

A POSSIBLE FRAMEWORK FOR FULL COMMUNION BETWEEN COMMUNITY OF  
CHRIST AND CERTAIN HIGH CHURCH CHRISTIANS

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The last fifty years have seen an impressive emergence of ecumenism within the former Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS, now called Community of Christ). While ecumenical impulses within this church go back much further, this change comes in the lieu of its long tradition of considering itself the “one true church.” Now that Community of Christ no longer considers itself the one true church, and desires (and has largely achieved) a greater involvement ecumenical Christian missional work, questions are raised about the fact that Community of Christ maintains a very different ecclesiastical structure than that of more traditional, non-Restorationist churches. For many low-church Christians, these different structures are not necessarily a problem as church structures, for them, reflect more practical, and less high-theological concerns. If, however, Community of Christ is to work with High-Church Christians on spiritual matters, it will be necessary for correspondents to be drawn between more traditional Christian ecclesiastical structures and that of Community of Christ. This paper seeks to do just that, and to suggest a framework by which full communion may be established between certain High-Church Christians (especially Independent Sacramentalists, specifically the Celtic-Rite Old Catholic Church [CROCC], from whose perspective this paper is written) and Community of Christ.

After the following analysis, this paper shall conclude that said correspondents do exist, and should be utilized by Independent Sacramentalists, to establish mutual spiritual ministry, and even full communion with Community of Christ. This paper shall proceed by analyzing the emergence of ecumenism within the RLDS tradition, and then the historical and theological underpinnings of both Community of Christ’s priesthood structure as well as more traditional Christian ecclesiastical structures. It shall then outline correspondents between these different

structures, and explain why it is possible and desirable for Independent Sacramentalists to have full fellowship with Community of Christ.

The RLDS Church began with the belief that it was the legitimate successor to Joseph Smith Jr.'s Church of Christ, founded in 1830 (which, by the time of Joseph Smith Jr.'s death, would come to be called the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints).<sup>1</sup> As Joseph Smith Jr. saw his church as the restoration of primitive Christianity and the one, true Christian church, the RLDS Church initially believed itself to be the one, true Christian church.<sup>2</sup> Much of the reason for this belief lies in Smith's supposed restoration of proper priesthood authority by which saving sacraments, such as baptism are performed; as other churches lack the proper priesthood authority by which to perform these sacraments, their members are incapable of achieving full salvation.<sup>3</sup>

Following the Second World War, the RLDS Church began evangelizing a number of non-Christian cultures who had little or no understanding of the basic message of Christianity, much-less it's supposed restoration.<sup>4</sup> This meant that while the RLDS gospel was appealing to frontier and post-frontier North-Americans and Europeans, it was not as well-received by cultures that had not already become largely Christian.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> LDS Doctrine and Covenants 115: 4; Mark A. Scherer, *The Journey of a People*, vol. 2, *The Era of Reorganization, 1844 to 1946* (Independence, MO: Community of Christ Seminary Press, 2013), 229.

<sup>2</sup> Gregory Prymak, *Authority in the RLDS Theological Tradition: Two Views*, Theological Monograph Series (Independence, MO: Graceland/Park Press, 1995), 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> Prymak, *Authority in the RLDS Theological Tradition*, 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> Maurice L. Draper, *Isles & Continents* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1982), 65-66, Community of Christ II Document Sharing; Richard P. Howard, *The Church through the Years*, vol. 2, *The Reorganization Comes of Age, 1860-1992* (Independence, MO: Herald House Publishing, 1993), 359-60, Community of Christ II Document Sharing.

<sup>5</sup> Charles D. Neff, "What Shall We Teach?" *The Saints' Herald*, November 1, 1967, 6-7, Community of Christ II Document Sharing.

In response to this need, the RLDS Church, realizing itself incapable of proclaiming the message of Christ to entire cultures alone, turned to ecumenical work with other denominations.<sup>6</sup> This undermined its understanding of its own uniqueness as the one, true Christian Church. The result was a theological revolution (taking off primarily during the 1960s) which eventually created a new identity for the RLDS Church. The RLDS Church would emphasize its Christianity, rather than its Restoration uniqueness; it would begin to see itself as part of the broader Christian Community. The culmination of this process could be argued to be the changing of the name of the RLDS Church to Community of Christ in 2000.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, Community of Christ maintains certain Restorationist distinctives, among which is a version of the Priesthood Structure established by Joseph Smith Jr. prior to his death. This structure was not given at once, but evolved over the course of the life of the early Latter Day Saint Church during the tenure of Joseph Smith Jr. It evolved into something very similar to those structures found in Community of Christ. Community of Christ is governed by two priesthoods: The Aaronic and Melchizedek. The Melchizedek Priesthood deals with the conferring of the Holy Spirit and recalls the priesthood of Jesus Christ himself, while the Aaronic Priesthood deals with temporal matters as well as Baptism, and also recalls the Priesthood that Aaron and his family exercised according to the Mosaic Law.<sup>8</sup> Within the Aaronic Priesthood

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<sup>6</sup> Harold N. Schneebeck Jr., *The Body of Christ* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1968), 32, Community of Christ II Document Sharing.

<sup>7</sup> W. Paul Jones, "Theological Re-Symbolization of the RLDS Tradition: The Call to a Stage Beyond Demythologizing," *John Whitmer Historical Association* 16 (1996): 5, Community of Christ II Document Sharing.

<sup>8</sup> Gregory A. Prince, *Having Authority: The Origins and Development of Priesthood During the Ministry of Joseph Smith*, John Whitmer Historical Association Monograph Series (Independence, MO: Independence Press, 1993), 52-53.

are the offices of Deacon, Teacher, and Priest, while within the Melchizedek Priesthood are the offices of Elder and High Priest.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of the historical and theological origins of this system, one has to look at Joseph Smith Jr. himself, as well as the development of his identity as prophet. The beginning of Smith's prophetic ministry was the dictation of the Book of Mormon. At this early stage (1828-29), there is very little explicit mention of priesthood, or even the concept of a "one, true church."<sup>10</sup> Even the finished text of the Book of Mormon only vaguely deals with priesthood authority, and does not specifically state that a literal church institution *had* to be restored in order to mediate salvation.<sup>11</sup>

Fairly early on, however (prior to the end of 1829), Smith began to see his mission in terms of actually starting an organization that would constitute a restoration of the one, true church. At this stage, the concept of authority within this church was very vague; words like "priesthood" were rarely used, and his theology of restoration was thoroughly Christian primitivist, not unlike what one would find among contemporary Stone-Campbellite Christians.<sup>12</sup> Of course, Smith had to answer the question of why one ought to join his church as opposed to another. It would seem that, for him, simply being the church that replicated ancient Christian practice was insufficient; there had to be an authority by which saving faith and saving sacraments (such as baptism and the laying on of hands) could be practiced.<sup>13</sup> It was this

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<sup>9</sup> Community of Christ, *The Priesthood Manual*, 2004 Edition. (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 2004), 30, 41, accessed April 21, 2016, <https://www.cofchrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Priesthood-Manual-2004.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Gregory A. Prince, *Power from On High: The Development of Mormon Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 3.

<sup>11</sup> cf 1 Nephi 3:135-181; 2 Nephi 4:42; Mosiah 4:4; 7:84; 9:51-59; 11:19, 97; Alma 2:11; 4:1; 10:103; 14:7-8; 21:25-26; Moroni 3:1-3; 4:1-4; 5:1-3.

<sup>12</sup> Prince, *Power from On High*, 10-11.

<sup>13</sup> Prince, *Power from On High*, 10-11.

authority that made Smith's church true and others false. Smith's Christian practices were valid, while others, lacking proper authority, were invalid.<sup>14</sup>

At this stage, Smith spoke of "Elders," "Priests," and "Teachers."<sup>15</sup> His language was very simple. He did not specify which of these offices belonged in an Aaronic Priesthood, and which belonged in a Melchizedek. Indeed the distinction between these two Priesthoods is only hinted at in sections of the Book of Mormon and other revelations, and may not even have initially been intended to be developed.<sup>16</sup> What was vaguely present, and later developed in Smith's practice, was the notion of an authority by which Baptism is to be practiced, and an authority by which the Holy Spirit is to be conferred.<sup>17</sup> This theology is not unique to Latter Day Saints. Indeed, Independent Sacramentalists make such a distinction in the practice of the sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation (anyone baptized may perform the former, only Bishops and Presbyters may perform the latter).<sup>18</sup>

The more Smith continued, the more his concern became not merely about replicating the Primitive Christian church as he saw it, but rather instilling in his followers profound mystical experiences. It is out of this concern that the Priesthoods continued to develop. By 1831, at a conference at which several Elders experienced a promised Pentecostal outpouring, a new Order of Ministry was established called the "Order of Melchizedek" which was equated to the "High Priesthood" found in the Book of Mormon.<sup>19</sup> This priesthood was understood as that governing the conferring of the Holy Spirit, but Smith was still comparatively vague. Smith does not yet assign particular offices to the High Priesthood, indeed half of the Elders present at the above-

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<sup>14</sup> Prymak, *Authority in the RLDS Theological Tradition*, 14-15.

<sup>15</sup> Prince, *Power from On High*, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Moroni 2:1-3:3.

<sup>17</sup> Prince, *Power from On High*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Andre' Queen, *Old Catholic: History, Ministry, Faith* (New York: iUniverse Inc., 2003), 124-25.

<sup>19</sup> Prince, *Power from On High*, 17-19.

mentioned conference were ordained to this Priesthood, while the others were still called “Elders.”<sup>20</sup>

At some point, probably resulting from his association with Sidney Rigdon, as well as his having immersed himself in the study of the Old Testament, necessitated by his project to revise the King James Version of the Bible, Smith’s understanding of Restoration took on a new meaning.<sup>21</sup> Smith began to understand himself as not just a Christian Primitivist, but also an Israelite Primitivist. This could be hinted at in the Book of Mormon with the identification of Native Americans as descendants of Northern Israelites, but again it is still very vague. Smith began to see a need to bring not only ancient Christian experience into the life of his church, but also ancient Israelite experience. By 1832, the priesthood he had associated with Baptism and temporal affairs of the church, came to recall the ministry of Aaron per the Mosaic Covenant.<sup>22</sup> By the end of the Kirtland Ohio period, the two Priesthoods—Aaronic and Melchizedek—were well-established.<sup>23</sup>

After the Kirtland Ohio and Far-West Missouri periods, Smith’s development of Priesthood authority continued. Smith had brought the experiences of primitive Christianity (as he understood it) as well as those of ancient Israel into his church. To this, during the Nauvoo period, he would add the experiences of Yahwists during the ancient Patriarchal periods. Indeed, he probably intended to add a third priesthood called the Patriarchal Priesthood to the two (Aaronic and Melchizedek) already established. As with the ancient Patriarchs, this priesthood would be passed from father to son.<sup>24</sup> Thus was established in the office of “Patriarch” or

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<sup>20</sup> Prince, *Power from On High*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Prince, *Power from On High*, 15-16.

<sup>22</sup> Prince, *Power from On High*, 27-28.

<sup>23</sup> Prince, *Power from On High*, 9-10.

<sup>24</sup> Prince, *Having Authority*, 73.

“Evangelist.” While this originally was intended to be a separate Priesthood entirely, by the end of his life, Smith would speak of this order as part of the Melchizedek Priesthood.<sup>25</sup> Today, Community of Christ considers the order of Patriarch or Evangelist as a sub-order of the office of High Priest.<sup>26</sup>

When the RLDS Church was founded, it adopted Smith’s priesthood structure largely intact but eventually divested itself of what it considered the more scandalous aspects of Smith’s cosmology. So the RLDS Church initially included Smith’s theology grafting what he saw as the experience of primitive Christians, Primitive Israelites under the Mosaic Covenant, and Primitive Yahwists tied to the early Patriarchs. Tied intimately to the above-mentioned revolution in identity that took place within the RLDS Church beginning in the 1960s was the scholarly realization that early Christianity did not identify itself with a particular institutional structure that was necessary to mediate salvation.<sup>27</sup>

As the RLDS Church began to see itself as a part of the broader Christian Family rather than its one, true expression, its historians and theologians were free to acknowledge that the structure established by Joseph Smith Jr. was not the structure established by the early church; indeed, the earliest church did not have an institutional structure as well-defined as that of Smith’s church.<sup>28</sup> In response to this, many in the RLDS Church came to understand the development of its priesthood structure as responding to functional needs among early Latter Day Saints.<sup>29</sup> While this may be true (it is certainly true for more traditional ecclesiastical structures), it must be understood that functionality includes not merely temporal but also

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<sup>25</sup> Prince, *Having Authority*, 76.

<sup>26</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 129:7.

<sup>27</sup> Prymak, *Authority in the RLDS Tradition*, 43.

<sup>28</sup> Daniel D. Landon and Robert L. Smith, *For What Purpose Assembled: A Study of the Congregation and Mission* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1969), 9-10, Community of Christ II Document Sharing.

<sup>29</sup> Prymak, *Authority in the RLDS Tradition*, 26.



spiritual needs. As the above analysis demonstrates, the function of the development of Smith's priesthood was not merely social, but also reflected developments in his spirituality, and many of these developments remained largely a part of RLDS identity until quite recently (indeed most of them are not, strictly speaking, heretical so Community of Christ may yet find purpose for them).

What is clear is that for whatever reason, Community of Christ maintains an ecclesiastical structure that evolved out of the spirituality and theology of Joseph Smith Jr. rather than ancient Christian tradition. By contrast more traditional structures emerged out of scripture as filtered through ancient Christian tradition. When this paper refers to "traditional" ecclesiastical structures, it does so with some peril because different non-restoration Churches have different structures, so it is necessary to clarify what is meant by this designation. "Traditional" refers to subsets of either the episcopal, or presbyterian polities (congregational polity could, for the most part fall under the heading of presbyterian polity, while connexional polity could, for the most part, fall under either episcopal or presbyterian polity, depending on which Wesleyan church one is speaking of).

The episcopal polity (that of most Independent Sacramentalists) arose through a sacralization of practical needs. By contrast, Community of Christ's use of Joseph Smith Jr.'s priesthood structure could be called a practical-ization of a spiritual need. At first, the church was not an institution but a fellowship of followers of Jesus of Nazareth. As practical needs emerged, certain persons were given certain responsibilities: non-Hellenistic Jewish Christians established what came to be called the "order of Deacons" to take care of practical, material concerns.<sup>30</sup> As St. Paul and his companions (and probably others) spread the fledgling fellowship across the ancient Mediterranean world, they ordained "presbyters" with prayer and

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<sup>30</sup> Acts 6:1-7.

fasting.<sup>31</sup> By the time of the authorship of the final documents of the New Testament, some congregations were governed by many Presbyters, while others were governed by a single presbyter called a bishop, or overseer.<sup>32</sup>

While these structures emerged for very practical reasons, they were, by the end of the second century CE sacralized to respond to Gnostic claims of secret knowledge passed down among certain elite disciples of Jesus.<sup>33</sup> To respond to this, Bishops were argued to be the literal successors of the Apostles. The Twelve Ordained Bishops who alone had power to ordain Presbyters and Deacons. These Bishops became the continuing presence of the Twelve Apostles in the Life of the Church.<sup>34</sup> At some point, Presbyters came to be regarded as Priests, and bishops High Priests.<sup>35</sup> This is possibly due to their association with Holy Eucharist, the most priestly act of the church.

For the Independent Sacramental movement, this is an important story which is and should be maintained in its structures (for reasons beyond the scope of this paper). Nevertheless, presbyterian forms of polity are just as valid, and indeed probably more-accurately reflect the structure of most Christian communities during the late First, and Early Second Centuries CE. It is, therefore, that this author includes presbyterian forms of polity within the designation “traditional.”

It is important to note a key difference between (even high church) traditional forms of polity and Restoration priesthood structures. Even high church traditional forms of polity do not

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<sup>31</sup> Acts 14:23.

<sup>32</sup> William C. Placher, *A History of Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983), 48.

<sup>33</sup> Placher, *An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 49.

<sup>34</sup> Placher, *An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 49.

<sup>35</sup> Kevin Knight, ed., *Apostolic Constitutions (Book li)*, trans. James Donaldson (n.p.: newadvent.org, 2014), under “Section 3,” accessed April 21, 2016, <http://newadvent.org/fathers/07152.htm>.

refer to church government as “the priesthood.” Presbyters may be colloquially called “priests,” and persons seeking ordination in high church denominations may be said to be “seeking ordination to the priesthood” but priesthood, traditionally speaking, is understood as being held by all baptized Christians. This is acknowledged by even Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theologians.<sup>36</sup> In traditional Christian polity, Christ is *the* holder of the Melchizedek Priesthood (called so because he is a great High Priest, and yet of the tribe of Judah, not Levi),<sup>37</sup> and the entire church may be said to hold this priesthood through its connection to him as his body.<sup>38</sup> Thus, all baptized Christians hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, though not all are Bishops, Presbyters, or Deacons. Furthermore, the Aaronic Priesthood is merely that Priesthood held by certain Levites. Certain Jews maintain that they hold this priesthood by virtue of their family history,<sup>39</sup> and some of them have probably become Christian. Only they, among Christians, may claim to hold the Aaronic Priesthood. Traditionally, Baptism is not a sacrament of the Aaronic Priesthood, but of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and is capable of being performed validly by any baptized Christian.<sup>40</sup>

It cannot be denied that both structures are, on the face of it, very different. This is potentially problematic for high church communities if they wish to engage in mutual spiritual ministry with Community of Christ. This is because they tend to maintain the sacralization of the particular ecclesiastical authority structure that has been handed down traditionally. As in Restoration churches, only persons of certain offices may perform certain sacraments. Indeed,

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<sup>36</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church: With Modifications from the Editio Typica*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 1268; Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Eugene, OR: WIPF & Stock, 1962), 239, Google Books.

<sup>37</sup> Hebrews 7:17.

<sup>38</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

<sup>39</sup> “The Levites Today,” The Cohen-Levi Family Heritage, accessed April 21, 2016, [http://www.cohen-levi.org/the\\_levites/the\\_levites\\_today.htm](http://www.cohen-levi.org/the_levites/the_levites_today.htm).

<sup>40</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1256.

even if Apostolic Succession is not understood literally, there is a sense in which the ministry of the church proceeds from its unbroken historic connection to the fellowship established at the first Pentecost. Does this not imply that traditional church structures (broadly defined) are essential to the proper practice of Christianity? Could Community of Christ be said not to be organically connected to the original pentecostal Christian fellowship, by virtue of its Restorationism? Furthermore, if mutual spiritual ministry is to be engaged in, where are the correspondents? What is, for Community of Christ, a Bishop? A Presbyter? A Deacon? since these terms do not mean the same thing in the Restoration priesthood structure. What are non-Restoration churches to make of the seeming absence of the Priesthood of All Believers in Community of Christ?

It is important to note that this paper is speaking about mutual “spiritual” ministry rather than “temporal” ministry. This distinction is important because the correspondents sought are mostly unnecessary for social-justice or charity work. “Spiritual” ministry refers to the celebration of sacraments, evangelism, or mutual leadership in worship. This paper seeks to go so far as to promote full communion between Independent Sacramental Churches (CROCC especially) and Community of Christ. This author dares to dream of a time when Community of Christ Elders may concelebrate mass with CROCC Priests, or when Community of Christ High Priests may participate in the ordination of CROCC members to Holy Orders, and vice-versa.

This paper proceeds on a couple of assumptions which would probably not apply to all High-Church Christians, but would apply to at least most Independent Sacramentalists and arguably the CROCC. The first assumption is that Apostolic Succession should not be understood as expressing a literal, historical truth but rather bears witness to the historic, organic unity of faith that all non-heretical Christians have with the original pentecostal Christian

fellowship. Thus, a Christian community need not produce lists of Apostolic Succession, or even have any particular polity to be valid; all that is necessary (and even this necessity is not absolute but conditional upon God's sovereign decision-making) is to assert the faith of the Good Confession,<sup>41</sup> and avoid heresy as defined by scripture and interpreted by the Seven Ecumenical Councils. Why this definition of heresy is essential to orthodox Independent Sacramentalists is beyond the scope of this paper, suffice it to say that one need not endorse the authority of an ecumenical council to endorse its doctrines or avoid heresies proscribed by it.

The Second assumption is that since the RLDS Church's identification with historic Christianity, as well as its identification of its priesthood structure as emerging from practical concerns (or more accurately the practical-ization of spiritual concerns), it has become possible to assert that Community of Christ and (many) Independent Sacramentalists are, in fact, saying sufficiently similar things using different language. This enables the existence of correspondents between traditional ecclesiastical structures and Joseph Smith Jr.'s Priesthood structure as practiced by Community of Christ.

Of course the question then becomes, where are these correspondents? The answer depends on the ministries being performed. Using the threefold structure of episcopal polity as a starting point, within Community of Christ, the role of Bishops is roughly fulfilled by Evangelists and High Priests (which includes members of the Order of Bishops, Evangelists, the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles) while the Order of Presbyters is roughly fulfilled by Elders and Priests, and the Order of Deacons is roughly fulfilled by Teachers and Deacons. It shall be assumed that what Independent Sacramentalists speak of when they rarely speak of the Melchizedek Priesthood refers to the ministry of all Community of Christ

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<sup>41</sup> Matthew 16:15-19.

Members, and that when Community of Christ uses the same phrase, it means something different. It shall be assumed that what Independent Sacramentalists speak of when they rarely speak of the Aaronic Priesthood refers to only those Community of Christ members who happen to be Levitical Jews (if there are any), and that when Community of Christ uses the same phrase it means something different.

On this basis, it becomes possible for Independent Sacramentalists to have a framework of understanding by which they may engage in mutual spiritual ministry in a full-communion covenant with Community of Christ. Of course, for many Independent Sacramentalists (CROCC included), one last problem remains: Community of Christ's lack of belief in the physical presence of Christ in Holy Eucharist. In this case, the ball is in the proverbial court of Independent Sacramentalists (CROCC especially) to decide either to be exclusive or inclusive. The physical presence of Christ is not dogmatically established in any of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, and it is biblically and traditionally sound to believe that one need not consciously understand what is going on in a sacrament for that sacrament to be valid.

Assuming the physical presence of Christ to be a correct principle, Community of Christ (or any other low-church Christian denomination) need not believe that Christ is physically present in Eucharist for him to actually be so. The sacraments are not magic; they are not made real by the use of proper beliefs, and proper words spoken at the proper time (though said words and beliefs are surely important) rather they are made real by God's sovereign grace. With this in mind, it is possible to understand Community of Christ Eucharist as valid (even possessing the physical presence of Christ) without requiring that they believe in the physical presence of Christ in Eucharist. To do this does not, in any sense, require that Independent Sacramentalists cease to strongly assert belief in the physical presence of Christ in Eucharist. Indeed, if they truly believe

in the true, physical presence, it becomes incumbent upon them to share it. A proper understanding of the doctrine of physical presence should result in greater inclusivity, not exclusivity as it has sadly, historically done.

But of course, one may ask if full communion and mutual spiritual ministry between Community of Christ and Independent Sacramentalists are even desirable. They are for a number of reasons. First because Community of Christ has a great deal to offer all of non-Restoration Christianity, especially through its vibrant theology of Zion. Zion, for Community of Christ, is the grace-aided construction of harmonious communities of love.<sup>42</sup> This speaks especially to Independent Sacramentalists' potential to build post-institutional catholic communities. Partnered with Community of Christ, both movements could be strong missional assets to each other.

Furthermore, through its re-symbolized story of apostasy and restoration, with restoration meaning something more akin to re-invigoration rather than the re-creation of a true church that ceased to exist,<sup>43</sup> coupled with its passionate pursuit of peace, justice, and harmonious community, Community of Christ is poised to offer Restoration/Reinvigoration to all non-Restoration Christian communities without changing their essential doctrinal or practical identities. This is a reality that words are at a loss to describe. The reader must spend time among Community of Christ members, and engaging with Community of Christ's story to see this concept play out.

Finally, beyond what they offer to non-restoration Christianity, it is incumbent upon non-Restoration Christians, especially Independent Sacramentalists, to build bridges of unity with Christians who have long been at odds with each other. Christian inclusiveness is not absolute.

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<sup>42</sup> Jones, "Theological Re-Symbolization of the RLDS Tradition," 11.

<sup>43</sup> Prymak, *Authority in the RLDS Theological Tradition*, 26.

There are heresies which threaten the identity of the body of Christ, and indeed Mormonism includes such heresies, but Community of Christ does not. They have arguably, from their beginning in the 1860s, united themselves to Christ in the good confession, and are therefore brothers and sisters in Christ. It is incumbent upon non-Restoration Christians to welcome them into full fellowship, and pursue mutual spiritual ministry. For Churches without High-Church understandings of ministry, sacrament, and practice, this is easier, but this paper hopes to have offered a framework by which churches with High-Church understandings may proceed.

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