimes called the Hans Mill Massacre happens a few days later, the Missourians probably wouldn't see that as the counter attack for Crooked River. Almost 20 men and boys killed bodies dumped in a well. The state militia surrounds far west our capital, and we end up surrendering and by early in the winter of 39, are fleeing, heading towards Quincy, Illinois. So that's, that's probably longer than I hoped it would be. But just a brief overview of the period that we're going to talk about today.

Karin Peter 12:00

Okay, so that you raise all kinds of questions there. But I want to hear what Tony has to say about this period.

Tony Chvala-Smith 12:08

So that was actually that was really very helpful to have that historical sweep. And also, I very much appreciate Lach's willingness as a historian to say, Huh, blame, lots of blame to go around. And that that's really important in our history. Often in in past versions of our story, we've constantly painted ourselves as the martyrs and the victims, and have been slow to recognize our own our own victimization of others. And so that's, it's really important to be honest about that. So the historical theologian, wants to get the history, right. And then the theologian, part of the historian wants to understand what are the contextual factors that are shaping how people in those settings, understand and interpret their faith. And so I am always going to advocate that we have to understand our movement, as intrinsically connected to the Second Great Awakening, that period of democratized religious enthusiasm and revival that runs roughly from 1790 to 1840, in American history, and there

are so many factors, so many features of our early movement that that just dovetail with, with the democratized experience of Christianity that so many people had in that period. So almost any anything we can talk about there, we could pick any point along the line. And I think we could show interconnection with the religious context of the period. If you will Karin, and I'll go back to the start, and go back to what we sometimes call the first vision. And I think Lach quite appropriately called a Joseph's conversion experience. And here's, here's, I think the historical rationale for saying that, first, a lot of people do not know that there are six different versions of that experience that Joseph had, presumably sometime around 1820. And the version that most people know, is the the last account that is an 1840s. And it's a highly stylized and really kind of heavily spun version of the story, in my view. The earliest account, the earliest account is from 1831 1832. It's, it's in the Kirtland letterbook And that account, I think, deserves to be read, as well, probably as close to the original experiences we can get. And here's why not only is it is it historically closer, but it is the least adorned by later theological developments, right? It has it has. It's very unselfconscious and has not a lot of spin in it. And what's interesting in the account, is that why Joseph goes off seeking God is that he's struggling with his sins. He's struggling with the sinfulness he sees around him, and he's out in the woods, praying, and here's, here's what he says, "I cried unto the Lord for mercy, for there was none else to whom I could go and obtain mercy." Stop. If you read if you read the conversion stories of revivalist preachers in this period, like Lorenzo Dow, Joseph Toms, Charles Finney, you read their conversion stories, there almost are like tropes in them. And one of the theological tropes is mercy, mercy, mercy.

Tony Chvala-Smith 16:13

The Christian faith was construed by revivalism as a as trying to create a crisis. God that the just judge has condemned you what you need is mercy. And what you need is the mediator to step in you to believe in the mediator who will then kind of give you mercy, right. And so it's not surprising that in his earliest account, the younger Joseph Smith was saying, "I went into the woods looking for mercy" because this is what everybody was looking for the revivalists, revivalists had, had had preached the Christian message in such a way that that was the that was the thing you had to search for. So he goes on to say, "And the Lord heard my cry in the wilderness. And while in the attitude of calling upon the Lord in the 16th, year of my age, a pillar of light..." he'd crossed out, or in the Letterbook crossed out the word "fire", "a pillar of light above the brightness of sun at noon, day, comes down, come down from above and rested upon me, and I was filled with the Spirit of God. And the Lord opened the heavens upon me. And I saw the Lord and he spake unto me." There are not two percentages in this in this account. And the language is in the rough, Trinitarian language of the frontier, the Lord, the Spirit, and then who appears to him I think this is very interesting. So the Lord opened the heavens upon a subtle already spoken me saying, "Joseph, my Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Right this is, this is the perfect conversion moment in terms of Second Great Awakening theology. "Go thy way, walk in my statutes and keep my commandments. Behold, I am the Lord of Glory, I was crucified for the world, that all those who believe on my name may have eternal life." Stop. It's the risen Jesus who appears to Joseph. And this appearance, whether in a visionary way, or a mental way of, of the Lord of Jesus, the mediator who steps in, this is a feature of conversion stories in this period. There's not really an emphasis here on churches, wrong churches, right church. You're going to, you're going to create the right church, all the other churches are wrong. It's about sin, and forgiveness. And one of the things I love about the earliest account is that you read out a little further. And Joseph, Joseph basically says,

For goodness sakes, he's a teenage boy. And he basically says, "And after a little while, I started singing again"

Karin Peter 18:58

Ah, the condition we all find ourselves in!

Tony Chvala-Smith 19:00

It's amazing, isn't it? And so you can read account after account after account of the revivalists talking about their call experience or their conversion experience, and they sound very much like this. By the way, this, this sounds like the story of Enos in the Book of Mormon, there's a lot of points of contact there. Or does the story of Enos in the Book of Mormon sound like this? Right? It's it's an interesting question. So in other words, Joseph's experience, whatever it was, was part of the kind of religious experience that was going on in Second Grade Awakening Protestantism. The later accounts with the doubt others express about his vision. Those Those I think, reflect later experiences of people's genuine skepticism about this religious movement. But you know, when you read the revival of stories, some of them have visionary elements or dream elements in them. They all have kind of realistic sort of encounters with Divinity. Nobody, nobody really expresses doubt about their experience because other people were having these experiences too. And I think I think that's a later apologetic element added to the story to say, it's kind of a victim element. You know, we, we, nobody believed me. I'm Joseph Smith, I had this experience and all the people around me that I had, I didn't have an experience. And, and well, if they did in Joseph Smith's time, it had to do with the Smith family's other reputations, right? So it wasn't necessarily because people didn't believe in visions. So, I think it's fascinating to read that account in light of revivalism, Second Great Awakening theology. And then you begin to find that same theology, that same theology runs through the Book of Mormon to the Book of Mormon is, in many respects, I see 19th century markers on every page of the Book of Mormon, and I see Second Great Awakening markers, I see accounts of conversions in the Book of Mormon that sound very much like conversions that are happening in revivals or after revivals. And as historical theologians, we've got to understand the origins of this movement, in light of and not in opposition to the context that formed it. And that that then throws additional light on who we are and what we know what we're about, and also helps us move away from the imprisoning power of that that last, that last version of of Joseph's experience the correct me Lach, I'm thinking of the 1842 account, is that right?

Lach Mackay 21:45

I think it's 1838. And what's particularly interesting, and it was an LDS friend who pointed this out to me, that's all the, you know, other churches are an abomination language is coming from there. Of course, that's happening that's being recorded, in the midst of, of the difficulties with their, quote, Christian neighbors in northern Missouri. It's, I believe, reflecting Joseph's understanding of, of his treatment by these other people. It's, of course not in the 1832 account, the only account in Joseph's hand. And I love when Joseph is looking back on that 32 account. And he says, as he remembered it, "My soul was filled with love." after that experience, and I love that it's so Christ centered in that that earliest account. Clearly, as Joseph's understandings of the nature of God would later evolve, his understandings of his experience, evolved to reflect that.

Tony Chvala-Smith 22:47

Yeah, so I think this, this sets up an interesting dynamic in the early movement, that destines the movement to go in two very different ways, I think. So for example, let me let me I'm going to pull up a text here. I think what block you will recognize this text right away. This is from the Elders Journal from Farwest 1838. I think this sorry, I think this is the smartest thing Joseph Smith Jr. ever said. "The fundamental principles of our religion is the testimony of the apostles and prophets concerning Jesus Christ. That He died, was buried and rose again the third day and ascended up into heaven". Oh, stop, by way, that's a little quote from the Apostles Creed, just saying. "And all other things are only appendages to these." In other words, there's this impulse in Joseph in the early movement, to be a highly Christ focused, millennial movement that's trying to create real transformed communities. And then there's the other stuff, right? There's the all those churches aren't abominations, I alone am getting light from God. I am the final arbiter of light from God. And that's a whole different, in other words, there's these two trends in the tradition. And it's not surprising to me, that there's going to end up being two major churches that come out of the tradition that follow those trajectories in different ways. Does that make sense Lach to you, the historian?

Lach Mackay 24:16

It does, but even in Nauvoo, there is not a clear break. So I always enjoy when I stumbled on things from the Nauvoo period that that reflect some of those earlier understandings. Joseph was talking about kind of the fundamental principle of the church. What is the church ultimately about in Nauvoo? This guy is an Owenite from London. So another communitarian who's visiting and just says that the kind of the fundamental principle is that God is love, love is the primary. So I'm always intrigued and relieved that it's not a clear break. There are things that we can mine from the Nauvoo period as well.

Tony Chvala-Smith 25:00

Yeah, exactly. And when we get to there, I think in a subsequent way, I really want to talk about the Nauvoo compositor, which I think that has tapped into this one stream of thought that then goes on to become the Reorganizations, mainstream of thought. But that's we're getting ahead of ourselves in the story Karin, sorry about that.

Karin Peter 25:20

Just a little bit, but you did both touch on something that is really important in this time period that needs to be discussed, and that is the Book of Mormon. So can we go from the whatever the First Vision or the conversion experience was and and talk about the intersection with the Book of Mormon. So who wants to go first and talking about that?

Tony Chvala-Smith 25:47

I'm happy for the historian to go first and give us the details.

Karin Peter 25:52

Well Lach, you didn't raise your hand, but you've been nominated.

Lach Mackay 25:58

So I believe I'm where Tony is, but not where everybody is in Community of Christ. But I believe Joseph wrote the Book of Mormon trying to answer a number of the significant religious questions of his day.

And I'm intrigued at the use of the book. And I, I believe there are studies but I have not tracked them down to suggest that the role of the Book of Mormon played in the church early on was, again, simply kind of proof that the Bible was true. And preaching from the Bible. And look, the Book of Mormon says the same thing. But more important, almost as symbol that God still speaks than anything it says, of course, with significant overlap in the texts that this has proved this is a symbol that God still speaks. I think that's the role it played early. But Tony has probably spent more time on that than I have.

Tony Chvala-Smith 27:03

Well, I totally agree with that. And a surefire way to see that the books actual content has had limited effect on the church's theology is that if it had had a deeper effect on Joseph's own theology, as well as the the church movements that subsequently come from them, these churches would sound way more like evangelical Protestants than they do. And that is because if, I mean for goodness sakes, if you if you'd read if you if you read the Book of Mormon, trying to understand what salvation is, you're not going to find the section 76 and 85, glories stuff, you're going to find kind of Heaven and Hell language and you're going to find you need you need the mediator to step in otherwise it's going to be a problem when you die. That's Alma three, you can read that there. And the vast number of biblical quotes and delusions indicate that what we have here is a commentary on the Bible. Right? The Book of Mormon, as I'll say this, and I'm going to backup one step, the Book of Mormon reads as if it is a revivalist commentary on the Bible, trying to solve the many issues that revivalist argued about. There are some assumptions behind the text of the Book of Mormon. And I want to say before I comment on that, that whatever the Smith family was with this with this book, in the end, Joseph Smith is the author and proprietor. That's what it says on the copyright. Right? Joseph Smith, author and proprietor. And I hope this won't be offensive, but I don't care how many angels showed up, in the end, what you have is a text that has the 19 centuries thumbprint on it everywhere. And you have to take the text as the artifact it is and interpret that and say, Well, this was their story of how they got it. But in the end, what I have is the artifact and I have to make sense of it. And as I tried to make sense of the artifact and its theology, I see connections to old Puritan theology, I see attempts to resolve religious issues that were unresolved. And one of the things that's interesting to me is that there is an underlying assumption all through the Book of Mormon, that revelation must come by a book. Ah, well, I know where they got that assumption! That's the that's the assumption that the Protestants all shared on the, on the frontier that we have, we have a book, we have the Bible, the Bible is the answer book. Problem was, they didn't have any modern critical methods for understanding the diversity of the book that the book is a library that that you need all kinds of historical and linguistic methods to make sense of it in a really good or responsible way. They had the book, they assumed revelation came by a book, and then they had competing claims based on what was supposed to be the infallible source book. And so the Book of Mormon actually shares that assumption, the Book of Mormon tries to resolve in book form all of the religious issues, that the diversity of the Bible had left there on the table. So, so as it does, then it creates subsequent will be subsequent theological problems. Right? So if, if the Book of Mormon in in inspired book form is trying to solve questions related to baptism, in 19th century frontier fashion, what knowledge do people have of the history and development of baptism and of sacramental theology? Well, very limited, right? So then, subsequently down the road, we have to, we have to do a lot of careful reinterpretation, in order to come up with a theology of baptism that is actually adequate. But in the time of the first readers, the thing that the thing that worked for them is that this quote, unquote, answered their questions in book form, which is what they thought an inspired books should do answer

their questions. So the Book of Mormon then functions that way. I agree with historians who say it's in lots of respects, it's the founding event of the church, it's, it's what congeals this group of people together. And yet, even by the Nauvoo period, you can tell that the theology of the church is, is only paying lip service to it. The book has become not a symbol, but a mere symbol. And there's a difference, right? If something's a symbol, it's it's a vital, vital part of your life of faith. If it's a mere symbol, you've got it, but its content doesn't actually affect your theology. And so there's, there's, there's no way there's no way you could go from the Book of Mormon to a divine plurality or a polytheistic theology, you know, in other words, the book no longer functioned as a norm.

Tony Chvala-Smith 32:03

So in theology, we say, we've got, you know, four voices or four sources, we've got scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. And these all function in a norming kind of way. And so the Book of Mormons message no longer functioned as a norm for the churches at church develop beyond 1839. So those are just some various thoughts I have about it Karin. And this is not to say that the book does not inspire religious experience in people. It has in me, I, I though, tend to prefer to see it as a 19th century religious classic, that has high status for our religious movement. I prefer to I prefer to say in contemporary terms, the Bible is the foundational book of scripture for Community of Christ. So just some thoughts on that.

Karin Peter 32:57

Which is in our Scripture statement. I think it's Affirmation 9 in our Scripture statement for those who are curious and want to look at it. Lach I want to ask you an historical question on this. And, and as Tony talked about, the Book of Mormon as addressing religious topics of the day, my question is what in the history of the American frontier and this time period is driving these kinds of questions, even to be asked by so many people that that the Book of Mormon would have been, become relevant to them? What was going on?

Lach Mackay 33:35

So before I go there, let me just jump back to Tony's last comment. That Joseph the third also thought that the Bible was the primary scripture. I love it. The day he joined the Reorganization April 6, of 1860. He said, "I believe in the Bible, and the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants, which are auxiliaries to the Bible." That was a fascinating take and a fascinating statement on on that, you know, why say and at that particular time? So Karin, I think that part of it had to do with just the intense competition, religious contestation that was taking place around Joseph. I think that there's various arguments about whether this is still the prevailing interpretation, but the burned over district, Upstate New York, which some I think would now argue that that same kind of religious fervor was much more widespread, but just intensely religious culture. For many people, I think that questions of faith were the central questions for them. And in Joseph's family in particular, I think the death of Alvin the oldest brother who kind of held the family, he was the glue that held the family together, he died. Apparently this administering the argument that perhaps the Smith family had a genetic predisposition to mercury poisoning. So when this doctor gave him this particular medication that it hardened inside and did him in. But then the family is arguing about what's going to happen, you know, Alvin was never baptized, with some suggestion that the minister at the funeral hinted that he was going to burn eternally as a result. But some of us my family members like that congregation, so religion, which should bring

families together is tearing them apart. So I think for Joseph, some of those larger questions of the culture, become intensely personal. I have to think that was part of what was happening as well.

Karin Peter 35:43

Thanks, that I think that helps us get a little bit broader understanding of what was going on contextually during this time. So let's move from there into how did that turn out to be a church? What the heck happened there?

Lach Mackay 36:00

I don't think I have a good answer for that. I like the Tonys, I don't think that was where it started. That's not where it started. But how did it get there? Yeah. Tony, what do you what do you think?

Tony Chvala-Smith 36:20

Well, a community of believers formed around this family and this experience in this book. And I mean, I'm just speaking sociologically there. That's how it began. There were people who were convinced, I mean, I totally believe Joseph Smith, Jr. was a highly charismatic, conversant with a very compelling personality. I think, you know, there's that dynamic. There's the dynamic of people actually, being involved in the creation of the book. And of being persuaded by it's its argumentation and there's, there's nothing about the formation of this group into a church that speaks to me of chicanery or anything like that. It's, it's it's a it's a natural outgrowth of this intense, communal experience they have, I think that the communalism of, of early Latter-day Saint movement is historically contextually understandable in terms of communitarian experiments. And it's also psychologically understandable in terms of this little group that forms around Joseph and the book, and this passionate belief that somehow we have to get back to the original form of Christianity, this primitivist idea that's on the frontier. Now, those are all forces that help start coalesced coalescing this into a movement. And I suppose one could say, the, the Divine, the Divine Spirit, which is ever creative and and ever, ever, ever looking towards diversity is actually at work there too. That would be a faith answer to the question, how did this turn into a church? But I'm probably happier with the sociological, psychological historical ones for now. So I know that there you go Lach. That's that's a way to answer that really difficult and good question.

Karin Peter 38:17

I got a stump the theologian and historian question.

Lach Mackay 38:20

So you think that the defined family dynamics would be part of that answer as well, if they're arguing about which church to join? Well, here's a good solution that that can solve that divide.

Lach Mackay 38:20

I love your practical answers there. Excellent.

Tony Chvala-Smith 38:42

We can't We can't. We can't agree on whether it'd be Presbyterians or Methodist. So let's just make something up.

Karin Peter 38:48

Will be our own thing. Excellent. Joseph Smith was creative, if nothing else. So. So we we've got this fledgling group of people who identify as church what what happens. From there, this could easily have just simply disappeared with a few argumentative conversations and a falling out. So and

Lach Mackay 39:14

I think it could have disappeared without the impact of the Rigdonites tonight's in northern Ohio. I'm not sure that the the movement, really even sure if it was a movement would have survived without the really significant impact because it wasn't just the number of people converted in northern Ohio. It's who they were and who they would become they were significant figures in their communities. They were business leaders, they had some resources, and they would become the Apostles and the members of the First Presidency and members of the Presiding bishopric just critically important impact coming from these ring tonight congregations. I don't think I can overstate For us the importance of what happened with those conversions.

Karin Peter 40:05

USA a little bit more about Sidney Rigdon. And his background and and why he had such a following in Ohio.

Lach Mackay 40:13

So I think Sidney must have been an incredible speaker. He was the voice of the church. Really every significant sermon prior to the King Follet discourse in Nauvoo, historically significant. Sidney is the person delivering it. He is Joseph's mouthpiece and I think we often have looked at it that way, but he's really also Sidney's mouthpiece, of course. So I just think he was so significant, but because he lost in the succession crisis comes later. We just kind of written them out of the story. But I also think that there's a compelling argument that Sidney probably struggled with bipolar disorder. And it's hard to diagnose somebody when they're in front of you. But, you know, even even before the tarring and feathering of Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon, and Hiram Ohio, people have often said, Oh, Sydney it has had and he was never the same. I don't think so. Even before that event, there are Rigdonites historians who talked about how when Sidney was on, he was on the mountaintop, but when he was down, he was really down. But I think when when he was on, he was just an incredible speaker and religious leader. And I think again, one of the forefounders of what's going to become the disciples of Christ movement, really significant in the disciples movement early on before he defected. I think Sydney is probably the the primary target of the tarring and feathering in hiring, we have this tendency to make it all about Joseph. But those attacking went for Sidney first, Joseph, and after the tarring and feathering, Sidney moved away and never returned. Joseph went on a mission and then went back to Hiram and continue to live there. So Sidney does much more important than we've understood in the past.

Karin Peter 42:18

So Tony, what about theologically?

Tony Chvala-Smith 42:20

I have sometimes joked I used to joke with Mark Scherer about this, I used to say something like, you know, Mark, Sidney Rigdon. And Emma Smith were Joseph's last best chance to stay a Christian. And I think there's not untruth in that it's because of their own religious rootedness both of them. They Sidney is in some respects Sidney is more deeply connected to larger Christian traditions than Joseph or Joseph's family are and so is Emma. And and so that in some respects, I would like to say that that saved the movement during Joseph's own time, I It's hard to imagine it served without without the influx of the Rigdonites. It's hard to imagine it amounting to anything after the current period. And by the way, there are other prophetic type movements that emerged in the American frontier. There's one really weird group called The Mummy Jums that had a prophet. They came out of Canada into Vermont, early 1800s. Around 18, between 1809-1816 Sometime, and they were like utter primitivist they were bear skins and their Prophet gave them revelations and they were they practiced severe kinds of fastings. And, and were, were they they saw all of their questions as apostates. And eventually they made their way down the Ohio River and crossed over into Arkansas territory, what was left of them by the time they got there, and they disappeared in the 1820s. But, you know if that's the question, Why does one prophetic movement that emerges on the American frontier survive and then become, you know, one kind of new world religion, Mormonism and another socially socially engaged ecumenically involved Christian movement. One prophetic movement does that another prophetic movement disappears in Arkansas.

Karin Peter 44:31

I think it was the bear skins that got him. I think that I think that's the clincher there Tony.

Tony Chvala-Smith 44:37

And by the way, I did I mentioned they didn't bathe either? I'm trying to imagine wearing a bear skin in the Ohio you know, but you know, well, it's partly because the Mummy Jums have one figure. And we We falsely think that the Larry single one had one figure. It didn't Did, Joseph was highly charismatic central figure but at people like Sidney and others who, who exerted influence who helped keep the theology at times from going totally off the rails, and who kept parts of the movement connected to the wider tradition, and thus provided stabilizing influences as the tradition develops. So, I mean, I think there are ways to understand why this thing that got started with a handful of people around the table survived and became to different kinds of large churches later, so.

Karin Peter 45:35

So Lach, Tony mentioned, Sidney Rigdon and Emma Smith as the theological underpinnings of Christianity in the church. Let's talk a little bit about Emma and her role in this in this early period.

Lach Mackay 45:50

Emma's raised in a solid Methodist background in a really, apparently surprisingly wealthy home. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is a reconstructed Emma's childhood home just a few years ago, and it is a beautiful historic site. And it became clear to me that it's the pattern for the Mansion House that Emma would finally get here and Nauvoo. Really very nice home. And, and her father is, you know, I think of him as a hunter. Well, it turns out, they were exporting meat to Europe, this huge industry they had. So really, surprisingly, seemingly well off home. And, and I love the fact that Emma as Tony suggested kept us, we're trying to keep us grounded in Christianity. I love the fact that she put

Amazing Grace in the Nauvoo hymnal which would disappear and then have to be brought back. You know, for our Community of Christ audience, most of us have long had a love affair with Emma, which I think is dangerous. And particularly for folks who are new to Community of Christ, we often get angry with Joseph and coming from this kind of, it's either true or false black or white, good or evil. We just reject once we find out that there's more complexity to the story. But we often then want to put Emma on the pedestal that Joseph has vacated, which is also not fair to Emma, just like it's not fair to Joseph to put him there to begin with, and dangerous. Now, in Community, Christ, we've long long loved Emma. It's been fascinating to watch kind of Emma's resurrection among members of the Church of Jesus Christ. I think that started with Mormon Enigma published, what was it almost 30 years ago now. But then when some Smith family members, but things like the Emma movie A few years ago, which kind of solved all the problems with Emma from an LDS perspective, which is not easy to do, that they did it in the film. Showing her at peace with polygamy, for example, when she was anything but but it's been really interesting to watch people kind of rediscover Emma from that perspective, as well.

Lach Mackay 46:38

So any, any thoughts or theological thoughts on Emma's contribution?

Tony Chvala-Smith 48:34

Well, I really like that we need to keep doing Emma as the ambiguous paradoxical figure that all of us are, right, as a human being. We have to remember, she's basically a Victorian woman too. And so there are limits. And this is a place where we have to be careful of our presentism there were sheer limits on what Emma could reject, or stand up against, or resist, as a married woman in the 1830s and 40s. And so I think she had to endure a lot of trauma. And when we get there, I'll be interested to hear Lach reflect on Emma's kind of later presumed disavowal of polygamy in the early organization, period. But I think you can't understand this woman without understanding the trauma that she went through, as, I mean, I started as a Methodist, so I'm glad to know that Emma is a Methodist her heart was strangely warmed at some point and she, she, you know, she represents the the kind of radical religious experimentation that was in this otherwise Victorian era that people felt free and, you know, to go back to the democratization thesis that, that people on the American frontier felt free to experiment with religion. And also then free to criticize other people's experience. interactions with religion. So how she held together, her deep Methodist roots. And the ever flowing stream of the new stuff of coming from her husband is something I don't think that's ever been sufficiently understood or plumbed. But that she somehow lived herself with those paradoxes. And I think then she, she becomes a, she's better as a symbol for how to live with ambiguity. In my view, I think that's with moral ambiguity, then then she has as a kind of a saintly frontier woman who could do no wrong, that's, that's not going to be helpful to us. So those are some things I think about in relation to her. I read on a Mormon Enigma quite a number of years ago. And the thing that surprised me most in that book was how Joseph could come off smelling so good at the end of the book, in spite of the narrative that was was was created there. You know, it's, it's a matter of the perspective of historians, I suppose on that, but I like the fact that Emma is enigmatic, as a person, but strong, devout, committed to her family, and the fact that she said, No, no, no, in 1844 and after and said, No, we're not going to do that. That may, that may give us that may give us a little bit of grist for our justice mill, if we don't presentize it too much. But she did, she resisted. She resisted all of the pressure and temptations to go west and to relent and to become become kind of a domesticated symbol of Mormonism. She refused to do that. I think that's, that does

place her that does at least give her a chance to stand on a pedestal and Community of Christ. But, but again, we want to be careful about pedestal lysing our our figures in the past, because as I said, they like us are morally ambiguous.

Karin Peter 52:17

That's a wonderful caution to add. And so it's helpful also, when we remember to put her in the era in which she lived, and the reality of women's lives at the time as far as owning property and not having the options to vote or even in many cases to leave a difficult relationship. So women's lives were severely curtailed, compared to what we have today, even though we still don't have equality in the world today for women. Okay, so where do we go from here? We have two areas where the church is centered. We have Kirtland and we have Missouri, you talked about those, Lach, as we began, what happened between those two groups that somehow began to escalate the conflicts in both places? I mean, you You were pretty blunt. We didn't get a permit. To go into Kansas. We didn't get a permit to start a bank. We ignored the kind of county establishments and crossed the borders where we weren't wanted.

Lach Mackay 53:34

Yeah, that's the important part that we were we weren't wanted. Of course, there's no, you can't legally prohibit somebody from moving in.

Karin Peter 53:42

Right, but there does seem to be a threat that runs through all of this.

Lach Mackay 53:48

So before we get there, can we talk about Kirtland Temple?

Karin Peter 53:51

Oh, absolutely.

Lach Mackay 53:52

So I think that the temple grows out of maybe three things probably more, actually more. And we talked about Christian primitivism in our first session, and, and this significant focus on physically recreating what they understood from the book of Acts, and acts as sort of the Christian history, there's still Jewish Temple still plays a role in the life of the church. So I think that's part of what's happening. But there are other factors as well. We can no longer afford the rent on the meeting house that we were worshipping in in Kirtland. So we needed a place to meet on Sundays and on Thursday, and we also understood that we desperately needed a place to educate our ministers. So we need a place to worship, we need a school for our church leaders. And that results in the Kirtland temple's to almost identical floors. The lower court is the space to worship in and the Upper Court, which again looks almost just like downstairs but not as nice is the place to train church leaders, we didn't stop with just church leaders. The third floor also included things like at Kirtland High School, with students as young as age six through adults. And Sidney Rigdon. might have mentioned this last time, but he's talking in Far West Missouri about the far west temple which didn't get built. But what he said really applies to Kirtland as well. He said, we're tired of our members being taken advantage of by the more learned, we're going to

use the temple to teach them to read and write so they can take care of themselves. So this focus on education. On top of that, they had this again, I think this is part of this, this Christian primitivism, this desperate desire to replicate what they understood of the Luke and Acts passages, where Jesus tells his disciples to tarry in Jerusalem, to lay are endowed with power from on high. So this concept of spiritual empowerment is introduced very early and would become central to them, and that it would evolve and Nauvoo comes something quite different in Nauvoo, but builds on Kirtland, so endowed with power clothed with power. Going to be interested in Tony's thoughts on how this concept relates to spiritual formation today, that so Acts 1:8, you'll receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, it will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth. That's also found in Luke chapter 24, verses 47 to 49. repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to all nations. You are witnesses of these things I'm sending upon you what my father promised. So stay here in the city that you've been clothed with power from on high. Joseph restates that in Section 38 of the Doctrine and Covenants. But instead of tarry Jerusalem, it's go to the Ohio and there I will give it to you my law and there you should be endowed with power from on high. And from hence, whosoever I will also go forth among all nations. And what I'm sharing is really based on the work of Greg Prince. His "Endowed with Power From on High" this idea of coming together to be empowered by the Holy Spirit for missionary outreach, and actually in the 1830s wouldn't let their missionaries go overseas until they had been empowered by the Holy Spirit. And they try three times in Kirtland. The first was as early as 1831, at a conference, priesthood conference at the Isaac Morley farm. So they put out a call to church leaders to come together to be spiritually empowered, and then they can go out. We actually call that an endowment, it seemed to work, but they thought it could work better. They try again, with the opening of the School of The Prophets in the Whitney store, there's always what they would have called an ordinance involved early on its ordination to high priesthood at that 1831 conference at the Morley farm. That's the first time the concept of high priesthood not the office of high priests, but the concept of what we call Melchizedek priesthood is introduced to the church. And try again, at the Whitney store with the opening of the School of The Prophets, what they would have called an ordinance was feet washing. We didn't call that an endowment, but it has the same common elements. Again, they come together, seeking spiritual engagement, then go out on their missions. Then you get to the Kirtland Temple, period. That's section 92. In the Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants, build a house in the which house I designed to endow those who might have chosen with power from on high for this is the promise of the Father and to you, therefore commanded you to tarry even as mine apostles at Jerusalem. They're very clearly making that connection, again, come together to be empowered by the Holy Spirit for missionary outreach, that what they would have called ordinances evolve. There's significant physical preparation, where the wisdom talks about what to do a strong drink, they would use cinnamon whiskey as a ritual cleansing agent, and then go into the temple with clean clothes on at a ceiling or confirming that they did anoint with oil as the sealing or confirming blessing, and feet washing. And church leaders in Missouri, were called to Kirtland for this significant time of preparation. And this is the part that I think is most interesting about all this is, they didn't just think this was going to fall from the sky. They spent a year or years in preparation, spiritually, intellectually, physically. So the all of this education that was taking place they associated with this as well. So this idea that, that through intentional engagement, and preparation, we can somehow connect more powerfully with the Holy Spirit. Now, that's the part I don't really understand. You know, and we often in our past would link the Holy Spirit with confirmation so I'm intrigued. And there's some I want to talk to Tony about for years, what what might be a value in this concept? Is there potential to kind of reframe it as spiritual

formation, which I've often done. What are the theological problems with this idea. But I just am really intrigued. This idea of intentional preparation for engagement with the Holy Spirit.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:00:25

Yeah. And actually, in that same period you're describing, we have a first attempt at something like an early restoration, systematic theology, which is called Lectures of Faith. It's no, I'm gonna be a presentist for a minute. It's full of errors. But it was an attempt to it and actually, in its preface, it says, it's okay to use the word theology. I'm paraphrasing, right. And so, but yeah, all of that was part of that experience there. And I. So the idea of endowment flows into the Reorganization, in terms of certain memories of, of the actual experience of the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, in other words, the super naturalist idea of endowment, connected to the Pentecost story in the book of Acts, that then shapes a tradition, mostly an oral tradition in the Reorganization of a future time of, of endowment, that would be connected to the building of our temple at some point. And there was all kinds of lore and tradition that arose orally in the Reorganization that would look forward to this time of, kind of, yeah, I use the word supernaturalism. It's, it's kind of a, a Pentecost type experience that would then subsequently empower the church to finish its work. And then Jesus could come back that was kind of the old Reorganization tradition. And as it has its roots, back to the Kirtland period, I liked the idea of, of framing what's going on there as a sort of spiritual formation. That is, it wasn't just let's build a building and, and pray and sit and see what happens. There's study, there's concern, there's concern for kids, right, we want to educate our our kids who can't read and write. So they're not taken advantage of there's so there's kind of a justice concern woven into that there's a concern for having ministers who articulate, who can stay on the same page together, if you will. There's a concern for articulating the faith, Lectures of Faith. There's a concern for spiritual practices. So lots of there's lots of elements in that Kirtland period that that have a, you know, to use our language, they have a kind of spiritual formation flavor to them. And it's really, what you shared is really important. Because for a long, long, long time, in the Reorganization, there was this hope for a future endowment was it had it had narrowed into a kind of something's going to happen, we're going to build our temple, and then all of a sudden, God is going to come down. And people who have no aptitude for biology are all suddenly going to become doctors, and we're just gonna be all all the supernatural stuff that will turn people into, into into as you mentioned, and they'll be able to go out and do all kinds of stuff. Roy Chevelle in the 1960s and 70s will be highly critical of that development, and he will track try to retrack the idea of endowment as more preparation, openness as learning as study if and spiritual, spiritual formation, if you will. So it's an interesting concept. I can really understand it in terms of, we want to, we want everything to happen to us that happened in the book of Acts. Right? I mean, that that primitive, primitivist ideal that followed the church in Ohio, and it kind of flourished and we and what happened in the book of Acts was, the disciples weren't ready to missionize until Acts chapter two. So I think the hope was for a new Acts, chapter two. A new Pentecost. And this by the way, over 80 years before the Azusa Street Revival is in California that began the modern Pentecostal movement. So, I think that's interesting.

Lach Mackay 1:04:26

Yeah, they were very, they don't say we are trying to carefully replicate the book of Acts. Although Sidney Rigdon says that before he met Joseph Smith, but we're not saying in 1836, "Here's what we're trying to do." What we were doing is using quotes from Acts to describe our experiences. So everybody made that connection, everybody got it. I love that Roy Cheville kind of reconnected to the preparation

for mission element, and was intentional about the connecting church leaders now he was focused on kurtulan but, you know, they're sending Dath and Blair Jensen into Asia from the Kirtland Temple to kind of reconnect to that 1830s preparation and empowerment for mission. Yeah. And I think that could be meaningful for, for some Community of Christ members today, particularly more traditionally minded folk who sometimes struggle to connect with spiritual formation language. I think it's possible to reframe it in a way that can feel comfortable.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:05:38

Yeah, absolutely.

Karin Peter 1:05:40

So I have a question that came out of listening to both of you talk about this time period. And that is that in this period of yearning for spiritual endowment, education played a big role. And yet somehow, in the RLDS tradition, at least, education got downplayed to the point of we became almost anti-theological education. Embittered, if you will, in some cases towards theological education. And that didn't end until just a few decades ago for the, for the broader church Community of Christ. What happened?

Lach Mackay 1:06:22

I don't know if this is true, but I blamed it on staying in the Midwest and being infected by Protestant fundamentalism when it comes to education.

Karin Peter 1:06:30

Okay, so all you people in the Midwest, your letters can be directed to Lach, not to Project Zion. And I'll ask Lach if you'd say a little bit more about that.

Lach Mackay 1:06:42

I just think that we absorbed the anti-intellectualism in our communities. We were we were part of our culture. And so is that that grew in the 20th century. I think it grew within some of us as well. But I don't know what's does Tony think?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:06:59

I agree with that. And I would also back the clock up and say, one of the things about the Second Great Awakening was that the revival is loved to pillory, literally pillory, the educated clergy from the east. I think there might be psychological reasons that could be examined for that senses of inadequacy and so on. But gracious, they, they they just the idea that a illiterate, but untrained person could travel 1000s of miles on horseback and do revivals that created 1000s of converts, without any Yale or Princeton, or Harvard education was a feather in their cap. And so the Second Great Awakening was anti intellectual. And that's our roots. Were there. Yeah, it's it's a paradox, isn't it? That the, the very religious context that formed put the anti-intellectual gene into us, as well as dosh we got a treat, we've got to teach these kids to read or they're going to be taken advantage of. So we didn't have any ways, theologically to resolve that conflict. And the very fact that there's a School of The Prophets is basically what they're farming is they're forming a theological seminary in Kirtland right?

Lach Mackay 1:08:19

They call it that, they did form the Kirtland, Ohio, theological institutions. One of are first five in Ohio.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:08:26

Apparently they did not, they were unable to see the irony of forming seminary and then being critical of seminary train people elsewhere. It's ironic, isn't it? Also, when you get into the reorganization, you have really powerful legendary figures like John Cornish, who was barely able to read, but who baptized hundreds of people was a powerful debater with other with other Protestants on the debate stage. And so that that then also became kind of the, the, the symbol of why we didn't need to have educated ministers. So there's different these different, these different forces formed us. And there are forces that are at odds with each with each other. But I can tell you from being a seminary professor, and Community of Christ Seminary for over 20 years, I see endowment every day. I watch students come in hesitantly and then by the time they're done, I watched them walk out confidently in saying i i know stuff I didn't know. And I feel like I can represent our church better. I would call that endowment but that minus the supernatural element, though, I wouldn't want to say that totally. Because, you know, as a theologian, I believe in the presence of the Divine Spirit and and through all things and that Spirit works in its own way in and through the stuff people do and learn and struggle with. So So I'm not speaking against supernaturalism. I'm just saying that it. What I see is an amazing combination. But anyway, I'm, I'm now jumping into the 21st century. Sorry about that Karin.

Karin Peter 1:10:11

No, I just noticed that when we began to talk about it, and we have reclaimed both theological education and spiritual formation, at this juncture in our journey, which is interesting, when we talk about Kirtland.

Lach Mackay 1:10:24

Can I say one more thing about endowment before we leave that topic. I think it was Wayne Hamm he used to tell the story about Mormon visitors to our Independence, Missouri Temple, would ask about our endowment, and we would say, "Well, it's \$40 million, and growing." So you know, the word itself, the term itself is problematic, because it means so many different things to different people. And like so many terms in our history before, you know, a definition you have to know when they're using it, when we're using it. So, I'll leave it at that.

Lach Mackay 1:10:35

All right. So from there, let's go back to the two different communities, Ohio, Missouri and kind of talk about what happened. And then, and let's not forget that we need to come back to the Doctrine of Covenants, and how that kind of came to be.

Lach Mackay 1:11:19

So Kirtland, they're, they're having these mountaintop experiences. Tony mentioned the Pentecostal language, the Temple filled with a mighty rushing wind and pillars of fire on the roof of the Temple and people speaking and singing in tongues. It's fascinating that Joseph had council members who said, "If God gives you a manifestation, keep it to yourself. You're not supposed to talk about these things." But we were apparently so overwhelmed with this stuff that within 10 days of Kirtland Temple dedication, a non member in Kirtland writes to his sister and says, "They say the temple is lit without candles." Great

stuff. So quickly, we go from these amazing experiences to our bank is failing, we are refusing to redeem the notes. So when there's a bank run, you know, you get a \$50 note, you're gonna sprint to the bank to ask for \$50 and gold or silver. And very soon, all of the older silver is gone. So we're, we suspend payment on the notes. We say, "You can hold on to it, it's good, but we'll redeem it later." Eventually, it all just kind of implodes. So, you know, folks just start packing up and heading out, because we're New Englanders and our neighbors in Kirtland. I might have mentioned this before, but northeastern Ohio was new Connecticut, where the Connecticut Western Reserve, one of the kings of England had granted Connecticut, that part for giving up a land claim. So it really is like all these little doing the villages picked up and dropped on the shores of Lake Erie. Very much in New England cultural region. So We're suing each other for the most part instead of shooting each other as we try and solve our differences in Kirtland, but it's just too much. So we start packing up and heading out. In Liberty, Missouri, Clay County, Missouri, again, concerns about our possible political participation had caused the creation of Caldwell County, once we fill up Caldwell County, again, differences with neighbors, the folks in Livingston County had sold us land that we would use to establish Dewitt, we were invited to settle there. But others in Livingston County didn't think we should be there. That starts to develop into a conflict. We ask the Governor for help. He calls up state militia to help, but before they're really needed, the conflict seems to be solved. So it made the governor look foolish for calling up state militia at significant expense for no reason. So then when the conflict flared again, and we again asked for help, he said, No, I fell for that once. You're on your own. Just pretty, pretty difficult times there. So it was really the combination of the Kirtland and Missouri churches in Caldwell County that are then forcibly removed. And it really was just horrific conditions for some as they tried to flee across the frozen north of Missouri. A number are sick, they're in a number of cases walking, they get to the Mississippi River across from Quincy, and then they can't cross. The river has broken up so it's not solid ice they can't walk across. But because there's big ice chunks out there that can't can't vote across, so they're caught on the Missouri side. Lucy Mack Smith tells the story of they lay down and go to sleep on the bank of the river and they wake up covered in six inches of snow. And so there's only with the utmost effort that we could fold our frozen blankets. Not a highlight of the story are the focus of Quincy, who have a long history of, of taking in refugees. The folks of Quincy, most probably, I don't know, 12-1600 of them, take in something like 5000 Latter-day Seekers open their homes and their cupboards and care for us. Wonderful example for us to follow up. That's a again, a very condensed version.

Karin Peter 1:15:41

Okay, Tony?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:15:44

how interesting is that Jen, Gentiles can show hospitality. And those quote within sometimes don't. So it's a lesson learned. Also another lesson, here's a theological lesson I've learned. Today, Lach, from listening to you describe the bank in Portland? I think Bob believes in heavily regulating the banking industry, just just a theological lesson to pass on from, from from our understanding of the Kirtland anti-bank.

Karin Peter 1:16:16

So these two communities came together, and then ended up being chased out, if you will, of Missouri having to leave Missouri. How did the two communities relate to one another? The Ohio community and of a church communities?

Lach Mackay 1:16:34

So, it was kind of interesting that there were some, there was some friction through the years, probably because the Missouri church leaders thought that they were the leaders of the church in Missouri. They were until Joseph showed up. But I think there was some friction there, there was some friction over some church leaders who sold land that Joseph thought the church should have held on to. And I think, one of Mark Scherer's, I think most significant contributions is talking about how the name of the church gets pulled into the conflict between the Missouri and Kirtland communities. So you have initially the Church of Christ is formed in upstate New York, at 1834, we become the Church of the Latter Day Saints, which is what they painted on Kirtland Temple initially. But the folks in Missouri don't really seem to have embraced that name. So with the failure of the bank, you have the Church of Christ in Missouri, and the Church of the Latter Day Saints in Ohio, kind of being forced together. But but it's not going particularly well. And so in a stroke of, of perhaps inspiration and religious genius, the Church of Christ and the Church of Latter Day Saints become the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to blend those two communities. I think I think Mark is on to something there. I think that's what was happening.

Karin Peter 1:18:04

Tony, what were the theological differences between the two communities that that we can identify?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:18:10

That's probably a question I can't entirely an answer. I suspect there were some, but I just don't know the sources well enough to be able to ferret that out for you. Sorry about that.

Karin Peter 1:18:22

No, that's by appreciate when somebody says when one of our experts I'm not sure about that, or I don't know about that. In your dialogue, though, about the two communities like we seem to have a history of being very much shaped informed by our cultural surroundings, depending on where the church is located. So if you're familiar with the Midwest and the East Coast, you can kind of navigate some of those cultural differences historically, that would impact I would assume our our communities as well.

Lach Mackay 1:18:59

One of the differences was, you know, it's it's the Kirtland church that comes apart through dissent. And so I think that the leaders from Kirtland, who then land in Missouri, are particularly sensitive about dissent, and and decide there's no place for it in the church. And I don't really think that's where Missouri church leaders were at at that point. So I think that that some of the internal conflict would have been routed there. And we were not kind to dissenters in northern Missouri. And you know, the Danites this, it's initially an internal group to enforce orthodoxy. It would later become the de facto Church Army. But that's that's not what it started as. So I think that that is there room for the sun was probably One of the significant issues at play between the two communities.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:20:05

Yeah, a question I would have related to that is and maybe Lach, no one answered this is, did the Missouri church leaders know anything about Josef's little experiment with the so called Book of Abraham?

Lach Mackay 1:20:22

I do not know. I'm guessing. Yes. But of course it wasn't published. So I think they probably knew that. That the potential was there. But I don't think they knew. I don't think they were influenced by the theology of it yet, but it could be wrong. Yeah.

Karin Peter 1:20:41

So before, before we go on to the Doctrine of Covenants, I have to ask, are we talking about the Danites in our next episode? When we talk about Nauvoo, or did?

Lach Mackay 1:20:55

no because I don't think I think Danite-isms happened in Nauvoo. Danite-like activities, but I don't think the daylight exists during the Nauvoo period.

Karin Peter 1:21:05

So maybe we need to talk about that. Now then just briefly, if you can give us an overview of Danites.

Lach Mackay 1:21:10

So I think sometimes called the "Daughters of Zion", giving a little outside of my area of expertise, but a group that, that church members, and I'm confident with Joseph's full knowledge, created an organization again, initially, to enforce orthodox orthodoxy within the church, they had just I think, concluded that there wasn't room for dissent. But as the conflict with their non member neighbors fires up, that I think they start turning their efforts outward. But I think, I think they would have been used to drive folks like John Coral, who is a fine, fine man, and church leader, from the church. And, and just a little bit more about Coral, when he, he gets to Quincy, Illinois, eventually, we had elected him to the Missouri State Legislature to represent us before the falling out. We drive him out of the community, he still serves in the legislature fighting to defend and protect us trying to take care of us. And then when he gets to, well, then he sells his property in Missouri, gives the money to church members to help them flee. And Coral eventually makes it to Quincy, impoverished and dies there, I think with nothing. So one of the heroes in our story, John coral.

Karin Peter 1:22:44

Thank you for that. Yeah. So, again Danites not exactly our most peace and justice see moments when we're there in Missouri and probably in an era that in the reorganization, we don't, we don't talk about because it's makes us uncomfortable.

Lach Mackay 1:23:02

Can I just add something real quick to that. You know, Tony talked about the trauma that Emma experienced and I agree completely. I also think we need to recognize the trauma that all of us in, in the

community in northern Missouri experienced in the 1830s. I think Matthew Bolton lifted this up first a number of years ago talks about collective trauma, which can be passed down generationally, not just the individual experience that they can transmit it to their kids, and the grandkids. And I still see evidence of collective trauma in some branches of Latter-day Saint-ism, kind of the myth of persecuted innocence. We didn't do anything wrong, we were persecuted because we were good people. And really quick, quick response. People think they're being attacked when they're not. Just really significant defensiveness, so I don't think you can understand the church in Nauvoo, without understanding the effects of the trauma of Missouri on the people and the leaders.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:24:16

Yeah, I totally agree with that. I, interestingly, Charmaine and I were having a conversation about this very thing earlier today. And she had this great image, she said, that this this combination of, of, of traumas, might have contributed then to a lot of church members in Nauvoo for word was subcontracting, theological reflection out to Joseph, right, let in other words, not not taking responsibility as part of the church for pushing back on stuff and letting letting the leader just make decisions. Again, and

Lach Mackay 1:24:57

The leader, the leader, who himself was traumatized.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:25:00

Right. We, a traumatized people, are letting a traumatized leader just decide stuff for us. And then he becomes sort of the sole arbiter of what what Christian truth is, and it spins completely off the rails then so I, but I loved I loved her image of sub sub contracting theological authority up to out to Joseph.

Karin Peter 1:25:23

All right, let's talk about the Doctrine and Covenants. Again, in the same time period, these, this second book comes forth. So how did that take place, historically will start historically, Lach?

Lach Mackay 1:25:38

So Tony, a bunch of letters passed around communities starting to sound like Paul's. So with Paul's letters, so let's talk about that, and how logically this, how did this contribute to the journey?

Lach Mackay 1:25:38

My sense is that initially, they're simply writing down what they understood to be justice revelations. And I'm intrigued that although we didn't talk about it much, Joseph seemed to be comfortable editing them at times suggesting he didn't have a concrete understanding of how revelation was working, meaning, he seemed to think that, that it was okay to edit. Although again, we didn't talk about that much. And a number of members would take exception to that when they came to understand that eventually, I think there's simply written documents that are passed around on individual sheets, or maybe a couple pages and copied and just just passed around that way we in 1833, make the decision to collect and publish something called the Book of Commandments. That's happening in Jackson County, Missouri, of course, when uh I don't like terms like mob, but I don't know what else to call them. In this case mob comes in just raise the press scatters the type. As we've probably heard the stories of

the little girls who gather up some of the signatures, the pages blowing in the wind and hiding in a cornfield, and they're able to put some copies of that book together, but it was not finished. We it was going to be longer than what actually ended up coming out. So they try again, Aniki, 35, Kirtland and they add at that point, as Tony is talking about the lectures of faith. Those are the doctrine of the book. And then the second half of the book, part two is the covenants and commandments. So the Book of Commandments becomes the Doctrine or Lectures on Faith, and the revelations of the Sections, the Covenants or commandments, or commandments against the Doctrine and Covenants.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:27:42

Well, yeah, so you know, this, this is an illustration of how canonization is a process. Right. It's a process of a community collecting and shaping and using and reshaping and getting documents into some kind of collection. That becomes inward words of Luke Johnson part of its working bibliography. Right. I think one of the difficulties that comes through is that failure to deal early with the fact that Joseph edits earlier revelations, that I think that's very helpful to know that he did that. For example, this is this is the you see the same thing in in the Biblical tradition. You know, there's, there's the there's the narrative, there's the narrative of First and Second Kings. And then there's the narrative of First and Second Chronicles, that spins David in a much better way. Right? In other words, editing, editing was always going on in biblical traditions. You could say that, that Matthew and Luke, are re edited versions of Mark, right? So so it should never surprise us that Joseph edited his earlier revelations, the problem was this underlying default setting that revelation is direct speech from God, right? In other words, that, that what we, what we have with the what Revelation is, is an Instagram post from God if I can put it that way. And, and instead of instead of, there's human perception human reconfiguring human editing, human thought humans struggle with the content of Divine encounter. We could have learned that lesson a lot earlier if we'd paid attention, and not been afraid of the fact that Joseph edited his revelations, but that's something interesting to learn from from the process. And then subsequently, we have discovered over a long period of time, that the Doctrine Covenants has not solved all of our problems, but it has sometimes created problems, theological problems for us, right. So, for example, section 20 which which is demanded rebaptism and said that God had done away with all other covenants that really became problematic as we came to understand the theology of baptism quite differently. And in our in our world mission had to deal with the fact that, that there were lots of people who wanted to join our church, who at great personal cost to themselves had left one world religion and been baptized into Christianity. So we were left with a, we were left with a section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants that people treated as direct revelation you couldn't alter or interpret or do anything to. So we've had subsequent issues to deal with having having an open cannon scripture does not solve problems. It sometimes increases them, but also just increases the need for responsible interpretation. So I'm, again, working from, you know, the early period out to I'm doing effect history here, what what is the long term effect of of something and we have other issues that come out of the Doctrine and Covenants, but I think I have heard Community of Christ people expressed dismay that, that Prophet-Presidents don't no longer use the the first person "I the Lord" kind of language from the early period. It's like, let's because we've learned some things about the difficulties of assumed the difficult difficulties that come up when you assume that revelation is always some kind of plenary experience that overrides humanity and agency and context. So some, some reflections on.

Karin Peter 1:31:37

So what happened to the Doctrine part?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:31:41

That's a historical question that I think Lach can answer that how, how the how the Lectures of Faith got severed from it.

Lach Mackay 1:31:49

Both in community, Christ and the church, Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, that the doctrine was removed. And I don't know why in Community of Christ, I think it's not going to be hard to recover that answer. I'm guessing because we thought, oh, it's not Revelation. In the church of Jesus Christ, I think it's because lecture five, doesn't fit at all with Joseph's teachings about the nature of God, wlecture five has got a personage of Spirit. It's not a personage of tabernacle, but later removed, I want to jump back for a minute to Tony's section 20 comment, which made me think about arguments we had in the past about open communion. William Law later a memeber of the First Presidency is writing a friend and 1837 and says, Oh, brother, Joseph, and brothers, Sidney, we're just here teaching. You should know, brother Joseph taught that sister so and so whose husband won't let her be baptized. We can confirm her serve for the sacrament, etc. So Joseph didn't seem to have you didn't let section 20 rule through the day. He saw a problem and fixed it.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:33:09

Very pragmatic of him. I love that.

Karin Peter 1:33:13

So is there anything else about the way that we have, that we've canonized our covenants, if you will, in the Doctrine of Covenants from this time period that that has affected our our understanding of who we are?

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:33:33

Well, the the canonization process we use currently, is significantly unlike the canonization process that the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament would have gone through because those processes went through literally hundreds of years of communal discern will say the attempt of the attempt at present to give us more time with the document is I think helpful, but we do hasten the process a lot. I think I'm more interested in the symbol, the symbolic nature of what we're doing. And the symbolic nature of what we're doing is we are communally trying to discern divine direction for a current moment. I think that's a it's a powerful a powerful symbol of our belief in continuing continuing revelation. And I think it's a highly valuable process. I do think we have some, some work to do on hmm, we have three standard books, what's the relationship of these books to each other? We've got more work to do on that. Because I think in reality in practice, that the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants are much more like what some Christian traditions referred to as subordinate standards. Right? In other words, the Bible Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants are not a Trinity of co-equal persons. And there is there is a hierarchy here of value and meaning and I think we need to do some work on that. And I have been trying to do some work on that, but it's so important. A subordinate standard in the reformed tradition does not mean you can disregard it, it means that it, it comes under the scrutiny of the Biblical witness. Again, and again, and again, that's, I think we tend we that's our instinct, as a

movement, Reorganization, and Community of Christ our instinct. But we've been probably not clear about articulating that. So

Karin Peter 1:35:51

Maybe we can revisit this when we get to 1860 based on what Lach shared earlier about Joseph Smith, the third's comments about the Bible of Mormon.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:36:02

Well, exactly. I think that's a good thing to revisit several times later, and the very fact that we have removed things from the Doctrine and Covenants,

Karin Peter 1:36:15

We put them in the appendix, Tony and THEN decanonized them.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:36:18

Right. Right. And then we do major surgery, right? Yes, but I think I think that is our that's our, our traditions, body language, expressing something about the relationship of these texts to each other. Right. So

Karin Peter 1:36:36

okay, so stay tuned for future episodes when we revisit this luck. What would you like to add?

Lach Mackay 1:36:44

I should know this, but I don't wonder if Tony does. I know the folks in (...) where they be inspirationalists, maybe, would collect sayings of leaders and bind them in a book. I don't know that they canonize them. But we often I often hear statements about how unique this process is to our tradition. But is that true? I was getting nervous when people talk about uniqueness and religion.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:37:12

Yeah, I think we have overblown that claim at times. I mean, if if, indeed, if indeed, the book The Doctrine and Covenants is, is equal to the Bible is in status, then that would be somewhat unique. But other Christian traditions have secondary texts that have a sort of quasi canonical authority. If I'm an Anglican, I'm going to use the Book of Common Prayer every day. And I know it's not the Bible has lots of Bible texts in it, but it's not the Bible, but it's a text that forms me and forms my understanding of myself as an Anglican. Yes, I am a if I'm Roman Catholic. Papal in cyclicals are not the Bible, but they have a formative authority for me. And you know, Papal declarations and so on are extremely important to me. And canon law is important. You know, there are such things as canon lawyers whose job it is they are trained to interpret literally centuries of Roman Catholic canon law. Basically, you know, like our rules and resolutions. Only 1000s of pages. So, um, for Methodists, you know, there's the Book of Discipline. And for Presbyterians, there's the Westminster Confession and other other document. In other words, lots of Christian traditions have these subordinate authorities that they that they treat as really essential to their life together. And that, you know, they would probably be uncomfortable calling them canon, but they have they have the kind of function that canonical documents have only they hold these as a less as having, I wouldn't say less authority, but less they're, they're of a different nature,

from the biblical texts, which are the originating revelations. So I think we have to be careful about saying, we count on stuff. We're unique. We were so much different from everybody else. No, not as different as we think really.

Karin Peter 1:39:26

So we're going to, in the interest of time, bring our conversations to a close and where we're ending is that we are trekking across the frozen tundra of northern Missouri towards Quincy, Illinois. What in our official lingo is exiled from Zion? Is there anything we need to further we need to know about that as we as we leave this era of our history, today?

Lach Mackay 1:39:56

Just to revisit something that I already shared, but I think is really important to understand. And most people forget or don't know, we were we were exterminated. But I think that means x terminus, forcibly removed beyond our boundaries, our borders. Gov. Boggs did not mean lever will kill you. It was not legal to kill Latter-day Seekers in Missouri until 1976. Just not true. When Governor Bond rescinded that order, and still lost the election.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:40:37

And I think I would riff off of that and say, for Community of Christ people today, it's really vitally, ethically necessary to remember that our ancestors experienced forced exile and loss of homeland loss of property. We're pushed out of places, and we're refugees. There, we ought to we ought to have learned something about refugees from our own past, I think we still could, and that that ought to have political implications for us political and social implications about how we treat refugees, we could we could be a church that stood for refugees like Quincy stood for refugees.

Karin Peter 1:41:18

Absolutely. Thank you, both of you for those closing comments. And for the entire discussion today. In our next episode, we're going to move on in our discussion and talk about the Nauvoo era, which culminated in the death of Joseph Smith Jr. and then also the succession crisis that took place after that, so all big topics to prepare for our next episode. In the meantime, you can be sure to catch up on all the topics at Projectzionpodcast.org. We have multiple podcasts on church history, including Emma Smith, Joseph Smith, Jr, the first division, the Book of Mormon, and other relevant topics from our conversation today. So with that, thank you again, Tony. And thank you lock on Karin Peter. Thanks to our listeners.

Josh Mangelson 1:42:21

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