

CuppaJoe | Theo-History |W Wallace Smith Era

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SPEAKERS

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Karin Peter 00:26

Welcome to Project Zion Podcast. This is Cup of Joe, where we explore restoration history. And I'm your host, Karin Peter. Our discussion today is part of a series of conversations about the historical and theological journey of Community of Christ. Our resident panel members are Lach Mackay and Tony Chvala-Smith. Lach is an historian, 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 regular participants here at Project Zion. In this particular series, we're following the development of the church from its early foundational days through the reorganization, and then into our journey as Community of Christ. And we've been looking at important church events in both their historical and their cultural context, as well as discussing the theological developments during those time periods and their impact on the church. So today, we are going to be talking about the period of time when W. Wallace Smith was Prophet/President of the church. And it was a time period when Community of Christ began to expand internationally. And that began to shape and form the church in new ways. So we're going to start today with this historical perspective of this time period. So Lach, what do you have to share with us about this?

Lach Mackay 02:11

So as always, I want to start by talking about the sources I am drawing on I recommend Paul Edwards', one volume church history, Dick Howard's two volumes, and Mark Scherer's three volumes. I'll just start with the one volume and then kind of drill down and get more and more detail. I'm also going to be drawing heavily on Peter Judd's "Exploring RLDS Identity in the 1960s, the Joint Council Seminars of 1967 in the John Whitmer Historical Association Journal. Peter identifies what he believes to be the five most significant events related to theological development in the church in the 1960s, and I found that extraordinarily helpful. Although we had a few thousand members in the British Isles, Europe, Australia and the South Pacific, we were fundamentally a North American church at the end of World War One. A second wave of international missionary zeal surged forward though, in the 1960s. This led us into non-western nations. We were officially organized in 10 nations prior to 1960. All but French Polynesia, Western. Leonard Jensen and Charles Neff though were sent to Asia after having been previously commissioned to go in Kirtland Temple by Roy Cheville. I love that they returned there, the place where

Heber C. Kimball was commissioned to take the church to the United Kingdom. They returned there and Cheville uses that place in that moment to send them off to Asia. By 1970, we were established in an additional 11 nations in Asia, Africa and Central and South America. Even included Japan, Korea, Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Nigeria, India, the Philippines, New Caledonia, Haiti, and Fiji. By the time W. Wallace Smith, another son of Joseph Smith III, and half-brother of Israel A. Smith, became president of the church in 1958. Improvements in travel meant that he was able to personally visit congregations around the world. As the church moved into new cultures, there were necessary growing pains. Leaders had to face hard questions and look closely at history and theology, working to determine what beliefs and practices were only culturally based, and which were basic foundations. Just prior to a 1952 trip to Israel, Israel A. Smith had designated his half-brother W. Wallace as the successor via a signed and witnessed written statement citing section 43 of the Doctrine and Covenants, and the work of Joseph Smith III on succession as his authority. This attention to detail probably came from both Israel's background as a lawyer and the significant uncertainty regarding succession at the death of FM Smith. W. Wallace had been called as an Apostle in 1947, as a counselor in the First Presidency in 1950, and, once again, was ordained Prophet/President in 1958, following Israel's death in a car crash. Despite ascending to the role of Prophet/President in a very traditional fashion, W. Wallace would soon break with tradition. He began calling younger men into leadership positions with Maurice Draper joining F Henry Edwards in the First Presidency, and Clifford Cole, Charles Neff and Dwayne Couey coming into the Twelve. The importance of these men in shaping the church in the years that followed, cannot be overstated. During his time in office, W. Wallace brought among others section 149 of the Doctrine and Covenants of the church in 1968, which touched on the role of bishops and shared instructions to begin preparing to build a temple in Independence. This caused some concern, they quickly returned to the conference with 149A, clarifying the statement on bishops and making clear there will be no provision for secret ordinances now or ever in the temple. During the 20 years that W. Wallace served 1958 to 78. The church grew from 167,000 members, to 215,000 members. Some of the cultural shifts that the Church and its members struggled with during this time, include things like war and peace, the Vietnam War, debates about conscientious objection, folks who would later become significant members and leaders, Dale Luffman, Ron Romig, Paul DeBarth, others conscientious objectors during this time, I'm guessing that had to be significant, significantly controversial though. We struggled with questions of race and racism in the civil rights movement. I believe that we were not on the forefront of that movement. We talked about and experimented with communalism and then zionic living from my own life experience, this is a little later, but I remember my grandfather talking hour after hour after hour about Harvest Hills, a carefully planned intentional community outside of Independence that he was prominently involved in. And we would do our grocery shopping at the co-op Food Fair, started by church members as a cooperative grocery store. So my sense is, lots of those kinds of movements are taking place, springing up during this time. We dealt with questions about baptism and polygamy in non-Christian cultures, as people like Charles Neff went into India, some African nations, where polygamy in certain contexts was legal and culturally acceptable. What do we do if people who discover the church want to join, ultimately, section 150 called on us to baptize them as long as they agreed not to take additional spouses and to raise their children as monogamous. Women's rights were important discussions during this time, including abortion rights, culminating eventually in the 1974 Standing High Council statement. This is late to the game. But I think that section 152 from 1976 is a reaction. It's really W. Wallace's take on the 1960s. A response to what he believed were excesses. So the language I think is even earlier but section 152 talks about, "some had been overcome by the

grosser sins of the world, the Spirit of revelry, wanton living, use of drugs, drinking and fornication, and have fallen away. And from what I can tell, I know that there was a very strong tradition of abstinence when it came to alcohol prior to this time, but our official policies from what I can find up into this point were always do not be addicted. And it was really focused on priesthood Do not be addicted. But the following this, it became abstinence, again, I think, a late response to the 1960s. Significant theological reconstruction is happening during this time. Immense changes are, are rooted in this time. And again, I'm going to turn to Peter Judd's work because I think it's really, really helpful. So he identifies five, what he believes to be the most important events during this time. Number one was the creation of the 1960 Basic Beliefs Committee. Up until this time, we were still using Joseph Smith Jr's Epitomy of Faith, also known as the "Articles of Faith," as well as F Henry Edwards' 1936 Fundamentals to express our basic beliefs, the work of the Basic Beliefs Committee over 10 years resulted in the 1970 publication of a book called Exploring the Faith first serialized in the Herald. Their work shifted from the earlier "what we believe," to "how and why we believe." We already touched briefly on church expansion into non-western nations which, again, Peter identifies as number two most significant event. Charles Neff was changed by living in Japan for four years. And his experience changed the church. He wrote to the Basic Beliefs Committee, "what is the central message of the gospel? Surely it must be something beyond the differences between the RLDS church and other churches. In a non-Christian culture. Is it possible to see other Christians more as allies than adversaries," Neff also wondered how it helped people in far off nations, to convert them to a church focused on the United States, and its culture and values. So his experience again started very significant discussions in the church. I do sometimes wonder I rationally I agree with Neff, I think we made the right decisions. But I almost wonder if we went too far. Because I think eventually the church in India and in Haiti and some other places really didn't look much at all, like the RLDS church or Community of Christ, which created a new set of challenges as we help them understand what it really means to be Community of Christ. Judd identifies as number three, the 1966 statement on objectives for the church, introduced at the '66 World Conference. This also seems to grow out of Neff's experience in Asia. The statement included five sentences. Number one, to clarify the theology of the church and unify the membership in their faith. Number two, to deepen the effectiveness of worship within the church. Number three, develop world church concepts and procedures in evangelism and administration. Number four, decentralize the administration of the church. Number five, interpret the Zionite concept for our day in world terms and aggressively pursue the implementation of Zionite development. You might have heard me laughing a little bit because some of these we're still working on. These are still primary objectives. Number four, on Peter's list, the Joint Council Seminars of 1967. These were an attempt to address the first goal in the objectives again to clarify the theology of the church and unify the membership in their faith. These seminars grew out of a lack of clarity and purpose among church appointees, which led it seemed to low morale. The seminars were intended to clarify and unify the First Presidency, the Council of Twelve, and the present Presiding bishopric members in their theological understandings, before they then turn their attention to the appointees and membership. Agreement was reached with nearby St. Paul School of Theology and Methodist seminary, several IHQ staff members had attended, and three theologians met with RLDS leaders for one week in March of 1967. At least some of these sessions were recorded, but the tapes have not been located. The theme of the first session. Tony, do you know anything about them? I'd love... I think that would be fascinating listening if we could find them.

Tony Chvala-Smith 14:02

As was as with Richard Nixon, I don't know what happened to the tapes. So...

Lach Mackay 14:10

The theme of the first seminar session was the Church and the World. A critical exchange occurred late in the first week, with Dr. Paul Jones of St. Paul asking W. Wallace Smith, quote, if our, and this this comes from Dr. Jones in about 2004 is his, so this is his reminiscence looking back. "If our mutual studies of Christianity and the RLDS Church were to discover that there was a discrepancy between what Jesus taught and what Joseph Smith taught, which would you accept?" This is again, Paul talking, "I felt a moment of profound silence settling on all of us. I'm sure that time stopped. I sensed that the eyes of every member of the Joint Council were glued on Wallace. I too, felt that everything from that point on would depend on his reply. He took a long breath, did not falter, but said with poise, 'We would have to go with Jesus.' There was a great sigh of relief, all said that became the foundation for our work together. From that point on." Ended up having a number of additional seminars. The second occurred in November and December of '67 and focused on church history with Richard Howard, Robert Flanders and Jeff Spencer, joining St. Paul faculty in presenting. One participant said that the intent was to help leaders understand that the church in Utah was the logical extension of Joseph Smith Jr's Nauvoo theology, and that the RLDS church was an attempt to return to Orthodox Christianity. The third seminar occurred in December of 1967, was led by Dr. Paul Jones and focused on the church in the 20th century. Finally, number five on Peter's list the Position Papers and new curriculum. The Position Papers are also sometimes called Study Papers or Discussion Papers. They were informed by questions coming out of the Joint Council seminars. They were prepared to present to a curriculum consultation committee for discussion which would then inform a new curriculum. These papers were leaked, which caused considerable consternation among some members. The curriculum developed was more ecumenical than earlier lessons, reflecting the transition, I believe, then occurring from sect to denomination. I used to think that the restorationist of schism started following the 1984 call to ordain women. I now believe that was simply the final straw for some, and that the schism started in the late 1960s with the backlash against the Position Papers, and new curriculum, I've said many times that until 2016, I lived my life in the 19th century. And then I jumped straight to the 21st century with my call into the Council of Twelve. This podcast has required that I move to the 20th century for a time, and I love it. The scenery is amazing. There is great history here that that I just never paid attention to. And I think that's true with many in our historical community. And I can't encourage strongly enough folks to, to join me for a time in the 20th century history. This is amazing stuff. As I spent time reading about theological reconstruction though, had to wonder about historical reconstruction. So, at the same time, we began, courtesy of new Mormon history, meaning the professionalization of church history. And because of the international exposure caused... both of those things, I think, are causing us to deconstruct our founding faith stories. We began to de-mythologize. I don't mean myth in a bad way. But we were never as intentional about reconstructing or re-mythologizing our history, as we were about our theology. And I think that caused significant challenges for us, almost an identity crisis, that I believe we're now working through. But I still think it would be helpful to be more intentional about that. We've struggled to put that story back together. I'm gonna stop there. And I can't wait to hear what Tony has to say.

Karin Peter 18:55

Before you begin to I just want to let our readers know that I can see both of you on screen as you're sharing. And I have, Lach I have never seen you grin so broadly, or look so pleased as your admission that you've been spending time in kind of the modern era of the church. And I hope our listeners take you up on that wise counsel to spend some time there with the history of the church in that time period. Okay, so Tony, let's talk about the theological developments. Lach kind of touched on some I'm sure there are others.

Tony Chvala-Smith 19:33

Well, so this, this is one of the most fun periods to reflect on theological change and development in the history of the church. And I would argue that the pieces were in place before the 1960s, they just had not been articulated in any kind of systematic way. And as Lach pointed out, international mission is one of the things that that kind of forced the hand on some of those pieces that were there. Long before W. Wallace said in that I think, revelatory moment, we would have to go with Jesus, not Joseph. You had people like Arthur Oakman, F. Henry Edwards and others who were trying to kind of focus on the importance of Jesus and they're trying to kind of Christologize the movement more than it had been. And so I think pieces, these pieces were already in place. Well, let's talk about theological revolutions and reconstruction. And I think where we have to start here is to say this is not simply a phenomenon of the 1960s. So let's go back to the first century. Right? So, the message, the ministry and message of Jesus took place in Palestine. It was a phenomenon within Palestinian Judaism. And very soon after Easter, people who were not either Palestinian Jews or Hellenized Jews, (ie Gentiles), non-Jews, became attracted to the message about Jesus Christ. And so the early church had to go through a kind of a quick and radical deconstruction reconstruction, as it tried to make room for people who had not grown up with the Torah, and with Torah piety, and in synagogue and all that, how do you... what do you do with that? And in Paul's letters ... in Paul's authentic letters, the seven that we know came from him, you can you can see Paul having to wrestle with, on the one hand, the gospel, and on the other hand, changing cultural contexts that he is preaching the gospel in. And that sets the pattern for Christianity from that point on. Christianity from ever onward. And everyone in the future will always have this polarity. On the one hand, there's faithfulness and identity. On the other hand, there's relevance and credibility, right? How do you stay true to what Jesus is and was about? That's the faithfulness part. But then how do you make it relevant or credible in new cultural settings that are remote from the first century. So this is, this is a productive tension. And I don't think it's a damaging tension. This tension is present ever after in Christian theology. And so one of the things that sparks new revolutions in theology is new knowledge. So, my one of my favorite cases in point here is that in the, when that horrible episode in the history of the Western world, the Crusades got going, one of the things that happened was that Europeans discovered that Arab civilization was advanced. And one of the reasons Arab civilization was advanced in lots of ways is because they had the works of the Greek philosopher Aristotle translated into Arabic. And the Western world had lost most of Aristotle's works. The philosophy of the West was Platonism. Aristotle's philosophy is highly empiricist, highly based on sense perception and the acquisition of knowledge through the senses, and so on. And when Aristotle's works, were then brought back to the west and translated into Latin, it created a crisis for Christian faith. Like, how did this pagan philosopher know so much about the world without any recourse to Revelation? Right? And so, immediately there, there was the a churchly reaction, banning Aristotle. But then as the medieval universities get, get started and are flourishing, universities become the place where we wanted to go to study Aristotle. So how do you bring together this new knowledge,

this incredible knowledge from the philosopher Aristotle? How does that... how do you mix that with Christian faith? How do you bring these two together in a kind of a relevant synthesis? Well, the key figure in that moment was Thomas Aquinas, who read Aristotle, understood Aristotle, even wrote commentaries on Aristotle, but was deeply profoundly devoutly Christian. And he was able to create a synthesis and make the reading of Aristotle useful and palatable in the church. And thanks to that, the basis was then set later for centuries later for the rise of modern science. So in other words, a crisis provoked a theological reconstruction. That's Thomas Aquinas. This happened again in the 1800s, when Charles Darwin's Origin of Species was published now. So we got through that, yeah, well, I'm not sure. There, there's a whole branch of Christianity, we'll just call it fundamentalism for the sake of ease that simply refuses to accept the new knowledge and and sees it as simply wrong. And, and yet lots of other forms of Christianity have tried to work with this new knowledge and make space within Christian faith, rethink Christian faith in light of evolutionary patterns in the universe. So we're going through it again right now in the postmodern world with kind of what will church look like in the highly pluralistic and somewhat individualistic realm of post modernity, will traditional congregations be able to adjust? Or will we have to rethink who we are? So, theological revolutions are, they are standard fare in a living religion. A religion that does not go through theological revolutions is a dead religion. So this is not a bad thing. And so I come back to the 1960s and the reorganization. This was a period in which all kinds of Christian communities were going through deep ferment and challenge. Number one, Biblical criticism had finally made its way into the into the congregations of mainline churches. And so what do you what do you what do you do with that? Right? How do you make sense of the fact that Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible? Another thing is, again, evolutionary science and modern science and space travel, but also the memory of the Holocaust is now public knowledge. And so what does that mean about God, about Providence, about evil in the world? That creates a real struggle for lots and lots of Christian thinkers? How do you make room for the new sense of the autonomy of the individual? How do you make room for the idea that women and men are of equal value in the universe, I mean, all this kind of stuff is happening? Plus, for Americans, the Vietnam war is going on? And is every war America enters into a John Wayne fest, right? Are we always the good guys? Are we always on the right side, and so on, creates enormous challenges for people. So this is the this is the context, that in which the social philosophical context in which a lot of churches are having to rethink themselves in light of new knowledge and experience. Mark Scherer and Matthew Bolton have both, I think, very astutely pointed out that from 1962 to 1965, was the Second Vatican Council, in which Pope John the 23rd, who initiated, he died mid-Council and then Pope Paul the sixth came in, but Pope John the 23rd, said we need to update, we need to modernize the church, we need to bring the church into the 20th century. And so that's going on roughly at the time when our church begins its own form of the Latvian Italian was *aggiornamento*, which is like something like updating, right? So so it was not just us, who were affected by the radical changes going on in culture in the 1960s. A couple of things, a couple of other things about this theological revolution. In my view, this, this revolution was aided and prompted by two books. One was 1968 Herald Schneebek's Body of Christ, which was really a very thoughtful and systematic study of the nature of the church. And it was published as reunion material in 1968, as a little hardcover. It's a substantial book. And I've written about it. And there are things about things about Schneebek's book that I disagree with. But the basic, the basic issues he's dealing with are really vital issues. By the time you got to the end of Schneebek's book, here's what you couldn't do as a reorganization preacher, you could no longer say our church has the actual reconstruction of the original New Testament church because Schneebek very convincingly shows, as all New Testament

scholarship at the time was showing, there is no original New Testament Church, there's no original pattern, church patterns, patterns of ministry, and so on. These are these adapt, adapt to particular places, and times, and so on. The church, called the church order, the polity, in Paul's time is different from the polity late in the first century. And so you can't, so this, this made this major piece of old RLDS apologetic theology that was so important for winning converts from other churches, (ie, we have the restored original form), you can no longer make that claim. That claim was debunked and falsified by that book. Right? And further, Schneebeck begins to talk about what really is the message of Jesus? What's it about? And are we the only ones who can carry it? Well, no, he talks about ecumenism. And this, by the way, is reunion material. So I was what was I was, oh, about 11 years old going on 12 in 1968. I wasn't a member of the church... wasn't connected to it at that time. But I wish like anything I could, I could be a fly on the wall and some of those were union gatherings that we're trying to wrestle with Schneedebeck's book. So that's '68-'69. The follow up book is Landon and Smith's For What Purpose Assembled. and For What Purpose Assembled, took Schneebeck's more theological, theoretical framework, and so what does this mean for us in congregational life? And they asked this question that turned out to be utterly prophetic, even 60 years later for our time. Why do we meet? What's the deal here? What is church supposed to be about? And so they speak of what they call a "crisis of relevance." And they talk about church gatherings, that where people are simply rehashing old testimonies and so on, and are not dealing with questions of race and all the questions that are pressing on people in the late 1960s. Now, again, I have in other settings, I've offered some criticisms of their approach to what relevance is. But nevertheless, these two books were at least two books, in some respects, are the blueprint for what becomes Community of Christ. And one of the things that prompted these books in the first place was that Statement of Objectives in 1966. And the Joint Council meetings that Lach talked about. In other words, those books come out, those books take what's happening in church life at church headquarters at that time, and they they get it into print, and get it out to church people. And, well, the reaction was, the reaction was, let's just say, mixed. So of those three authors, Schneebeck, Landon and Smith, at least Schneebeck and Landon, I don't know about Robert Smith, but at least Schneebeck and Landon did not ever reassociate with the church after that. They were hammered, hammered hammered for, for that and for other things. So being at the forefront of a theological revolution can be costly to people. So that's a little bit about theological revolutions. Here's an interesting sidenote. So, church leaders go to St. Paul School of Theology, which is, which was up the road on a Truman road, a few miles away from the Auditorium. A Methodist seminary, kind of a mainline rather progressive seminary, and engage the help of some fairly well known professors of theology, historical theology, philosophy, philosophical theology and New Testament. And those guys come and do some teaching here. I going to...this is a long story, but here's the short version of it. Years and years later, Charmaine Chvala-Smith and Tony Chvala Smith, go back to St. Paul School of Theology to teach History of Christian Thought One. We go back there to teach ancient and medieval theology 2012. Check that... 2010, 2011, 2012. So we got, it was kind of a paying it forward there for us. We got to go back, and some of the students we had back then we're still connected with and friends with and all that so. So it was kind of an interesting circle of us getting to do a little bit of returning the favor. It's, uh, you know you're in a whole new era, when you have a Community of Christ theologian teaching Methodists how to understand the doctrine of the Trinity. That's, that's a that's a new animal. So, um, how do you accommodate theological revolutions? Well, this is complicated. It's really difficult. It's really hard. Because truth be told, a lot of people who are regular faithful churchgoers go to church not so much for the theologies, but the sociology, right. It's the place where there's this

one stable thing in their life. And back in 19, say 1968, in the average RLDS congregation, this one stable thing, had deep, like a centuries deep assurance that it was the one and only true church with the one and only true priesthood, with the one and only true message. And you had to be faithful to this to the end if you wanted to get celestial glory, and all the others were the churches of men. And so it was a super stable place for a lot of people. But how could you go forward once you knew you were teaching things that were not fully accurate? Or were not adequate? Or were misreadings of? I mean, you got to do something there. Right? And so church leaders, I think, very courageously stepped into that, and I, I don't I mean, Duane Couey was a dear friend of Charmaine's and mine. So we will count him as a mentor. And Jeffrey Spencer was a dear friend and a mentor of ours. And so they were some of the some of the people who were involved in this theological revolution back there, and deeply powerful, spiritual, thoughtful, thoughtful man, they had endured the slings and arrows of church members, you know, that period, you know, had the had the scars from really nasty stuff that church people did, as they were trying to, people were trying to hang on to the security they'd had, as the one true church. And yet, it was, what are you going to do here? Well, you can't, when you're faced with new knowledge, you have only a couple of choices, right? New knowledge that disrupts the, potentially disrupts the old, you can stick your fingers in your ears and pretend you're not hearing it. Right? Alright, number two, you can say that knowledge must be wrong, it can't be right. So we reject it out of hand. Or third, you try to affect some kind of a synthesis. Those are your three choices. And the church, church leadership chose choice number three, we're going to affect some kind of a synthesis. I don't think they realized how long it was going to take. Right? Because I think we're in the we're currently in 2023. And we are coming out of that period with, in my view, a clearer sense of who we are, what we're about, what our message is, what our identity is, what we will teach and preach than we've had since then. It's taken a long time. But you know what, Thomas Aquinas' great synthesis in the 1200s. It didn't become kind of standard theology for the Catholic Church for 100 years or so or more. So you got to slow down sometimes and just recognize these things take time. But it was a costly period for the church, right? It, a lot of a lot of goodwill was simply evaporated in that period. And to this day in Community of Christ, there's still a kind of a US them view. Out in the field, we're "us," and the folks at headquarters are "them." There's still a kind of a wall of separation there that's left from that era. Could they have done things differently? Well, who who doesn't look back on their life and say that we could have? Possibly they could have, but I think they trusted, they trusted in the goodwill of church people. And in the long haul, over the long run, what they saw as a future for the RLDS church has become the Community of Christ. And I think I think we are very much aligned with what their vision and hope was. Now, where do we go from here is up to us. But I think people like Duane, and Jeff Spencer would be, would probably say, Yeah, you guys, you guys got where we were hoping we would get. But the journey ain't over yet. So, so don't be afraid to keep doing additional theological reconstruction as you go. So those are some reflections on this. What else can I say about the Spirit? Oh, my gosh, it's such it's such a rich period, theologically, but such a difficult period. I joined the church in 1975. I was 18 years old. And so I was coming in ... the revolution started in the 60s, and it finally kind of trickled out to congregations in the 1970s. And so I, I was getting in on the end of the aftermath of the, the initial explosions of the revolution. But when I joined the church in 1975, I was still taught the old stuff. I joined the "One True Church" with the old preaching chart theology that had been turned into a slide a slideshow. And it was really, really hard and painful for missionaries, like the one who taught me to ever unlearn what they had, like, so convincingly taught for so long, and we're so absolutely sure of. Maybe a side note here is that one must never confuse faith with absolute certainty. That's a dangerous thing to do. Faith, faith is

trust it's not certainty. And so the confusion of the two is the basis of idolatry. And it's always a temptation for all of us. Right. So. So those are some theological reflections on this era. One last thing, W Wallace Smith, I met him once. Back in, oh gracious, it was 1978 or nine. I was just out of university with a history degree and I, I was taking a year before starting seminary study, and a job opportunity came up at church headquarters to help W Wallace Smith with his, with his history, with his personal history. I applied for it, and was interviewed first by Dick Howard who, who I picked up at the Tri-City Airport in Michigan on his way to a reunion at Stanford and I was, I can't, I can't believe how young I was actually at the time. I picked him up at the airport. We had an interview in the car as I took him to Stanford. And he was kind of an advocate for me with W Wallace, but W Wallace in the end picked somebody else that he knew. He didn't really know me, but I met him. And in the interview, I can remember that his son Wallace B whom I later became friends with. I could see, I could see Wallace B and Dick Howard trying to coax W Wallace into hiring me, but he didn't. He hired somebody he knew and that was fair. He needed to have somebody who he was really comfortable with to work on his oral history. And it also, it also helped me not get sidetracked somewhere. So I got I got off to seminary the next fall as I needed to. But W Wallace was, from my experience there, was gracious, kindly spoken. a commanding presence really. And, one of the things about him that I think is really important is that a sign of good leadership is not that the good leader is out in front but the good leader puts really good people around him or her. And W Wallace, I think, had amazing, creative revolutionary thinkers around him. Maurice Draper, Chuck Neff, Dwuane Couey and so on has so many amazing people around him. And he even though his own tendencies, I think his own personal tendencies were naturally conservative, he let revolutionaries have some space, and he walked with them in that space and did not hamper them as he could have. So just a reflection on him. Finally, one of his Doctrine and Covenants sections, where he talks about Scripture. And he says, let me see if got it right here. In that section, he says, I'm further permitted by to say by the Spirit instructions, which have been given in former years, instruction is applicable in principle to the needs of today and should be so regarded by those who are seeking ways to accomplish the will of their Heavenly Father. But the demands of a growing church require that these principles shall be evaluated and subjected to further interpretation, this requisite has always been present. That was 1964. And then, in 1968, in Section 149, he says, some of you have sought security in the words and phrases by which the faithful of earlier days have expressed their knowledge of Me. My ways are still the ways of my son. So that's very interesting phrasing, isn't it? Some people have sought security in the words and the doctrines of earlier eras. And basically, it's saying, Be careful there. Keep focused on Jesus. Right? The way of Jesus is the way to read and interpret things, it's going to take a further interpretation and reinterpretation to get us where we're going. One final thing. 1960 6-7-8, somewhere in there, the great soon to be retired apostle Arthur Oakman, British apostle, who was sort of one of the the most prominent preachers in the reorganization, and was, oh my gosh, became kind of the patron saint of restorationist breakaway groups because of his, his strong certain views about God, revelation, and so on, nevertheless publishes an article in The Herald on theology and doctrine. And he says something that is quite remarkable given his certainties. He basically says, I'm going to paraphrase doctrine is not revelation, doctrine is distilled from Revelation. It's us trying to make sense of revelation and putting it into words. And that doctrine can be reconfigured. So the old earliest church was highly, highly doctrinal. And there is Arthur Oakman, the the crown, the Crown Prince of conservatives saying, we can rethink doctrine, you know. But then as now, many church people don't read the Herald. So I'm not sure how many read his article. I think it's a classic. And we have theology students read it in some of our classes because

it's so important. Anyway, that's kind of a theologian's take on this period, we're still, as I point out, we're still developing and, and reconfiguring out of that period. It was that revolutionary.

Lach Mackay 45:50

Tony, it seems like Oakland was released when he was relatively young, maybe 59 or so. I could be wrong. Any insights into why?

Tony Chvala-Smith 46:03

I don't, I don't have any insights about that. Now, because I was good friends with Duane Couey, I got to ask him things. And I asked him once, maybe I can tell you two things that I asked him that maybe you'll find interesting. But I asked him once about Arthur Oakman. I said, Duane, in the midst of all this theological rethinking and reconfiguration, and Exploring the Faith and all that stuff that came out 60s, where was Arthur Oakman in that. And Duane was always gentle and patient and very kind and very, very measured in his speech. He said, Well, he said, Arthur was basically in favor of all of it. But Arthur had a reputation among a certain kind of church member. And he didn't want to risk that reputation. So he was very cautious about how he came out in favor of that. So that was, that was that was very gracious of Duane to say that now, remember, I'm telling you stuff I heard. So you can use, you're a historian Lach, you have to weigh this in a different way. You know, if I had to transpose it into our speech, it's like, I think I would say, Arthur had his groupies and didn't want to disappoint them by coming out and saying, Hey, we got to do this. This is really important. So the other thing I asked Duane once was, Duane, I've heard from some of the people who adored Roy Cheville, why was Cheville not ever put on that Basic Beliefs Committee. And Duane, Duane, again, said, well, very gracious and gentle. He said, we knew Cheville, so well, we knew that if he got on that committee, he was going to try to steer everything so that it said things his way. And basically, he was going to be hard to play with on the committee. And, by the way, this is me, with a the field historical theologians view should all see ology was was crafted in the 1920s and had this 1920s sort of progressive, modernist Protestant feel to it. And he never, he never really, I mean, he didn't understand Tillich and he didn't understand this, the theology that was being read in the 1960s. And he had his system all worked out. And so, I think part of what Duane was trying to say also was that Cheville's theology simply was not going to be up to the task of what we needed in the brand new situation we were in, he was going to, he was a 1920s American. Right? And that's where his... he was brilliant in his own way, but his theology was simply not, he was not flexible enough to be up to the tasks we needed in the 60s. So those are tidbits I got from Duane. So yeah, but I don't know why, you know, why he retired at 59? Or why he was retired at 59. I'm not sure.

Karin Peter 49:17

Well Lach, any other things come to mind, as Tony was sharing theologically.

Lach Mackay 49:24

I just wanted to share the W Wallace story that I can't really make sense of, and it's kind of long. But so at the start of his presidency, and in a very notable break in tradition, he didn't call as Presiding Patriarch Elbert A Smith's son, Lynn. Despite Israel's, writing to Lynn and telling him, he had this call, and that when Elbert retired, he would be called. There's a long backstory, Lynn had come to conference from I think it was Boston, and with just a few minutes warning, was not reappointed as a

church appointee, and suddenly had to pack his family up and moved to California and started a new life. And it was going well out there that Elbert desperately wanted his son to take his place, and wrote, you know, his own powerful testimonies of the call, and was clearly lobbying hard with Israel. And it was all happening June 6th of 1958. Elbert wrote a letter of resignation. Knowing and saying in the letter, this clears the way for my son Lynn to take my place. Apparently, the letter is never mailed because Israel's killed on the 14th. But I think in the meantime, Lynn is packing up and moving back to Independence with assurances that, you know, we know, we know this terrible experience that happened last time, we're not going to do that to you again. Suddenly, W Wallace is in control. And he is apparently not at all interested in Lynn, as Presiding Patriarch. Who knows why? I do think Lynn struggled with, with some of the depression that ran in the family. And, and to the church's credit, I think this is a credit, I'm not quite sure. They employed Lynn, they didn't leave him hanging, they gave him a job, and they kept him in that job for the rest of his life. But the job was secretary to the Order of Evangelist, secretary to the man who had the call that Lynn you know, that was Lynns, but he was never placed in. So I just think it's fascinating that there was that really sharp break with tradition to begin W Wallace's tenure. But in one of his last acts, he returns to the tradition and calls his own son, back to lineal priesthood. I just don't know what to make of that. I don't know what to make of that. I'll finish there.

Karin Peter 52:31

So all of this is fascinating as as I've listened to, to both of you talk about this, but it's also very much the it's very much what happened from the lens of looking back at it through an institutional perspective, whether it's historically or theologically. But you've touched on some things that would have affected people in their actual life in the church congregationally. Probably more so out of the radius of Independence, Missouri. And it was really interesting. In several of the things, for example, Lach, you talked about section 152, was reactionary to what happened in the 60s, and all of the culture shock and, and that, that reaction, that section 152, lived brightly in congregational response, because parents and grandparents grasped onto that as ways to maintain some kind of church life with their kids as their kids came of age. And it became almost the foundational text for sermons and classes and just congregational life, I think in a lot of places was that be in the world, but not of the world, so pious, the whole expression of piety solidified through revelation, I think, in that in that period. And so, even though the what's happening at other levels of leadership was theologically groundbreaking, or historically fascinating. What was happening in the life of actual people in the church was this digging the heels in to some kind of structure and doctrine and piety that they could hang on to, in the midst of just crazy stuff happening in culture. And so when we're talking about these seismic shifts still going on for us today, we have to remember that. So our listeners out there in podcast land who are hearing some of this, it's like, oh, yeah, we're still going through that in our own congregation, because we have people who want to teach pieces of doctrine from what was the phrase from Saints of Old? What was the, I missed how that actually went, rather than actually what's happening currently and how we're being called currently into reimagining the church as we go forward. So that just really struck me is, with everything else that happened, life in the church for most people in congregational life, specially in Western nations was very much faith through piety, faith through abstinence. So any last comments on this period besides the whole communalism, the Zonic communalism, and which I find fascinating because it was like the, the church side of communes, which was the secular side, it's all happening at

the same time. And, you know, one is branded good, and one is branded bad. So I find that fascinating. So anything else going on?

Lach Mackay 55:57

I strongly encourage people that... to jump in it's, it's 20th century is neglected but there is a lot of material there, much of it unexplored. And we need, we need to get it out.

Tony Chvala-Smith 56:10

I agree with that. And I think it's it, it becomes really helpful to current church members, especially those spent not uniquely but especially those who are 50 and older, who have some ties to the older part of the church. It's really helpful and pastoral, and theologically useful for them to see how we got to where we are today. Right to see that we didn't just stumble into what we are today, but that, that this is, we've been working towards this. And oh, by the way, you voted for some of this. You voted for conference resolutions, you voted for sections of the Doctrine and Covenants. This didn't happen to you, you helped this happen. I think that's really important for people to see. The church we have become an are becoming is in motion, and that motion has been prompted by church members who stayed the course and kept, kept saying yeah, let's let's do that. Let's go there.

Karin Peter 57:20

Lach any last comments from you?

Lach Mackay 57:24

Nope, I'm good. Okay.

Karin Peter 57:27

So if you're interested in, in looking at something to really delineate the church from this modern period, I'd suggest you find a copy of The Hymnal. The old gray hymnal is how it's talked about in the church and read some of the hymn texts from that. And then our next episode is going to move us into the era of what's called the red hymnal, which is the one that followed us during the tenure of Wallace B. Smith, which is where we're going in episode nine. And we'll be talking about Wallace B as Profit President of the church and also the Independence temple. So with that, be sure to catch up on all the topics Project Zion Podcast talks about and shares about at [Project Zion podcast.org](https://projectzionpodcast.org). And thank you, Lach and Tony, for being with us for this conversation again. I'm Karen Peter, thanks so much for listening.