

**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. I'm your host for Cuppa' Joe, Karin Peter. Our discussion today is the third of 12 episodes in our series where we are engaging in conversations about the historical and theological journey of Community of Christ. And we're having these conversations together with our two resident panel experts. So, we have Lach Mackay to share with us the historical aspect and Tony Chvala-Smith, the theological aspect. Now, Lach is an historian. He's the Director of Community of Christ historic sites and he serves on the Council of Twelve Apostles. Tony is a theologian who teaches scripture and theology at Community of Christ Seminary and Graceland University. And both Lach and Tony are quite familiar to our Project Zion listeners. So, in this series, we're following the development of the early church through the reorganization and then our journey as Community, well, as RLDS, I guess, and then Community of Christ. And we're looking at important church events in their historical and cultural context, as well as discussing the corresponding theological developments and their impact on the church. So, today we're talking about the Nauvoo era. So, we're gonna' start, Lach, with you and see if you would like to, uh, kind of walk us through this interesting and often problematic era.

**Lach Mackay 02:10**

I would love to. I'm gonna' to take us initially to, back to Quincy, Illinois, where church members as they're fleeing from Missouri, are gathering in the winter of 1839, there was a debate among church leaders about what to do next. Some, like Brigham Young, are considering moving their families back to Kirtland. Um, others think that's a terrible idea. And they eventually decide that they're going to start moving north and they have selected a place that would become Nauvoo, Illinois. Nauvoo is a peninsula. It's surrounded on three sides by the Mississippi River. And it was a beautiful location. It was also problematic because it was very swampy. They would get creative and manage to, to divert a lot of the water as it came down from the river bluffs. That started to dry things out. But one of the primary reasons they pick what would become Nauvoo as the spot for them is that they could purchase land on credit there. They could have gone out into Iowa and buy surplus federal land for a dollar or two an acre, that required specie. That required gold or silver which they did not have. Instead, they choose what become Nauvoo and pay, ( . . . ) 40 to 200 plus dollars an acre. But Nauvoo was, it is courtesy of credit. They begin surveying, laying out four acre city blocks. Each four

acre block is going to have four one acre lots and Nauvoo would soon grow explosively. It was described as growing like a mushroom, which means like magic, just appearing overnight. Soon had 1200 log cabins, 3 to 500 timber frame homes, 2 to 300 brick homes, and it was the second largest city in Illinois. Perhaps a third of the residents would become, would be English converts with boatloads of members sailing from the UK, across the Atlantic, eventually, uh, down around Florida, and then up the, the Mississippi River on steam boats. They are coming, they're fleeing some pretty wretched conditions in, in the factories in the United Kingdom. That's what they knew how to do, was work in factories, but of course, Nauvoo had little or no industry which was a problem. So, they started getting very creative trying to figure out how to integrate these new members into the Nauvoo community. They are attempting what we would later call Zion experiments. We are distancing ourselves by Nauvoo from the all things common emphasis of the 1830s. In fact, it almost seems like we're pretending we never believed that, although we clearly did. But, but they didn't forget the reason for those all things common attempts, and that was so that the surplus of the wealthy could lift up the poor. So, very concerned in Nauvoo about the plight of the poor. They're doing things like the Big Farm, which is a, a massive collective farm outside of town. They're creating trade associations kind of like trade unions for sash makers or brick makers or shoe makers. They're creating public works projects like the Nauvoo House and Nauvoo Temple. People would gather to Nauvoo with little or no building skill, but be put to work on these buildings and given food in return. They used real estate as an equalizer. Joseph Smith was the, the primary real estate developer in Nauvoo. That's, in effect, how he made his living, buying and selling the city plot. And if you were impoverished, you would get a lot cheaper, maybe even free. If you were wealthy, you would pay top dollar. Worked pretty well until you started talking to your neighbor and discovered what they paid that caused some conflict. They were creating things like the Nauvoo Female Relief Society. Emma Smith was the first president. They would find work for the widows and food for the poor. And there was a young gentlemen and ladies Relief Society that provided an opportunity for young adults to engage in things like raising money for houses for impoverished members and then helping to build those houses and like Habitat for Humanity. Soon, though, we are again in conflict with our neighbors and many of the reasons are rooted in Missouri. I would argue that you can't understand Nauvoo unless you're looking at it through the lens of Missouri. Matthew Bolton, years ago, talked about post traumatic stress disorder and collective trauma.

### **Lach Mackay 07:03**

The result of some of our experiences in Missouri like the extermination order, the Haun's Mill massacre, the siege on Farwest, Joseph Smith is court martialed and sentenced to death despite the fact that he's not in the military. Those experiences were deeply traumatizing for church leaders and for church members. ( . . . ), uh, maybe a stereotypical account, but Joseph III describes taking a nap on a bed in the Smith home in Nauvoo. Joseph Smith Junior's aide-de-camp in the Nauvoo legion had cleaned a brace of ( . . . ), tossed it on the

canopy bed where little Joseph was sleeping, not realizing the boy was there. Joseph III wakes up, picks up one of the pistols, thinks nobody would leave a loaded gun around a little boy, pulls the trigger and blasts a hole through the canopy through the ceiling through the roof. And church leaders meeting next door, of course, immediately assume they are under attack. It's, it's the mobs and that stereotypical drop to the floor in response to the gunshot deeply traumatized folks. And, so, we are responding to that trauma in ways that we think are going to be helpful in Nauvoo, but, but soon make it worse. Uh, but it also helps us understand some of what was happening in Nauvoo. For example, Joseph Smith, the, the, the prophet as Lieutenant General, seems like a, a power grab, and maybe it was, but I think in Joseph's mind in order to be court martialed, somebody had to outrank him. So, if he is the only Lieutenant General in the land, he's protected from the illegal abuse of the court martial system that he had experienced in Missouri. Um, but, but we, we were legally required to participate as, as adult white men in things like the Nauvoo Legion because it's the state militia. But, but we really fell in love with the concept, and he, became very militaristic. Um, Joseph would prefer to be called Lieutenant General Smith or General Smith instead of President Smith, for example, and at times there are cannons in the prophet's yard. So, the way we embraced militarism, I would argue, in response to Missouri terrified our neighbors. There's a, a, an anonymous US artillery officer who comes to Nauvoo, watches us parade and practice in the Nauvoo Legion and leaves just, uh, very unsure about the future. He writes an article and he talks about how these Mormons are like a snowball rolling down an incline plane that will soon become an avalanche. It's true, he said, they're peaceful now, but they're like a lion asleep. Be careful, don't wake them. And he refers to us repeatedly as a war-like people. So, our attempts to defend and protect are perceived by our neighbors, and I think not surprisingly, as an offensive threat. They couldn't differentiate, and sometimes we couldn't either, between the state militia and the church militia which, it was the state's, but it didn't look that way. We also, in Nauvoo, are bloc voting, swinging from Whig to the Democrat and, at times, voting as a bloc by revelation, which infuriated both political parties as well as some of our members and leaders. I think that in some ways, the experience in Missouri caused us to almost give up on this life and turn our attention to the next life. So, that, that deep trauma we experienced, so, Joseph and church members and leaders in Nauvoo start to focus significantly not on the here and now, not on building the kingdom of God on earth, but more, um, What's next? So, Joseph introduces in Nauvoo baptism for the dead by proxy. He introduces the concept of sealing husbands and wives and children together. He introduces the concept of plural marriage. He introduces the concept of plurality of gods, uh, maybe growing out of his Hebrew studies in Kirtland in a, a misunderstanding of the grammatical, uh, Elohim as plural.

### **Lach Mackay 11:26**

Um, e, even late in life teaching things like progression to godhood, these are ideas that, of course, are well outside of Orthodox Christian thought. We also began to become into conflict with not just our neighbors, but with the state, particularly over, uh, issues related to the

Nauvoo Charter. The charter is the, the piece of legislation passed that allows Nauvoo to exist as a city. The charter in Nauvoo was not that different than some others for Illinois cities at the time. But the top politicians wanted our votes, and sometimes allowed us to interpret that charter very differently. A critical component, uh, has to do with our power to use habeas corpus. It literally means to produce the body. And it's a way to protect against false imprisonment. The charter granted is that power when enforcing city ordinances. But we realized that we could start writing city ordinances that broadened our reach. And, and we soon understood that we were not bound by Illinois state law or US law, for that matter, only the Illinois and US Constitution. And Nauvoo becomes something like a city-state. There was one significant difference between the Nauvoo Charter and other cities in Illinois at the time and that was that the mayor and aldermen also were the justices on the city court, so, there was no separation of powers and that would become important later. The Nauvoo Legion, again, was the state militia, but they participated in church events which caused confusion and questions about, again, was this the state's militia or the church's militia? Things eventually are getting pretty tense. By the spring of 1844, Joseph Smith has announced that he's running for United States president. Um, he had in 1839 visited US President Martin Van Buren and asked for help after being exterminated or expelled from Missouri. It's unclear what Van Buren said. It was either, Sorry, I can't help; states' rights. Or, Sorry, I can't help. That'll cost me the Missouri vote. But whatever he said it was clear he was not going to help and Joseph was furious. The next election cycle Joseph is writing to various candidates for US president and asking them, If elected, how would you help my people? If they bothered to respond it's all at all, again, it's, Sorry, can't help. Uh, also, by that time, though, church members and leaders we're hearing rumors about things like the secret practice of polygamy. And soon those rumors go public in something called the Expositor, uh, dissenting newspaper put out by people like William law, who had been a member of the First Presidency, and other leaders and members who were intent on exposing some of these secret teachings. They're also complaining about things like the way that we are using or they would say abusing habeas corpus. The city council with Joseph as mayor ordered that the Expositor be destroyed. There's some who argue, and they might be right, that it might have been legal to destroy the paper, uh, but it was not, at, at that time, but it was not legal to destroy the press and church, uh, members did both. Joseph seemed to recognize that he had made a mistake and suggested that he would compensate the, those who had been wronged. But he is charged initially with riot. Uh, officers from the county seat of Carthage come to arrest Joseph on charges of riot. He's probably not guilty of riot because it was orderly and, um, and quiet. Uh, what he's probably guilty of is trespass and destruction of private property, you know, who knows, uh, but he doesn't want to go to Carthage. He doesn't believe that he will be safe there. So, he gets a writ of habeas corpus that takes him not to Carthage, but instead in front of the closest justice, which, of course, happens to in Nauvoo in a, a courtroom filled with church members who are also the justices.

**Lach Mackay 15:56**

They, uh, release Joseph. Um, that makes folks pretty upset. And a non-member attorney friend of Joseph says to him, Look, you, you got to get in front of a justice who is not a church member. This, this just doesn't look good. So, Joseph does. He goes in front of Daniel H. Wells, not a member, soon would be and would later be a member of the First Presidency in Utah. But he goes in front of Daniel H. Wells using habeas corpus to get there. Wells only had legal authority to hold or release Joseph. Instead, he acquits him which makes, uh, our neighbors even more angry. They conclude that there is no way for the law to reach Joseph and so they decide to go outside of the law. Joseph initially posts bail on the charges of, of riot. He's in Carthage. Um, he's turned himself in. He, uh, puts up the money. He's preparing to leave. He's re-arrested on charges of treason for calling up the Nauvoo Legion, he would say to protect the city. Uh, I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but if there's a conspiracy, it's in the treason charge because it's not aailable offense. Joseph can't just put up more money and leave. He is there. He's in the jail until he gets in front of a judge. Uh, it's probably the Warsaw State Militia who attack the jail. Um, they're acting independently. Governor Ford had promised to protect Joseph. I think that Ford's deepest flaw is that he had been an Illinois Supreme Court Justice and he believed in the law. He believed it would work. He had promised to protect Joseph. And he never expected that militiamen acting independently would go outside of the law. But they did. They apparently arranged with the Carthage Grays, who were guarding the, the, the jail, to load their guns with gunpowder, but no musket balls. So, it looked like they were defending. They were not. Uh, this mob stormed the jail. Uh, shot Hiram Smith through the door. Shot Joseph. Joseph's, uh, last words were apparently something like, Oh Lord, my God, which is the beginning of the Masonic sign of distress suggesting he recognized Masons in the Warsaw State Militia. It's not a Masonic conspiracy. I think there just happened to be some Masons in the militia. Following Joseph's death, there was a succession crisis. Joseph has designated different people at different times as his successor. The Doctrine and Covenants lays out different methods of succession. Uh, and Joseph had not said before going to Carthage, Okay, everybody. Here's exactly what is supposed to happen next. So, there was significant confusion about what should happen. Some historians argue, and I think they're right, that William Marks, the Stake President in Nauvoo, actually had the best claim to succeed Joseph. He wasn't particularly interested in leading, though, and he was also opposed to polygamy. So, other church leaders, like Brigham Young, knew that if Marks was the chosen successor, polygamy would not continue to be part of the church. So, there was a significant push against Marks after initially, the kind of, there's agreement before many of the Twelve made it home, that Marks is the guy. Suddenly they realized what that would mean. So, there's pushback against him. Others argue that Brigham Young and the Twelve should lead. They're not initially claiming to be Joseph's successor. Uh, they're simply saying, We'll hold the church together and it would be three years before, uh, Brigham Young would organize the Presidency. People like Lyman Wight, who was a member of the Twelve, said, Well, Joseph gave me a mission to go to Texas and explore settling the church there. I'm gonna go. And he

did. He didn't claim to be Joseph's successor. He argued that little Joseph was the, the person that Joseph had designated. Other succession options Alpheus Cutler, James Strang, who claimed to have a letter of appointment, and, of course, Joseph Smith III who had been blessed multiple times by Joseph Smith, Jr. to, to lead at some point in the future. Very few people, though, thought that, uh, an 11 and a half year old should do that, but, but some took that position. The, that gets us up through Joseph's death and the succession crisis 1846-47 and I'm going to stop there and listen to what Tony has to say or any questions that Karin has.

**Karin Peter 20:38**

So, um, yeah. I want to go to Tony and get, um, Tony's reflections on this and then we'll, we'll come back if my, uh, if my one question doesn't get addressed here. So, Tony?

**Tony Chvala-Smith 20:53**

So, Nauvoo is, uh, an historically dense, uh, experience. There's so many lev, levels and layers to it. And the theologian, first of all, needs to rely on the historian. Uh, the theologian doesn't want to make ups, make up history. We want to work with our best, our best understanding of what happened, why, when, what were the, the factors that we can understand, the, the causal factors as much as possible? And then the theologian, uh, once we have this full of an understanding of the event on its own terms as we can, the theologian asks a different set of questions. And one of the questions that a theologian will ask of something like Nauvoo is what, what could have been known about the Christian faith that might have, uh, pushed back on what was happening in Nauvoo? And we don't have to speculate on that, because the Nauvoo Expositor is a theological document. Now, you know, in terms of, in terms of the genre, this is an expose'. And, so, the historian would always say, We've got a, a, a newspaper that's an expose' always has a, a, a certain kind of mud to sling, right? So, you have to, so you have to, you have to pay attention to the genre. But here we have, uh, a, a small group of people who are running an oppositi, opposition printing press right in the place where they probably least likely ought to be at risk to themselves in their property. And these people are not bystanders, but were, were deeply involved in the highest levels of the church in Nauvoo. So, one has to listen to what, uh, people like William Law have to say about what's going on in Nauvoo. And, so, this, this newspaper is kind of one of our main theological, theological documents to analyze what's going on. So, when you start to analyze what's going on from William Law's perspective, the theological term that comes to mind to me, is dumpster fire. This, this is a theological dumpster fire. And what

**Karin Peter 23:04**

That describes how many people feel about the Nauvoo era, Tony.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 23:07**

So, and, one of the things Law says early in the Expositor, and I, I work from a, a, a Word, uh, a Word copy of the Expositor, so, it's, oh, it's gosh, it's about 20, 27, 28 single spaced pages. It's, it's not, not a short document. But I work from a Word copy of it that, uh, the historian, Mark Scherer, uh, ga, gave me a number of years ago. And, uh, if you could see my, my, my printed copy of it, you'd see yellow and pink highlightings all over the place. But one of the things that Law says right up front is that, What we are now is different from what we started out as, right? The, the, the simple principles of the gospel that we started off with, that's not being upheld here. And, so, he tries to catalog in the Expositor, what he calls, uh, damnable heresies, right? Um, interestingly, in, in, at least in Community of Christ tradition, we don't use the term heresy very often, if at all. But here we have in this really important document for 1844, the word heresy being used a couple of times to describe what's being taught. And Law, Law knew intimately what was being taught because he was in the presidency for a while. And so he's able to, he's able to say this, this, this and this, and so he holds up a number of these principles and practices. Um, he interestingly does not ever, as I recall, does not ever point out baptism for the dead, but plurality of gods comes in for profoundly deep censure. This, this is paganism, uh, from Law's perspective. And polygamy and also the abuse of female converts, single female converts, uh, who have made that trip up the Mississippi and find themselves having, uh, special meetings with church leaders, uh, to indicate that there's, that there's, there's more they need to learn. ( . . . ) Law is livid about this. He's outraged about the treatment of, uh, female converts who, who, at great risk and expense leave their families and homes behind in other countries and then find themselves in a really deeply coercive situation in Nauvoo. So, he's, he's very critical of the idea that church and state can somehow be blended here. He's, he's vigor, he vigorously contests the idea of theocracy. Uh, contests the idea that Joseph can be called king. Uh, pushes back on this misuse of the law and the harboring, the harboring of criminals from other places. Uh, and then the use of habeas corpus to go, to get, to, to, to set them free, which makes, which makes the neighbors unhappy, of course, justifiably so. Uh, he also is really critical of the fact that stuff that's, stuff that's practiced secretly is not taught openly. So, there's a transparency issue for Law. So, uh, he uses the word reformation. Many of us, he says, have sought a reformation of the church. His hope, was that publishing the paper in, will say, downtown Nauvoo might start a reform movement. I think it's, it speaks, it speaks well for William Law that rather than just packing up and leaving, there's something about the movement that's so convicting to him that he wants, he wants to do what he can to re, reform it, but, but one of the problems is that he records a number of incidents in which Joseph simply won't have it. He, he will not listen, and, uh, you know, makes extravagant claims about, about how, and if, if he and, if he and the brethren are thrust down to hell for what they're doing, they'll just, they'll just convert hell and stuff like that. And, so, Wil, William Law is, is, uh, let me put it this way. Uh, William Law is too much of a Christian to stand by and let this just simply go on un, uncontested. But, of course, contesting

it was, was going to be, uh, uh, well, not, not very, not very healthy for his printing press and his whole operation.

**Tony Chvala-Smith 23:08**

So, he refers, he refers to Joseph's, quote, unquote, vicious principles because not, not only is, not only in Law's perspective is the theology way off any Christian rails altogether, but also there is, there is, uh, an abuse of power going on, on the part of Joseph. And, uh, one of the things that Law says in here is, uh, he says, We do not believe that God ever raised up a prophet to Christianize the world by political schemes and intrigue. It is not the way God captivates the heart of the unbeliever. But on the contrary, by preaching truth in its own native simplicity and its, in its own original purity, unadorned with anything except its own indigenous beauties. Joseph may plead he has been injured, abused, and his petitions treated with contempt by the General Government, and that he owns the, he only desires and influence of a political character that will warrant him redress of grievances. But we care not. The faithful followers of Jesus must bear in this age, as well as Christ and the apostles did anciently. In other words, one of, one of Joseph's, uh, several theological faults is his attempt to use political power to force the hand of people around him, basically to, to, to try and, and, and force Christianize them, uh, after Joseph's manner. And law says, that's, that's not part of the gospel. That never has been. And, so, he sees, he sees this as a, I mean, he could say, also, the trip, the theological train has gotten derailed here. And William Law says, I can track how the train got derailed, here, here, here, here and here. And we have to name it, we have to name this. We have to name this and get it out in the public. Early in the Expositor, he says, The remedy can never be applied, unless the disease is known. And, so, one could argue that, actually, law is the one who's performing the prophetic function here. Right, because in the Hebrew Bible, the prophets often were the ones who called out religious authorities, called out political authorities for injustice and unfaithfulness. And here Law is, that, that, that has fallen to Law. And, uh, his, I, I, I don't think his intent here is to smear. He, he wants to salvage this movement, which he sees heading for an absolute disaster. And, um, the only way to do it is to expose to the light what's, what's going on what's being said? And there's a couple of places and exposure where Law will say, You know, if, if Joseph had come and said, Oh, I've made, I made a mess of things. I'm so sorry. I'm totally wrong in this stuff. I would have welcomed him back with, you know, with, with, uh, brotherly arms. But no, Joseph, Joseph, uh, is concerned about his appearance now at this point, and so, so, uh, the, the reform of, the reform of his personal life and his theological, uh, his theological, this theological debacle is not going to happen. So, we, we have this from inside. It's a theological document, and deserves to be read as a theological document, I think. It intends to fix the problem by laying, laying it bare, and by simply hoping that readers will say, Yeah, gosh, we have really run off the Christian mainstream rails here, haven't we? And we need to fix this. So, uh, we had, we had a reformer in our church in 1844. Alas, he was not listened to.



**Karin Peter 31:12**

Okay, so that's, um, harsh, Tony. Just be frank. It's like, even I, who am no big fan of Joseph Smith and Nauvoo, I'm like, Ooo, ouch. As, as I listened to that. A couple of things I, I wanted to kind of revisit and see if we can talk a little bit more about and one, Lach, is, um, when you were talking about Nauvoo and, and Joseph Smith as Lieutenant General and, and some of the other things, he held lots of, uh, civic power in Nauvoo. What were some of the other, um, aspects of its, of his civic power that contributed to the dissent that William Law felt?

**Lach Mackay 31:57**

Some of it was, was the way that the charter was set up. So, uh, as mayor, Joseph was automatically Chief Justice. So, uh, which is, I think, very problematic, but the problem was with the charter. But I think it's problematic o be the church president, rather than, maybe it was not problematic, but, um, you know, Joseph is the church president. He's the mayor. He's the Chief Justice. He's the chief real estate developer. Um, and, and, and I think there's probably many other roles that he played, multiple businesses that he was trying to run. Uh, there's no way anybody could do all of that. But it was a very significant consolidation of power in one person.

**Karin Peter 32:46**

Which contributes to some of the off-the-rails behavior that happens when one person holds that much power. That's just human. That's the human experience, I think. (Yeah.) So, um, Tony, you alluded to a couple of things that I think are important to look at when we're talking about this, um, intersection of a historical and theological dialogue. One of them is the Council of Fifty. So, I wanted to know, Lach, if you could say a little bit about what that was. And then Tony, if you could talk about how this whole idea of being crowned with a theological title, what that looks like. So, Lach, could you tell us a bit about the Council of Fifty?

**Lach Mackay 33:25**

Yeah, so this is a little confusing, but they apparently understood that the church and the kingdom of God were not the same thing. And they created something called the Council of Fifty, was charged with literally bringing about the Kingdom of God on earth. They understood that not everybody in the kingdom would be members of the church. So, there were non-members, just a few, but on this Council of Fifty. And so they were involved in things like Joseph's run for the presidency, tried to put the infrastructure in place for Christ to return and reign. And, and my sense is that since Christ wasn't here yet, somebody needed to run things. And so they apparently crowned Joseph King, um, uh, temporarily until, uh, Christ's return.

**Karin Peter 34:16**

Uh, Tony, you want to talk about the theological implications of that kind of setup?

### **Tony Chvala-Smith 34:21**

Well, so, yeah, I mean, William Law sees all of that, of course, as, as problematic. And it's problematic on a number of fronts. Um, one of them is the idea that the kingdom of God is somehow a, a, a human contrivance that we can somehow do X, Y, and Z and have Person A in charge of it and then we've got the kingdom of God ready to roll there. It's, uh, uh, understandable in 19th century American religious culture with its kind of optimistic view of human potential and so on. I quite, I can understand it contextually. Um, but, you know, theologically, it's, it's very, very problematic. Uh, this is, again, from Law's perspective, this is, this is the attempt to use political and coercive power to create something that is not, not by nature coercive, uh, the reign of God. And, so, I think Law saw into that, and I think it's, it's good for us to see into a to, that is, somehow trying to, ther, there's obviously a role for, for Christian faith, a witness in society, but somehow trying to turn a social order into a Christian order raises all kinds of questions like, Well, whose Christianity gets to run it, right, since there's not one kind? And on the basis of what principles and what would dissent look like? Uh, obviously in Nauvoo, dissent is quickly, quickly, uh, squashed. So, so, yeah, that's just, those are just some reflections on, on that. Uh, Law also, by the way, found himself and some of his group, um, poorly treated in terms of being put out of the church, uh, by a secret, a secret gathering that met, a secret counsel that met, uh, contrary to church law. And, um, that was another, another thing that, that miffed Law quite a bit is that we're not even, not even following our own rules here. And instead, we have, so we have extra, extra judicial activity going on in the church, which, a, which can never produce justice of any kind. And, so, something to be, something to be learned from that, um, that when that happens, that happens in the contemporary world in different cultures and countries, uh, it usually is connected to forms of fascism or despotism. Extra judicial killings, for example, in Latin America, um, extra, extra judicial, um, arrests and trials without, you know, without any kind of legal support. All that stuff goes with, with despotism and law, in a variety of words and phrases, says that what we have going here is a form of human despotism. Let me say that contextually going back to, uh, I think, I, I totally agree with Lach that you have to understand Missouri to understand Nauvoo. But also you have to understand the, the underlying kind of theological substructure of the whole second Great Awakening period, this whole revival period, is that you, as a, as an autonomous individual, you have to take salvation into your own hands, right? So, the second Great Awakening revivalists pilloried the Calvinists for their doctrine of predestination. Um, and, instead said, No, we as, as, uh, as individuals who have freedom of choice, we choose we, we, we figure out salvation. And in some ways, um, I would argue that, that Joseph's theology in Nauvoo just follows, follows that arc and just takes it a lot farther, uh, to where, um, uh, the church, the church, the church, Joseph and his church tried to, to maintain salvific control over people's lives. And I think trauma is behind that as well. I, uh, trauma in the Smith family, trauma among church members, all the loss and heartache, but also revivalist theol, theology ought to have been viewed as trauma producing. In fact, it intends to produce trauma. That's the conversion moment based on trauma of your, you know, if you don't choose tonight,

you're going to hell. And, so, that, that kind of theology, then, makes you believe, consciously or unconsciously, that you are in charge of eternity. And, well, um, here I might, I might say, I might agree in principle with the Calvinists. No, God is in charge of eternity. It, it really gets messed up when we think we are. So, just some different reflections, some different, you know, theologians' different reflections on what's going on here.

**Karin Peter** 39:17

Okay. Lach you want to say any more about that, as should I go on to my next question?

**Lach Mackay** 39:22

I'm, I'm ready for the next question.

**Karin Peter** 39:23

Okay. I want to know, uh, hear a little bit about Freemasonry in Nauvoo. Joseph Smith had one opinion about it early on in his life that changed as he got older. Um, how did that, how was that lived out in Nauvoo? How did that affect so many of the things. You mentioned it when you talked about, um, his death in the Carthage Jail. And then Tony, I want to flip back to you and say theologically, what kind of imprint did, did Freemasonry, um, have on the, uh, developing understanding of, of the church. So, Lach?

**Lach Mackay** 39:54

Yeah. Freemasonry was making a comeback in the US by the 1840s and I think that Joseph and other church leaders saw some opportunities in the, the Free Masonic brotherhood. Um, I think that they probably believe that there would be significant, what we would call networking opportunities today, uh, because of the significance of Freemasons in politics and business in some parts of the country. Um, but Joseph also believed that, kind of the common myth at the time, that, that Freemasonry had roots with the builders of King Solomon's Temple who would therefore know what took place in the temple and would have some special insight. And, so, Joseph would say things like, The Freemasons have a distorted priesthood. I am restoring it to its pure form. And, so, Joseph, um, joins the Free Masonic Lodge in Nauvoo and very quickly there are more Freemasons in Nauvoo than in the rest of the state of Illinois combined. So, we very quickly began signing up. Uh, the lodge first met in Hiram Smith's one room brick office just down the street from the Red Brick store. Then it moves into the store. Joseph becomes a Freemason in March of 1842. The next day, he creates the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo using Masonic language to do it. And then maybe five weeks later, he introduces, uh, what would come to be understood as endowments, the, uh, some of the rituals practiced in temples for the Church of Jesus Christ today, and he adapts Masonic ritual and symbols for that. Um, very clearly a relationship, the Nauvoo Temple weathervane, you know, we think of the angel which I think is probably Gabriel on top of the Nauvoo Temple, um, but on top of that was the square and compass. In the sun and moon and star stones, which were on, um, Joseph's

home, the, the Mansion House, in the form of the 10 rainwater collectors. And then also make it onto the Nauvoo Temple, um, as part of these decorative elements. Um, so Freemasonry really significant in the last few years of the Nauvoo story.

**Karin Peter** 42:15

Thanks. Tony, wanna' pick up from there?

**Tony Chvala-Smith** 42:18

Uh, I, just briefly I can. This is, uh, outside of my area of expertise. The only thing I can say is that William Law was not a fan of such things. In the Expositor, he has a list of, uh, 15 resolutions and resolution 11 says, quote, That we consider all secret societies and combinations under penal oaths and obligations, professing to be organized for religious purposes to be anti-Christian, hypocritical and corrupt. Uh, so, I don't yet know enough about William Law's personal history to know what his involvement may have been. That would be, that'd be a good, a good historical question for me to pursue in my spare time. But, uh, this, this is clearly aimed at what he saw as a variety of abusive practices connected to us, secret groups, secret societies in, in Nauvoo. Um, and in, in the, the, uh, resolutions in the Expositor, it's right in the context of the resolutions where other resolutions are talking about, um, well, say, I, I would call it land speculation. It is that, that Joseph and others are selling land to church members, um, perhaps at, at higher prices than they should or some, at least that's how Law looks at it. He sees, he sees this as the church leadership gaming people a bit on it. But the fact that this one about secret societies is right in there, uh, does give me pause and makes me wonder. So, actually, you may have noticed he's quoting Book of Mormon language there. (Yeah) Secret (Yeah.) Combinations. And, so, he's saying, Hey, uh, we've got these original, the original, the original faith of the church in our sacred texts and we're not, we're not living by them. They forbade us to be involved in secret societies. And here we are practicing secret societies again. So, for him, this is just one more evidence of the, of the slide down the slippery slope.

**Karin Peter** 44:24

And as I remember, Lach, um, Joseph Smith was the head of the Masonic Lodge in Nauvoo, was he not?

**Lach Mackay** 44:33

I, I don't know that that's accurate. (Okay.) I think he was elevated pretty quickly through maybe the first three degrees, maybe quicker than was typical, which probably ( . . . ) some people. I think a bigger annoyance was I think the Masons complained that Joseph had shared their rituals with women, (Ahh.) women in the, uh, endowment.

**Karin Peter 44:55**

How interesting. Patriarchy rears its head in all kinds of places, doesn't it? Okay, so, this is a wonderful snapshot for our listeners who are like, Okay, I knew that. I knew that. Whoa, didn't know that. So, I'm hoping that people are having little moments of illumination as they listen to your, uh, discussion about Nauvoo. Are there any, like, last thoughts or comments you want to make based on, on our discussion today?

**Tony Chvala-Smith 45:26**

Uh, yeah, I think for, for the longest time, uh, Nauvoo was Nau, Nauvoo was taboo in Community of Christ circles because, uh, our ancestors, our Reorganization ancestors referred to that whole time as the dark and cloudy day, especially after the, the murder of Joseph. But it was a dark and cloudy day from the perspective of the Reorganization. Um, we, we, we need to not, uh, treat Nauvoo with ta, taboo. We need to understand what it is that Community of Christ has pushed off against as it has developed and followed its own trajectory. That is, when I read through, for example, the Expositor, I see hints and glimmers of what will become Reorganization theology. And there's little, you know, in other words, going back to, going back to core principles and making other stuff kind of, uh, less consequential in the belief life of the church, trying, trying to always go back to the, the, you know, as our, as old Reorganization missionaries used to call it the first principles. That's what it's really about, right? And this, this sense that, that you, you, you can't create the kingdom of God by practicing injustice and coercion. There's something we can learn from that. Uh, kingdom of God has nothing to do with, with those, with political tactics and that sort of thing. Um, the, the reformist impulse is something we continue to learn from. This, this is a place where, I would argue, that the Reorganization and Community of Christ which has descended from it, is the Protestant branch of this movement. That is, we believe the church is always in need of reform. Now, I won't say always in need of, of restoration. I, I, you know, I think restoration is a problematic concept. I'll just say that right out, the idea that there's a pristine original and so on. But reform, yes. And there's always need, there's always need to get the train back on the track. There's always need to take stock of, of where we've messed up, where we have slipped, um, where leadership may have not gone the best possible way and where we can correct that. Um, and where followership may have not gone the best possible way. And, and we, we need to correct that. So, this reformist impulse that's in the Expositor, I think, has a lot to teach Community of Christ. In fact, I think some of that is in our genes. And, so, for me, if you, if you want to, if you want to trace back something like a justice gene and Community of Christ, I think you can find that justice gene all the way back in this single edition newspaper published June 7, 1844, which, I would say, is actually the birth of the Reorganization, not 1860. That's what I would li, I, I think we should celebrate June 7, 1844, as Nauvoo Expositor Day in Community of Christ and say, This is probably when we really started, we just didn't know it yet.

**Karin Peter** 48:19

We can print those buttons and sell them at, uh, church events. So, another source of revenue. So, one of the things I find interesting is that when I talk to folks who come from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and they asked me about, about dissent in Community of Christ, I just laugh because we are, uh, the dissenters, that's pretty much our, our, our makeup, if you will, we're comfortable with dissent. And we've learned how to manage that in community, um, for, for good, for the, for the blessing of community as opposed to, um, in a detrimental way. So, I think we can trace that back, if you will, to the Expositor and say, Here is a very public, um, beginning of our history of, of dissent. And we're okay being, you know, the angry grumblers until we get some kind of compromise worked out. It, it's worked for us. So, Lach, what would you like to, uh, to add before we close our discussion?

**Lach Mackay** 49:21

I'm gonna' go with a simple one. Community that focuses inward versus outward is threatening to neighbors.

**Karin Peter** 49:31

Yeah. So, all the Seventy in me agrees with you wholeheartedly. So, whenever we do that and focus only inward and not outward, I think we are hurting our understanding of what it means to be followers of Jesus. So, this has been an interesting conversation. There are times when, uh, I'm looking at the history of Nauvoo and I do think it's a dark and cloudy day and there are other times I'm a, I'm a little more friendly to it, but, um, especially in the fall when it's beautiful there. But I do want to thank both of you for the discussion today. In our next installment, we're going to, to move on to Joseph Smith III and discuss his life and the Reorganization, the beginning of that. And, in the meantime, for our listeners, be sure to catch up on all the topics Project Zion Podcast covers at [projectzionpodcast.org](http://projectzionpodcast.org). And, um, also, I want to thank Lach and Tony again for being willing to have these conversations. This is Cuppa' Joe. I'm Karin Peter. Thanks so much for listening.

**Josh Mangelson** 50:47

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