

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 00:33

Welcome to *Project Zion Podcast*. This is “Cuppa Joe” where we explore Restoration history, and I'm your host for a “Cuppa Joe”, Karin Peter. Our discussion today is the third episode in a series of conversations about the historical and theological journey of Community of Christ and our panel members, as always, for these conversations are Lach Mackay and Tony Chvala-Smith. They've both been on *Project Zion Podcast* multiple times but let's review. Lach is an historian and Director of Community of Christ Historic Sites, serves as a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles. Tony is a theologian who teaches scripture and theology at Community of Christ Seminary in Graceland University. So, you've heard both of them before if you're *Project Zion* listeners. We have talked about the, the early Restoration and we've talked about Nauvoo, woo-who. That was I think last time. And this time we're going to have a conversation about what happened after the death of Joseph Smith, Jr. So, let's start with you, Lach, and talk a little bit about this period in our particular history and what was going on.

Lach Mackay 01:52

So, after Joseph's death, because there was no clear method of succession laid out, the Church began to branch out into various branches. Some are heading west with Brigham Young within a few years. Some go with Alpheus Cutler. Some follow David Whitmer. Some go to Texas, what would become Texas with Lyman Wight. Others go east with Sidney Rigdon. Some follow William McLellin or Gladden Bishop to Kirtland. The ones I want to focus on, though, are folks that are kind of centering around James Strang or William Smith. They are in Northern Illinois, southern Wisconsin. Some of Strang followers eventually make it to Beaver Island, Michigan. And those, those people slowly start to come back together in the early 1850s. Both Strang and William Smith had initially lifted up monogamy, but both, it turns out, are secretly practicing polygamy, so their followers kick them to the curb, slowly start coming back together. They really only had two things in common. They, they hoped that a son of Joseph might lead them someday, and they were big fans of monogamy. But they were kind of, in some ways, lost for a while. But they started gathering under, some Jason Briggs and some under Zenas H. Gurley. Both of those men had experiences that led them to believe that they were going to be able to pull things back together and eventually they had this idea that they would do that with, with a child of Joseph leading them. So again, Northern Illinois, southern Wisconsin, may be critically important to the success of these scattered saints, most of these folks had been members of the early church, was that William Marks eventually joins with them. He had been the stake president in Nauvoo. Some historians argue he had the best claim of authority to succeed Joseph Smith, Jr. He wasn't particularly interested in leadership. But, but his joining was critical because Emma and the Smith family I think, had a really strong respect for Williams Marks. So, these people are coming back together in the early 1850s initially. They selected Jason Briggs as a president pro tem. He also had this experience that led him to believe that a child of Joseph, even Joseph Smith III, would join with

them someday. So, they eventually send missionaries to Nauvoo, Samuel Gurley and E.C. Briggs, Edmund Briggs. They believe that they're going to be immediately successful, doesn't turn out that way. Joseph Smith III stops just short of kicking them out of his house. One of them starts crying, he's so upset by their lack of success, they were, they were so confident in what was going to happen. One returns home, the other stays in Nauvoo, I think for close to a year, and begins to develop a relationship with Joseph Smith III, working for him at times on the farm and just, just getting to know him. Joseph III, of course, had grown up in the remnants of his father's communal experiment, surrounded by the after effects of what can go wrong in gathered community, and I think he is profoundly impacted by, by the violence that was part of his culture, but also that had, had taken his father and his uncle's lives, and those two things, I think, profoundly impacted Joseph III. And I think we can still see the effects of those in the church today. Joseph III also had some legal training in Canton, Illinois and I think his legalistic mind was pretty important in what would become the Reorganization as well. And then finally, his pragmatism, I think, in some ways, can still be seen with us. Joseph III was not quick, though, again, to want, want to join us. He was, he was pretty cautious, but in 1856 there are kind of three critical things that I think are happening. He has a conversation with Christopher and Putnam Yates. Their family had been members of the early church. They were no longer, I think, engaged, but Joseph III is talking with them. They start trying to convince him that he should go to Utah, that, that he would be rich if he went to Utah, that he could have lots of cute wives if he went to Utah. He's kind of thinking well, maybe, maybe, my, my distaste, my extreme distaste for polygamy is just my mom's influence on me. Maybe *[inaudible]*...

Karin Peter 06:35

Okay, so I'll stop there, because I'm getting a total revision on the temptation in the desert that we talk about at length. So, we got some, we got some parallels running through my mind right here. So, remind us on who the Yates are, and why they're influencing him in this way.

Lach Mackay 06:53

They're, they're just friends living in Nauvoo. They had been members of the early church, their family had anyway. So, you know, I just think they're seeing that Nauvoo is struggling. Joseph III is, is not financially successful at that point in time. He and his brother had a partnership in a farm and the brother dies, and Joseph III ends up with, with the shared debt, which would burden him for many, many years to come. And I'm sure that Utah was in the news in significant ways at that point in time. So that's all...

Karin Peter 07:25

Okay...

Lach Mackay 07:26

...just kind of swirling around.

Karin Peter 07:27

All right.

Lach Mackay 07:29

And then, not too long after that, two Mormon apostles, one of them a cousin of Joseph III's, George A. Smith, and Erastus Snow come through, and they're inviting him to come on out, let's visit. And so that really is making Joseph III wonder what, what is in store for me? What might the Lord have for me to do? And then you layer on that the visit of the RLDS missionaries. So, he's, he's at a kind of a difficult point in his life. And I'm intrigued by this, this account of what almost feels like Joseph III's first vision turns up, and it's a little later, and so some of the same questions I have about Joseph Jr's experience I have about Joseph III's account, shows up in Tullige's *Life of Joseph the Prophet* in the RLDS revision of it. But Joseph III in that describes an experience that he has that, that, again, is somewhat reminiscent of his father's experience. But in the end of that, he's told, "The light in which you stand is a greater than theirs," which means the folks in the west, and that, in Joseph III's later telling, it kind of shuts the door on Utah for him. He knows that's not an option. And so, what should he do? And then he had some loss in his life, a child, and just, he was having some emotional challenges as well. And that eventually led him to believe that he should, should take up the invitation of those who would become the Reorganization. He writes to William Marks again, a good friend of the family, said yep, I'm ready. I want to join. And Marks, I love Mark's response, I think it's hilarious. Instead of jumping up and down in joy, Mark says, "We have had enough of man-made prophets, and we don't want any more of that sort. If God has called you, we want to know it. If he has, the Church is ready to sustain you; if not, we want nothing to do with you." I think that, that response, I think, was a bit of a shock to Joseph III.

Karin Peter 09:45

I'm liking this guy. That's, I'm really liking him.

Lach Mackay 09:47

But, I, I, love him. William Marks is one of my favorites. We need to know more about him. There is a biography in the works, John Dinger and Cheryl Bruno, and I think it's going to be a critically important story that has been relatively untold. So, Joseph III and Emma make the decision to go to the Amboy, Illinois Conference, April of 1860. They are rowed across the Mississippi to catch a train up north, to catch another train going back. And they affiliate with the church in Amboy. Again, a great quote from Joseph Smith III, "I come to you, if you will receive me, give my ability, and the influence my name may bring, together with what little power I possess, and I trust that your prayers and faith to be sustained." He also said as part of that, "I have come in obedience to a power not of my own, and shall be dictated by the power that sent me." So, at that point, April 1860, Joseph III and Emma, make it official. They join with a Reorganization. They're accepted on their original baptisms, which was not uncommon at the time. They then, with others, begin to turn their attention to gathering up the scattered saints, folks that were, some back east in Kirtland or Pittsburgh or some down south, folks like Isaac Sheen in Covington, Kentucky, many in Wisconsin and Northern Illinois that, that kind of critically important was southwestern Iowa, folks who had started across the plains and then stopped or came back. And so, Joseph III and those working with them were tasked with creating an organization out of a very disorganized group of people. Joseph III had made a promise to George Edmonds, Jr. a non-member friend of the church in 1860, when he joined with the Reorganization, that he would stay in Nauvoo for five years. He was not going to move for five years. I think that's based on economics. Edmonds was hoping that, that Joseph III joining the Reorganization might be a spark to Nauvoo in Hancock County. So, Joseph III stays in Nauvoo, but the, kind of the, the main focus of church government is, is Northern

Illinois. So that's a bit of a challenge. He's doing a lot of things by mail that eventually, once in 1865 the decision is made to make him editor of the *Herald*, you know, they realize he really needs to be where the press is. So, the decision is made that he's going to move north, which he does. He gets his five years in so, so beginning of January 1866, he moves to Plano, Illinois, and is very involved in the *Herald*. Now, I said where the press is but the reality is that they're initially printing in Cincinnati, but the kind of the operations are taking place near Amboy or in Amboy, Illinois. Isaac Sheen is initially the editor of the new Church, of publication. They called it the *True Latter Day Saints' Herald*, first edition, January of 1860. He had previously published something called the *Aaronic and Melchizedek Herald* for William Smith. Sheen had been a radical abolitionist in the 1830s. Here's somebody else we need to know more about. He published in a newspaper an ad for a black woman to marry him. To make a point, he's, he's a radical abolitionist. He'd also been a daguerreotypist, learned the art of the daguerreotype in Philadelphia in 1840. Dick Howard did a really interesting survey on the focus of the first 12 editions of the *Saints Herald*. There's 292 pages in those first 12 editions.

Lach Mackay 14:02

He looked at how many pages things get, so not surprisingly, apostasy and Utah Mormonism got 65 pages out of those 292 pages. Opposition to polygamy got 36 pages. Conference minutes got 29 pages. Lineal priesthood got 28 pages. Obedience and revelation to the law got 17 pages, and news from the elder 16 pages, and then it drops from there. This is going to be a reoccurring theme, that a constant battle for the publication was a lack of funds. They were, they were hobbled by their lack of resources, and we're not always able to get out issues on time. Sometimes there were significant delays. Again, it was printed in Cincinnati until 1863 when the publication was moved to Plano. I said something about Amboy earlier, but it was, Ambo is where the first Conference was but Plano was where the printing was taking place and where Joseph III moved to. Joseph III was appointed to editor again in 1865, removed in 1866. Some important events during the Plano years, the *Holy Scriptures* published in 1867. The church turned their attention overseas in significant ways: Charles Derry to the United Kingdom in 1863, John Bear to Germany and Switzerland in 1872. John Avondet to Switzerland, France and Italy, 1872, Charles Wesley Wandell and Glauod Rodger sent to Australia, but, and a great story that we won't have time to dig into, but their boat breaks down so they convert significant numbers in Tahiti in 1873 and continue on to Australia, begin the work there for the Reorganization. Wandell had gone as an LDS missionary, discovered polygamy, was not a fan, found the RLDS church, was going back for the RLDS church, gets things started with Rodger, but dies pretty quickly. So, Rodger really would be considered the father of the church in Australia. Denmark and Sweden opened in 1875 by Hans Hansen and Magnus Fryando. Mark Scherer has done some nice work, kind of talking about the way conversion was taking place and the way that impacted early missionary efforts overseas. So, members in other nations would, would learn about the church, they'd be converted, they'd emigrate. They discover things like the authoritarian nature of the church in Utah, or often they'd discover polygamy for the first time after they're in Utah. They would leave, sometimes going home, but sometimes coming back to the Midwest. They would bump into the Reorganization, they would be reconverted, and then they would often be sent back to their homelands. So that's, that's kind of the pattern that a lot of early international missions took. Again, though, some significant challenges that we were facing at that point in time, the lack of funds, the lack of resources to support missions and missionaries. We also had a difficult time matching language skills among those gifted enough to be sent back. There was also long separations from families, in some cases, five years or more.

Sometimes families would go but often they would be left behind and it would be up to the church to support them as well as support the missionary, so extraordinarily difficult for missionaries and their families during those years.

Karin Peter 17:52

In fact, we have, in the journals and records, we have letters from families of missionaries to the church because often they found themselves in dire straits,

Lach Mackay 18:03

Desperate poverty, desperate poverty, which I think is not, it's not uncommon for children of missionaries to not be fans of the church for, for that, and other reasons. Other significant Plano developments; the first church seal, the church had been incorporated in 1872, and in April 1874 they accepted new church seal. Now that's, that's the thing that you stamp legal documents with. It was not designed to be the visual symbol of the church, but that is what it would become. So of course, the lion, the lamb, the child, the word "peace" underneath, and on the earliest version, a palm tree in the background, probably due to the success of the church in, in French Polynesia. Other important events during the Kirtland years: the Kirtland Temple Suit, which of course we lost. Let me clarify, we didn't lose. The case was dismissed. It likely had no legal bearing, but for us, it was all about identity. We, we could have done nothing and owned Kirtland Temple free and clear by 1881, but instead we, in some ways, gambled our possession of the Temple because, for us, it wasn't about owning the temple. It was about proving that we were the original church at that point in time. So, if we had the original temple, that looked just as it originally did, it would prove that we were the original church. So we went ahead with this suit, even though our local counsel did not show up in Ohio. We forged ahead on our own, which was a terrible mistake, which means we filed the suit wrong. So, the judge, Judge Sherman, took our language, "The Reorganized Church is the true and lawful successor to and entitled to the properties thereof, Joseph Smith, Jr.'s. Church," great language for us, the judge took our language, repeated it back, but then said oh, sorry, you filed the case wrong. Case dismissed. So, we took his judgment, left off the last sentence and published it far and wide. I would like to think that, that the attorney in Ohio didn't send the full judgment to Joseph III, but I don't know that. But in any case, I don't think that's our proudest moment. So, Kirtland Temple Suit though, so, we, we ended up, we were going to have the Temple one way or the other, through either adverse possession. That's how we ended up with it. We owned it. Well, we, we possessed it. We proclaimed to the world it was ours. In Ohio, you have 21 years to object. Nobody did so, cloudy ownership becomes clear. Kim Loving did a great article in the *Mormon History Association Journal* a number of years back on that. Also, during the Plano years, a number of Utah missions, so pushing the work of the church forward in Utah. We were convinced, I think, that as soon as we went out there with our message, and opposition to polygamy, and lifting up Joseph III as the lawful successor to Joseph Smith, Jr., that folks would sign up in droves. Didn't work out that way. And those who did join us would pretty quickly leave. It was not a comfortable place to be if you were considered by your neighbors as an apostate. So, every good old RLDS family has the story of wrapping their wagon wheels with rags and sneaking out in the middle of the night to avoid the Danites. I have no idea if that's true or not. I do think that it would have been an uncomfortable place to be had you, had you left the LDS church. And tragically, also during the Plano years, David Hiram Smith's commitment. He was probably our most talented missionary. He was extraordinarily gifted at poetry, wrote hymns, was a painter, but also eventually very, very ill, probably

bipolar and maybe schizophrenia, but very ill. Joseph III had called him into his presidency, but Jos-, but David was never able to serve in that capacity, so committed in 1877, Elgin, Illinois, lived out his life there. So, ridiculously quick, lots of information in a hurry. That's kind of a 30,000 foot overview of the Plano years.

Karin Peter 22:51

A blurred journey through several decades, yes, as we go through there. And, of course, contextually, during this same time period, the United States is being fractured and going through the horrific struggle of the Civil War. So that, the, the political climate with, not just polygamy, but slavery being the two issues that the Congress is fighting about, the United States Congress is fighting about. Difficult time all around for a lot of...

Lach Mackay 23:27

Twin relics of barbarism. Twin relics of barbarism.

Karin Peter 23:32

Okay, so, with that framework, Tony, with all of that going on, what was happening to us, theologically? I mean, that's a lot of stuff to deal with. We talk about the stress scale. I don't know how many listeners have taken the stress scale. It's like, how stressed are you? And then, if you've moved, if you've had a child, if you've been divorced, all these things. And if you hit 300, you're as stressed as you can be. I'm thinking this is way above 300. This is like off the charts,

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:02

Sure. Have you, have you survived a theological train wreck?

Karin Peter 24:06

Yes, it...

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:08

Really high up the stress scale, I should think. So...

Karin Peter 24:11

So, let's talk about it. What was going on?

Tony Chvala-Smith 24:14

I want to start by saying that who Community of Christ is, receives a lot of genetic material from this period. It's very, very formative of our theological identity. I'm struggling for an analogy. I'll try this one and, and see if it works. So, my home, I grew up in Michigan, and though Charmaine and I do not live in Michigan anymore, it's still my home. And all kids growing up in Michigan, at least when I was growing up, learned Michigan history, and we learned about the Lumbering Era. And so, from basically the, immediately after the Civil War, up to about the 1890s or so, the lower half, or sorry, the upper half of the lower peninsula of Michigan, was logged off. It had virgin conifer forests on it and massive lumbering companies came in and clear cut the land, and the, the lumber actually was used to build up homes and settlements out on the frontier. In fact, we're not quite there yet, but some, some of the

some of the wood or flooring in the house that was built for Joseph III in Lamoni came from Michigan. I'm not surprised. But the analogy is this, once the forests were clear cut, and after massive fires that burned the dried slash, second growth started, and second growth was more deciduous trees, some conifers still, but deciduous trees. And so, if you travel in central and northern Michigan in the autumn, you have these magnificent autumn views of hardwoods, but that was the second growth. The original growth was, was pine forests, and pine spruce forests. And so, what I'm trying to do with the analogy is say, let's, let's be real. The initial experiment of the Restoration movement, 1820 to 1844, ended up clear cut. It burned, and it's not surprising that everybody who survived said we want to be the original. But the question is what grew up afterwards? And you can argue, I think very well, that, that Utah Mormonism is the, it's what grew up basically out of the scenes from Nauvoo, essentially. But then the Reorganization, first of all, the new organization which starts in 1851-ish, and then the Reorganization starting officially in 1860, this is second growth of a different kind. Now, yes, there are, as in the forest in Michigan, there are conifers there, so there are, there are pieces of the early movement in, in the new organization and Reorganization, but, but there's new stuff growing. And one of the, one of the key theological points I want to make about the new organization, and then subsequently, the Reorganization is, there's this deep instinct to practice a kind of what I call critical reduction to basic principles, right. They're, they're stuck in so many ways, because they came from different factions, and so on. They're, they're stuck with, how much of the early experiment we call the Restoration Movement, how much of it can we take with us? How much of it is theologically viable. And of course, they, in this period, they referred back generally to the Nauvoo experience, and afterwards as the "dark and cloudy day". So those who become the Reorganization agree essentially, that among the things that they will reject are polygamy. And they're looking for somebody who can be the legitimate successor of Joseph Jr., so we want, they use this priesthood lineage, family lineage thing as a way to do that. And they wanted to avoid the authoritarianism they experienced or remembered from Nauvoo, so the, the very, very dissenting groups and people who became part of their Reorganization.

Tony Chvala-Smith 28:39

Their initial consensus is no to polygamy, no to authoritarianism, and we're going to wait until the true son of the true prophet comes. That's where they started. So, what I'm getting at here is that already from the new organization period, there is an instinct in what will become the Reorganization and what will become the Community of Christ, to say, not everything from the early period is valid, right. That is, I'll call it the Protestant principle at work in the birth of the Reorganization. There are many reasons why I think we could legitimately call ourselves Protestants. One of them is that we say not everything inherited from the tradition turns out to be legitimate or valid. And so, they start with that critical principle and it continues. And oh, by the way, all the way to today, we talk about Enduring Principles, right, right. We, we say if you really want to understand this Church, you got to look at this, you have to focus on the central stuff, not on this peripheral stuff. But that's what they're doing in the 1850s and 60s is they're trying to say, what is more valid? What is less valid? What is invalid? Now, the complicating factor in this theologically, I think, is that they, they critiqued polygamy and authoritarianism but were very unable, unwilling to critique the prime originator of the authoritarianism and the polygamy, so that then the mystique of Joseph the Prophet they, I mean for them, he's still the martyr. I don't use that language, but they use it. He's still Joseph the martyr. And they did not have the critical lenses to be able to say, oh, gracious, this stuff came from Joseph, right. For them, if they had said that, for many that would have been simply invalidated the whole thing, right? They had this kind of black and white,

all or nothing sort of view, If, if, if you invalidate Joseph on anything, it invalidates everything he did. So instead, they talk about the "dark and cloudy day," and they blame stuff on Brigham Young, and sometimes Brigham Young is very blameworthy, but they blame, they blame everything on Brigham Young. They talk about, we don't, we don't want any more man-made prophets, William Mark says. Well, he may be referring to the individual successors who claimed to be prophets on their own, but it's going to take a while to realize that Joseph Smith, Jr., in that 1839-1844 period, may very well have fit under that. He makes, he may have slipped out of a person with a prophetic, legitimate prophetic calling into somebody who was now an authoritarian control freak, who was, himself, departing from the calling that he had, he'd begun with. They just, they're just not able to think to there yet. It's gonna take a long time. So, so, they're trying to say, who are we? We're not this. We're not this. We're not this. How much of Nauvoo can we take with us? How much of the early movement can we take with us? And you can't do that without having theological criteria to say, true, less true, false. So, I think that's very, very important for understanding what becomes eventually Community of Christ. That is, the very fact that today, we say, belief in and use of the Book of Mormon is not a test of fellowship in the church. Well, darn, that goes all the way back to not just 1879 and a conference, a piece of conference legislation passed in 1879 that I'm going to come to in a minute called Resolution 222. It's a very lovely piece of theology, actually. But even before that, when, when Joseph III is first in the presidency and they're trying to decide, you know, well, should we, should we make, should we make the, this belief in the divine plurality, i.e., polytheism, is that, is that, should that be part of, yeah, there were some people in the new organization and early organization who had carried that with them out of Nauvoo, and some who didn't like it either? And so, what do you do? And Joseph used the language in a session with the Council of Twelve back in the 1860s of, we shouldn't make belief in the divine plurality a test of fellowship. So, in other words...

Tony Chvala-Smith 33:26

...we have a critical principle of conscience, a critical principle of, we're not going to accept everything that we inherited from the tradition, and also a critical principle of, it kind of has to align with basic shared Christian values, right. In other words, being a, being the Restoration Church doesn't mean you can just simply wholesale abandon everything that the Christian tradition has ever said. So, notice these things are forming here at this period. So, I think it's fasc-, it's a fascinating period for understanding what will become of our personality as a church, our character as a church. It's going to take a long time, but that's where you find the genetic material. Some other things that are interesting to me about Joseph III in this period, Joseph, Joseph III has what I will call, right, he demonstrates what I would call a kind of faith generosity, right. So, he, he doesn't believe that outsiders are de facto wrong, and he doesn't believe that insiders are de facto right. So, there's this element of you have to test things for yourself and see where your conscience takes you, and see what kind of experiences you have, and so on. His, he has a deep commitment about what we would call personal discernment, right. So, among, among the experiences he has, I mean, Lach mentioned that one, that one great one about more light versus less light. He has this other experience where he believes he's, he's being asked to make a choice, right, and in part of what he sees in this experience is a bustle, a kind of like a bustling city center with people, you know, rushing around doing business and, you know, making names for themselves and, and living prosperously. The other part of what he sees is kind of farmsteads that are well tended, and it has a sense of peace and of, you know, kind of goodwill around it. And he's, he's basic, his experience is basically, he's going to have to make a choice between one or the other. This

is, as I think, right around the time he's still trying to figure out what he's going to do about his law career. And he, he says, I would rather go with the happy little farmsteads. And in a sense, he was making an existential choice for himself, that his life was going to be about care for others, care for small community, not making a name for himself, not getting wealthy, versus popularity, size, money, etc. That was the choice he made. Well, that's actually really profound, I think, right. He, he chose, he chose the path that was not going to make him ultra, ultra-well known and successful, in terms of the larger categories of life. There's something in that for us about discerning ways ahead. Discerning ways ahead ought to be, we have to be very circumspect about creating, setting up a series of criteria about what looks big, successful and wonderful, versus what looks faithful, generous, and kind. So that's an interesting thing about him, I think. Another interesting thing about him is that when he's serving as a justice of the peace, and he's reading law, and, and, you know, he's still in, he's still in Nauvoo, some of the, some of the immigrants who came to the city after the, the exodus, spoke German only. They spoke other languages. They were, they were refugees, immigrants, so on, from other countries, and Joseph III, as it is recalled...

Tony Chvala-Smith 37:32

...would sometimes reduce his legal fees or reduce his justice of the peace fees to, to, to work up deeds and land purchase agreements and stuff. And sometimes he wouldn't charge them anything at all because he was sympathetic to the fact that, that their, their command of English was not good and they didn't fully know the culture yet. They didn't understand the legal system. Hmm, so the found-, the founding president of what will be the Reorganization was concerned about immigrants and refugees, and about fairness and compassion towards them, was willing to, was willing, willing to cut his pay in order to help people who didn't really know the lay of the land that well or the culture well. Well, that's something quite interesting to me. And so, I'm always looking not for a peace gene, but a justice gene, or justice genes in our past. And those little instincts of Joseph III, I think they, they carry through, and they have something to teach us very much today. So, what else? What else can I say? There's, there's a lot of theological stuff that's going on in this period, and then the period we'll cover in our next, our next podcast, but one of, one of the things that happens in this period, the Plano period, is that the Reorganization has to decide, how will it do theology? And so, you know, how will we discern what is true doctrine, false doctrine, and so on? Jason Briggs, and Zenas Gurley, Jr. get involved in various controversies with Joseph III, and with the church over this same issue of how much of the early period do we carry with us, carry forward? Zenas Gurley's issue was, how, how authoritative is this prophet? And, is this prophet going to be treated simply as the last word on everything? Jason Briggs, by the 1870s, is, he's becoming informed about such things as biblical criticism, which is all the rage in Europe. He now knows that Moses didn't write the Pentateuch. He's becoming aware of evolutionary science and his time in, as a missionary in Utah was somehow deeply affective to him. He's, he said, he basically is coming to the conclusion that the Reorganization, which he helped found actually, the Reorganization has inherited a bunch of theological flotsam from the early period, that it's not going to do us well to continue and we need to drop it right now, and we need to have open debate. And of course, when Briggs talks about open debate, he always assumes that he will win. But we would need to have...

Karin Peter 40:34

Don't we always?

Tony Chvala-Smith 40:36

...we need to have, we need to have open debate. The *Herald*, this, this magazine should be opened up, needs to become a debating society, debating forum on true versus false doctrine in this movement. And he wants to, he wants to say, look, the gathering failed every time we tried it. It was a miserable mistake, and yet, here we are, Joseph III's a new prophet, and the average member is like, when do we get to gather? When are we going to gather? When are we going to do that Zion thing again? And Briggs is like, have you learned nothing? Right. It's, it's horrible for relations with people around us. It fails every time. He uses the word, it "pauperizes" the people, it impoverishes them more. And so, we got to drop what he called the idea of a local Zion. And he was really critical of the idea of the, the idea that human beings pre-existed their physical bodies. He found that to be just untenable theologically. He wanted to drop that. He, both he and, and Gurley, Jr. want to, want to say, if, if, if we have to use the Doctrine and Covenants, do we have to believe everything in it? Because there's some stuff in it, that's like, I don't believe. So how do we, we have, we have our scriptures, but how do we read them? How do we test them? How do we use them? So, what else is Briggs into? Well, Briggs, Briggs, like Gurley, is very concerned about the idea of a prophet who's simply treated as a mouthpiece of God, and there's no way to critically discern and work with the prophet.

Tony Chvala-Smith 42:22

Keep in mind, in, at least in my view, this is a remnant of the Nauvoo theology. That is, they're reacting to the idea of the prophet as a living oracle, who, who's, who no matter what he says, cannot be critiqued. In fact, Gurley, Jr., I think, very theologically at least says, based on section 19 of what is our *Doctrine and Covenants* and, and based on practice in the church, we, we, we are obliged to believe everything that a prophet says in the name of God without testing it at all. And so, we've, we've, we've pushed ourself right back to, to the Middle Ages in a sense, right. And so, these guys are very critical of, of, of stuff that's going on. Keep in mind, at least with Briggs, is a founding member of the Reorganization. So, they're rather, they're rather ahead of their time. The average member of the Reorganization, 1860s and 70s, there's a kind of a theological consensus among them. Hey, we've got the true prophet. We've got the right books. We've got the right Bible now that the new translation has been published. We're going to gather to Zion again. We've got all the right stuff, and we have these couple of leaders who are challenging us at every turn on stuff we've all, kind of implicitly, theologically agreed on. So, it's, it's a very difficult situation for Joseph the, Joseph III to deal with. This, Joseph, by instinct, is going to men-, wants to let people follow their consciences places. I think in that way, he's quite different from his, his father, at least who his father became. So, they're pushing, they're, they're pushing, Briggs and Gurley are always pushing at the boundaries, always pushing on Joseph III, who's tolerant for a long time, but both, to make a long, complicated story short, Briggs, Briggs and Gurley both will end up leaving the church. They go through situations with Conferences in which they are not sustained in their offices and then reinstated and people want to try them for heresy. Yes, by the way, we did use the term heresy in the Church of the 1860s and 70s. I wonder where we got that term? Well, that term was used several times in the *Nauvoo Expositor*, right. But we were using that term and people thought Briggs, Gurley had, in some ways, kind of fallen away from the consensus. But in, what's happening this period is that the church is, the church is having to say, what are our theological standards? So, a couple of pieces of legislation are passed. Conference Resolution 214 and 215, which basically say, the three standard books are our reference tools. The Bible, i.e., they usually meant then

the new translation because it had been published in 1867, *The Book of Mormon*, the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and any other revelations we get. People like Briggs and Gurley are like, well, this is exactly the problem, because the books, as a whole, contain stuff that many of us would say, I don't think so. The *Doctrine and Covenants* still contains stuff about baptism for the dead. That was another issue for, for Briggs. So how do we, how do we, we've got sacred texts, how do we use them? This goes back and forth, and actually the result was in 1879, in the autumn Conference, a, a resolution identified as number 222, that I think is authored by Joseph III and William Blair, W.W. Blair. Lach can correct me if I'm wrong on that, but I think Blair, Blair become, Blair becomes kind of Joseph III's right hand man. And he's, he's really sharp, brilliant. And in some respects, kind of a, I mean, I think he's a, he's a brilliant thinker, but he's a total apologist for the Reorganization as he understood it, and he sometimes comes across a little bit like a hatchet man, too. So, he pushed back hard on Briggs and Gurley, and he was one of the few people who was able to look at Briggs's arguments and find all the holes in them. Briggs was not, Briggs is articulate, but he's not always, he leaves gaps in his thinking sometimes, so. But anyway, this, this, this resolution basically says something like this.

Tony Chvala-Smith 47:19

When we, when we passed the resolutions that made those three books the standard of reference, we weren't trying to say that church members have to believe every last thing in all the books, right. That wasn't the intent. Belief in the revelations in the book of covenants, or any abstract doctrines that might be in them, like baptism for the dead or so on, belief in those is not a test of membership or fellowship in the church, right. So, so the books give us the rules of procedure, which we have to follow. But when, when the books say different things theologically, membership in the Reorganization does not depend on you believing everything in them. And 222 says it's not a good idea ever to proscribe the liberty of conscience, right, you know, shackle conscience, however, those who are representing the church are obliged to stick with, in their preaching and teaching, to stick with "the plain provisions of the gospel," right. Whatever, whatever we teach that is necessary for salvation, that's the heart of the matter. And so, as a minister of the church, you're obligated to speak for those, and you're also obligated morally, not to use your ministry and the pulpit and public opportunities to constantly arraign and decry different aspects of your own church. In other words, you are a public representative of the church. You are morally bound to share the public faith of the church. You can disagree with parts of it, but don't use your office to, you know, get people all upset because you don't believe in baptism for the dead. We, Briggs, by the way, Briggs will eventually turn out to have been right on a number of things, but he was just pushing pretty hard for where the people were at that time. So, 222 also says, if you're called upon publicly to explain some aspects of the church that you personally have disagreements with, you have to clearly discriminate or differentiate between the Church's position and your private position. And then finally, 222 says, don't use, don't use your ministerial authority to advance speculative ideas about this and that, right. So, in other words, 222 is trying to say, we have, and I'm gonna give you the technical theological language for this: formal principle versus material principle. The formal principle is where you go to settle disputes. Material principle are the interpretative tools you use to decide what in the formal principle you will use, right. So, there's the books. Think of them as, I used Luke Johnson's image, the three books are like the working bibliography of the church. But then, what's, what's the most important stuff in the books? Well, the, the first principles of the gospel, i.e., the six principles: faith, repentance, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment, which they took out of Hebrews chapter six, that also, this says, refers to the Epitome of Faith as part of the lens by

which we go to what, that, what the heart of scripture is, right. So, when people say we're non-creedal, this is something they, they forget. First of all, the term doesn't literally always mean that. Non, a non-creedal literally means we don't have beliefs. And oh, no, no, the Reorganization had beliefs, and they were going to get cast in stone pretty soon, but also, people in this period are using the Epitome of Faith, that 1842 summary of the Church's faith that Joseph made, Joseph Smith, Jr. made. They're using it as a lens by which to say, here's the central stuff, versus the peripheral stuff, right. So let me give you a comparable example in Lutheranism. So, in Lutheranism, the formal principle is scripture alone, right...

Tony Chvala-Smith 51:51

...but Luther himself knew that the Bible had good stuff and less good stuff in it. And so, the question is, how do you, how do you read, how do you use the working bibliography? And Luther said, justification by faith, that's the material principle. Whatever, whatever teaches, whatever "was Christum treibet," whatever puts forth Christ, and whatever teaches justification by faith, that's, that's the material principle. That's the center of scripture. And we're doing something very similar. We've got the three standard books. That's our, that's where we go to resolve theological disputes. How will we use them? Well, it's not that everything said in the books is of equal value. We were going to use the plain provisions of the gospel, that which is necessary for salvation: faith, repentance, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of dead, eternal judgment, and then kind of the Epitome of Faith, that's the material principle. So, we still do that. Community of Christ's instinct to say, here's our public faith, here's our books, here's our formally stated doctrines. Get as close to them as you can, but, but when it comes right down to it, we're going to focus on Enduring Principles and some very key concepts and beliefs. That's going to be the center from which we interpret the bigger, the bigger mass of material. So that's 1879. That's in Plano. And I think that was actually a very thoughtful and competent piece of theology that I wish had been followed a lot more by the missionaries from the 1870s on, who loved their preaching charts and loved their plumbers, their plumbers' diagrams of who's going where, when, and for what reason. And nevertheless, I think this, this was an interesting theological development. So, lots of theological, cool theological stuff going on in this period. Joseph III is beginning to shape the character of this church as, I mean not shape it, but kind of mold it a little bit more than where it started, as what Charmaine and I sometimes refer to as a "big tent", right, the big tent with a pole in the middle, the plain principles, but, you know, that's what's holding the tent up, but get as close to it as you can. But there's still room under the tent for all kinds of perspectives and so on. So...

Karin Peter 54:26

There, there are a lot of things that have come out of this discussion that help, I think, understand the application of this big tent. There are a lot of seeds here, from what, Lach, from what you shared, Joseph Smith III, himself, was, was kind of an advocate for a big tent in the way that he applied both his authority and his leadership. It sounds like he made space for people who didn't always agree with him...

Lach Mackay 55:01

He tried to.

Karin Peter 55:01

...not making things a test of fellowship. I mean he used religious language to help create that big tent, if you will. And just the reality that people felt the need for resolution 222 to be instated shows that the tent was extremely big, and they were trying to define though, where the parameters of that tent went. We still struggle with that. Those are, those are issues we face today.

Lach Mackay 55:33

As Tony was talking about 222, I kept thinking of Faithful Disagreement. Is this the 19th century version?

Tony Chvala-Smith 55:41

Yeah. Absolutely, I think that's a really good analogy. When we articulated several years ago, Principles of Faithful Disagreement, we were being faithful to our tradition, actually. Joseph III is trying to create space for faithful disagreement. Briggs and Gurley were, as I said, they're ahead of their time and Briggs maybe a little bit more than Gurley, kind of absolutist on their views. And so, it was, they, they, they were, they were going to be very hard to play with, right? This is...

Karin Peter 56:16

Zealots always are. That's just how it is.

Tony Chvala-Smith 56:18

Yeah, yeah. But it, but I do think both Briggs and Gurley, Jr., but especially Briggs, I think Briggs, some of Briggs his instincts, were right, and then over time, they have proven correct. We no longer treat the, the Joseph's new translation, as either a translation, or as the real Bible. We do not teach in official capacity, I don't think I've even heard it unofficially for 40 or 50 years, the idea of human pre-existence. We are very, we talk about community building, but we're, we're not into local, local Zion in the sense of we want everybody who possibly can to move to Jackson County, Missouri. We don't do that. We rejected, completely rejected, the idea of baptism for the dead, pulled it completely out of our *Doctrine and Covenants*. That's a theological move, by the way. And so, so things that Briggs was concerned about, and oh, by the way, we, we use all the best principles of modern biblical criticism and historical criticism in our work in the church. So, things that Briggs wanted, we have done, but the way he wanted them and the way he wanted to achieve them in the 1870s, would have been community destroying at the time, I think. So, he was, he pushed. He, he makes this great statement, as he looks back over the, over the Restoration, when he says, "We have believed too easily and too much." I think that's brilliant, really, and so. But I think one other thing I want to mention here, this is, I mean, every, every figure we consider is like all of us human beings, an ambiguous figure. And I've been holding up some of the things about Joseph III that I think they're, are commendable. I think that, I'm not sure there was any way for this not to have happened, but you know, the theologian wishes in retrospect, that Joseph III had said something more about polygamy than he said. It was just so hard, on the basis of Emma and Joseph III, for people to say Joseph was responsible for this. It just, it. And yet, the, what happened then is that it became an article of faith that Joseph Smith, Jr. was not involved in it. And that, that then has taken us ages and ages to, to correct and undo, and takes a lot of good theological teaching to recognize that the whole, the validity of what we are part of does not stand or fall with whether Joseph made lots and lots of theological mistakes. So, but one wishes that, that the denial of polygamy had not

been so, had not had such a powerful figure to, to uphold it, and, and so. But, hey, people in the future will wish that all three of us had done or said something different. You can be sure of it.

Karin Peter 59:46

Lach, you look like you wanted to interject something there. Did you have some comments?

Lach Mackay 59:52

I just, back to Briggs and Gurley, Joseph III, and I think a significant part of it was that they wanted access to the pages of the *Herald* to lift up their arguments and Joseph III was not going to do that.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:00:04

Yeah, yeah, yeah and he kind of, he, they did for a while use the *Herald* until it just was like, Joseph III is very much aware that there's a general consensus, wide consensus in the Church on some of these things, and that what's happening now is that, is that Briggs is, Briggs and Gurley are, what's the word I want? They're hammering on something that is, that is making the consensus seem like it doesn't matter. And Joseph is not, Joseph III, I don't think he has many autocratic bones in his body, but there's a point where it's like, alright, this has got to stop, right. And so, he, he's, I think he's trying to be democratic in a way. If the majority have already agreed on some of these things and Briggs and Gurley keep harping on them, then, if we yield to them, then we can't have agreement on anything. Agreement won't mean agreement. Consensus wouldn't mean anything then. So that's Joseph III's instinct. But it was, was unfortunate for, for the whole thing to have happened the way it did, and for the church to have lost such capable people as Briggs and Gurley, but it was almost inevitable, given the fact that they simply were not going to let, let go of the bone they were gnawing on. So.

Karin Peter 1:01:35

Yeah. So, the, the Faithful Disagreement gene that we can see all along through this discussion, in this period of time, when people ask us, people from outside Community of Christ, particularly those who come from other Restoration traditions, ask us about this Faithful Disagreement, or how do we make decisions and get along when we don't all agree on decisions? It goes right back to Gurley and, and Briggs and the people from Michigan and Wisconsin and Iowa who gathered. We call them people who dissented, but it, my word for it is disgruntled. We, at our very beginning, were disgruntled people of the Restoration, and we kept that as part of our character, that it's okay to be disgruntled and to voice your disgruntlement if you will, with what's going on. And we do that, in lots of ways, mostly, we're respectful about it. We have our times where we're like Briggs, and we're not respectful and we get in trouble, but, but we have found that to be compatible with who we are, as a people, even in how we react to situations today, that it's, it's okay to feel disgruntled about something, and to share that in, in ways that bring dialog, bring some kind of ability to be together in community. And I think our Faithful Disagreement principles formalize that and allow us to do that in a, in a more responsible way. But, but in fact, disagreement is anti, anti-polygamy and, and pro-disgruntlement, I think are two main character aspects that come out of this period here. But also, we're responding to what's happening culturally around us in this period. And one of the things that was mentioned, Tony, I think you mentioned that the preaching charts where, some of those Epitome of Faith and some other things got cast in stone. We weren't the only people with preaching charts. That was a phenomenon of the time. We didn't have PowerPoint. We didn't have, you know, slide decks, like we used to use, and in a *Project Zion* episode

that you can listen to from Professor Moore from Boston University, he shows pictures of, of those same preaching charts from multiple denominations, and they all look the same as the ones we were using. And so sometimes we look at those things, we go, that was just us, those are Restoration, blah, blah, blah. No, those are very much part of the, of the theological framework of the culture of the time.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:04:28

Yeah.

Karin Peter 1:04:29

Which I found amazing.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:04:31

Definitely we, we, we, we borrow, we're children of that culture, and we, we borrow and then put our own, our own flavor on it.

Karin Peter 1:04:40

Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. So, the two favorite things from this conversation, and that is, William Marks always comes out as stellar and I need to know more about him because I need to know his flaws as, as well as the rest of it, before I make him a patron saint of the Restoration, but I do really like him every time he comes around. And the other thing are the abstract doctrines, which I think are the Restoration version of alternative facts. So, when we, when we look at that, I'm gonna be using abstract doctrines I think in a lot of conversations in the future. So, in talking about Joseph Smith III, as we've gone through this, we've gotten a look, historically, at what happened, kind of the timeline of things. We talked about some of the theological development and the development of the institutional, the praxis of authority in the institution during this time period. But I want to point our listeners to three podcasts from *Project Zion*, "Cuppa Joe" by Wendy Eaton, who is administrative assistant in Nauvoo, at the Joseph Smith Historic Site, and she goes into the lives of the three successive wives of Joseph Smith III. He was married three time. His first wife, second wife, each died. He married finally a third time. And as she talks about those three women, and the relationship that they had with Joseph Smith III, we get a picture of him that's very different than the chronolo-, chronological kind of picture of what happened in the church. We find him to be very tender, with a wonderful, robust sense of humor, very loving to his family, to his children, to his spouse, and very respectful of women and their capacity in, in leadership. There's a wonderful story she tells about his third wife, who raised horses, and trained horses, and someone came to buy a horse when she wasn't home, and he's like, nope, that, nope. I don't have anything to do with that. That's my wife's business. You want to buy a horse, you talked to her. In that time period, that was quite unusual for women to have that kind of privilege in, within a marriage. So, I find him to be very interesting from those conversations as well. So, if you're interested in a more, kind of in-depth familial look at Joseph Smith III, I'll point you to those three podcasts. Any last, kind of, comments about this time period? We've talked a bit about Joseph Smith III's decision to go to Plano and to lead the church. We talked about, a little bit about the expansion into the UK, to Europe, and then to the Pacific. Anything else we need to mention about this time period before we go?

Lach Mackay 1:07:54

I'll share a story that I think is symbolic of the transition that is taking place during this time, or at least the beginning of it. So, when Joseph III is first elected justice of the peace in Nauvoo, he's elected in '57, starts serving in '58, then he joins with the Reorganization, what would become the Reorganization in 1860. The locals are not at all amused. They're passing resolutions forbidding him from preaching or praying in the local townships, which he was pretty annoyed at, for obvious reasons. Fast forward, by 1877, somewhere over 350 Nauvoo locals sign a petition asking us to move our headquarters to Nauvoo. So, 17 years, you can't preach or pray here to, please move your headquarters here. They had come to understand that Joseph III's vision of community was different than his father's. It was not threatening. I'm sure they also saw some economic opportunity, so, we're there. But I love that 17 year transition. And I think it's kind of a, again, symbolic of the transition that is, that is taking place during this time.

Karin Peter 1:09:17

So, with that, Tony, any last comment or thought about this time period.

Tony Chvala-Smith 1:09:22

I think if you want to understand Joseph III, go read the lyrics of his hymn, "Tenderly, Tenderly" and keep in mind that this is a hymn written by a man who's had a lot of loss in his life, and yet he is able to find God amidst the suffering again and again. And I find that really inspiring.

Karin Peter 1:09:49

You can find, "Tenderly, Tenderly", I believe in *Community of Christ Sings*. I think it's still in *Community of Christ Sings*, if it's not, we'll correct that in the notes when we post this episode, but I'm pretty sure you won't find it in the hymnal. So, for our next discussion we, we're going to go to those pastoral farmlands that Joseph Smith III saw in his visionary experience, because we're going to go to Lamoni, Iowa, and then take a little march south and go back to Independence, which was an interesting move as well. We'll talk about our, our provision of peace in Community of Christ and what that has looked like in that time period. So, I'm looking forward to that conversation as well with Tony Chvala-Smith and Lach Mackay. I'm Karin Peter. Thanks for listening to this episode of "Cuppa Joe" here at *Project Zion Podcast*.

Josh Mangelson 1:10:54

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