

# **Internationalized, Hollowed-Out and Deregulated: The Impact of Globalization on the Community of Christ's Understanding of Zion**

**For MHA conference, Independence, MO, USA. May 2010**

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'Zion' has been a central theological concept and practical imperative of the Community of Christ, formerly known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS Church), since its very beginnings. Particularly in the first half of the 20th century, Zion (not to be confused with Zionism) represented a vision of 'the kingdom of heaven on earth' – not to be realized in some far off future, but to be built in the here and now. This was rooted in the Acts 2 description of the early Christians' communal living<sup>1</sup> and a passage from the Book of Mormon describing ideal Christian society in the following terms:

...there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another; And they had all things common among them, therefore they were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.<sup>2</sup>

Early Mormons, the Community of Christ's forebears, were urged to "Seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion,"<sup>3</sup> described by Joseph Smith, Jr. as both a social condition<sup>4</sup> and also a specific geographic place. In July 1831, Smith designated Independence, Missouri – the head of the Western trails – as the "Center Place," a "land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion."<sup>5</sup> Other early Mormon communal experiments were built in Nauvoo, Illinois and Kirtland, Ohio.

In the early 20th century, the RLDS church placed renewed emphasis on the idea of building Zion. Drawing on the social gospel (e.g. Rauschenbusch 1912 & 1917) and his training in sociology, church President-Prophet, Frederick M. Smith laid out a coherent vision of Zion as a "new social order," a "New Jerusalem" to be established in Independence. While respecting the need for each person to have private property, he argued for the "communizing of surplus wealth" to be redistributed and administered "in the interest of the group," "according to the law of need" and "public benefit." He called for the establishment of public institutions such as schools, 'storehouses' and churches to "control economic and industrial conditions

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2: 42-47.

<sup>2</sup> Community of Christ Book of Mormon 4th Nephi 1:3b-4.

<sup>3</sup> Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants 6:3a.

<sup>4</sup> "And the Lord called His people Zion, because they were of one heart and mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them." Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants 36:2h.

<sup>5</sup> Community of Christ Doctrine and Covenants 57.

in consonance with religious ideals.”<sup>6</sup> Prior to 1960 then, the Community of Christ mental map pivoted around Independence – the ‘Centerplace,’ ‘Zion.’ Congregations in other parts of the world were called ‘branches’ – they branched out from the trunk – rooted firmly in Jackson County, Missouri. Good members were expected to ‘gather’ from the peripheries into the center, to build heaven on earth in a specific, geographic place.

However, by the 21st Century, church leaders spoke of Zion as an abstract vision, to be implemented wherever members were living, in their neighborhoods and those of their congregations “throughout the world.”<sup>7</sup> Gone was the emphasis on ‘gathering’ to Independence and leaders no longer called for a radical sharing of socio-economic resources. The social gospel, in terms of the redistribution of wealth largely occurred in the geographic ‘peripheries’ of the developing world and was outsourced to quasi-affiliated organizations like Outreach International. Zion had been ‘hollowed out.’

I believe the explanation for this massive shift in organizational thought and practice lies in part in the internationalization of the church since the early 1960s. The Community of Christ has transformed from a small, geographically-concentrated Midwestern Mormon sect to a denomination spanning over 50 nations in the space of 50 years. Members participating in the US military and economic expansion in the aftermath of World War II took their Restoration faith with them to East Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (Peffer 1980; Draper 1982; Howard 1993; Bolton 2005). Presiding over a significant portion of this push out from the church’s traditional geographic core was Apostle Charles D. Neff, whose first travels overseas were as a US Naval Officer in the war in the Pacific.

The Community of Christ’s internationalization has not occurred in a vacuum. Christendom’s center of gravity has shifted definitively into the Global South, where the church has experienced explosive growth, and Christianity is a far more diverse religion today than prior to WWII (Winter 1975; Jenkins 2002; Johnson & Ross 2009). This global expansion of Christianity is in itself intrinsically linked to “a structural shift underway in the organization of human affairs: from a world of discrete but independent national states to the world as a shared social space” (Held & McGrew 2007, p. 3). This has been described by social scientists as ‘globalization’ – the “intensification of worldwide relations and interactions” (Held & McGrew 2007, p. 2), driven by innovations in information technology, communications and transportation, growing international economic and political integration, increased human migration and an emerging awareness of the world beyond one’s own borders (Giddens 2003; Held & McGrew 2007; Baylis, et al. 2008).

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<sup>6</sup> Frederick M. Smith. (1938) “Laws of the New Jerusalem.” *Zion Series*.  
<<http://www.therefnantchurch.com/zion/13laws.htm>>.

<sup>7</sup> Community of Christ. (2009) “Basic Beliefs.” <<http://cofchrist.org/ourfaith/faith-beliefs.asp>>.

In the rest of this essay, I will look at how three important social impacts of globalization –the growth of a global consciousness, the hollowing out of institutions and the liberalization and deregulation of traditional norms – have influenced the Community of Christ’s understanding and implementation of Zion. In doing so, I will draw on my research into the role of Apostle Charles D. Neff in the internationalization of the Community of Christ (Bolton 2005) as well as my broader inquiries into the possibility of progressive politics in the globalized era (Bolton 2010; Bolton & Nash Forthcoming 2010).

### **Global Consciousness**

Globalization has made us more aware of the cultures, issues and matters beyond the borders of our neighborhood, town and country. This has been described as the emergence of a ‘Global consciousness’ (Robertson 2003). Waves of human migration, the growth of international travel and lowering costs of global communications (telephone, internet, radio and television) have conspired to make it nearly impossible for the average human being to be unaware of people who look, think and act differently than themselves. This has brought home the challenges of cross-cultural interaction and communication to an unprecedented number of people. Perhaps more people than ever have had to think about how their culture’s claims to truth measure up against that of others. This has provoked a range of responses, from cultural relativism to reactionary fundamentalism (Grillo 1999).

For the century following the reorganization of the RLDS church in 1860, the church expanded very little outside its traditional geographic core of North America (particularly Missouri, Iowa and Michigan), Northern Europe, Australia and French Polynesia. However, at the 1958 General Conference, delegates passed a resolution declaring “the urgency of spreading the gospel as broadly and as quickly as possible into all the world....”<sup>8</sup> In 1960, the conference itself changed its name to the World Conference.<sup>9</sup> By the end of the decade, the church was established in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Dominican Republic, Haiti, India, and Nigeria. What happened? Why the sudden explosion out of Jackson County into every populated continent?

With the post-WWII military occupation of Japan and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, many RLDS members were thrust out into world for the very first time. They began to share their faith with local people they met and made some converts. This attracted the attention of the church leadership, which eventually assigned Charles Neff in 1960 to take his family to Japan and serve as the first Apostle to ‘The Orient.’ Robert Neff, his eldest son, who was aged 12 at the time, described what people thought of their move to Tokyo:

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<sup>8</sup> RLDS General Conference. (11 October 1958) “Gospel to All World.” *Rules and Resolutions*. Independence, MO, Herald Publishing House.

<sup>9</sup> RLDS World Conference. (1960) “‘World’ in Place of ‘General.’” *Rules and Resolutions*. Independence, MO, Herald Publishing House.

At the time, in that part of the US, the thought of an entire family departing to Japan was akin to them boarding a spaceship to Mars. No one had a clue about what Japan was, or even where it was, except very far off and alien.<sup>10</sup>

The sudden attention on Japan, Taiwan and Korea was partly because the church membership and leadership suddenly realized that these places existed. Previously, these countries had laid outside the church's geographical imagination. Akin to the medieval *Mapa Mundi* that showed no sign of the Americas, church leaders' mental map of the world before the 1940s simply did not include Latin America, Asia or Africa. But with either themselves, friends and family members serving in the military in East Asia, RLDS members in the American Midwest were suddenly made aware of countries, real places, that to them might well of been in Outer Space. In other words, as a result of US military and economic expansion into East Asia, the church leadership and membership became *conscious* of another part of the world. Without this consciousness of East Asia, there would be no motivation to go there.

Nonetheless, simply the conscious recognition of other places' existence was only the first step. Once RLDS missionaries started engaging with other cultures and contexts, they found out that much of what they believed to be core teaching of the church seemed irrelevant or difficult to translate. According to Neff, Japanese people were not interested in how the RLDS church differed from Mormons, the term 'Latter Day Saints' made no sense translated into Japanese and the stories of the 'discovery' of the Book of Mormon were uncaptivating (Bolton 2005, pp. 35-44). In other words, 'Zion' – the traditional geographic of core of the church – was not speaking well to East Asia. By contrast, in an article he penned in 1963, Neff posited the "Orient speaks to Zion." He argued that elements of Japanese and Korean culture had something to contribute to RLDS understandings of Zion: "I'm convinced that Zion will be blessed immeasurably as the Orient makes her contribution. It is not a one-way proposition."<sup>11</sup>

Since then, the church has had to struggle with an increasing breadth and depth of cross-cultural challenges, over polygamy, sexuality, understandings of wealth, racism, use of alcohol and musical styles. By being conscious of difference in the world, church leaders are engaged in a constant, delicate and difficult discernment of how to be principled in a pluralistic world, how to avoid both relativism and prejudice.

This recognition of a world beyond Missouri has made it difficult for the church to continue to assert and believe that there is something special about Independence. Claiming it as Zion, as the 'Centerplace' of the entire world seems arrogant, even preposterous. A global consciousness has deterritorialized Zion, cut it from its mooring in a specific place. But the question lingers, once the concept of Zion, or the

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Neff. (c. 1997) Personal correspondence to Hiroshi Yamada. P110-1 f7 Community of Christ Library/Archives.

<sup>11</sup> Charles D. Neff. (November 1963) "The Orient Speaks to Zion." *Saints' Herald*. pp. 4-7.

Restoration Gospel itself, is stripped of its Americanness (something Charles Neff worked hard to do) is there anything left? Can Zion mean anything if it is not rooted in a geography?

### **Hollowing Out Institutions**

Globalization has also had an impact on institutions. Market transactions, conversations and supervisory relationships have been increasingly de-spatialized – with an American able to talk to person in China, using a phone designed in Sweden, made using minerals from the Congo. This has reduced the rationale for having highly centralized institutions ordered by hierarchical relationships of command and control. It has become possible for businesses and other institutions to outsource operations and seemingly core functions to subcontractors all over the world (Grossman & Helpman 2005). Simultaneously, trends of privatization have led to significant public assets and services being sold off to the private sector, transforming the role of government into that of a contract manager (Milward & Provan 2000; Stiglitz 2002). Outsourcing and privatization have contributed to the rise of the network, rather than the Weberian bureaucracy, as an increasingly powerful organizational form (Boyer 1990). Manuel Castells, has argued that only networks are able to survive in the atmosphere of “relentless adaptation and the extreme flexibility that is required by an interconnected, global economy...” (Castells 1999, p. 6).

Globalization has also impacted the institutional structure of the church, which has come, in many ways, to resemble the structure of a multinational corporation. Just as the American car industry hollowed out its core in Detroit and pushed out its manufacturing to the world’s economic peripheries, in recent years the Community of Christ has cut jobs at its headquarters and sold or killed off ‘non-core business.’ The Independence Sanitarium and Hospital, Herald House, Groves retirement home, church-owned farms – all institutional expressions of the Zionic concept – have been shuttered, sold or drastically curtailed. I suspect that this has been accelerated by the tendency of the Bishopric – responsible for the material wellbeing of the church – has largely been trained and educated in the institutions of capitalism and neo-liberalism that have driven economic globalization. Moreover, the membership in the geographic core is aging and, absent any accurate demographic statistics, probably declining.

Meanwhile, like many other denominations, the church has experienced dramatic growth in the ‘periphery.’ After the initial wave of churches that were started by military members posted overseas in the 1960s and 1970s, the church (including Neff) adopted a different model of expansion – that of ‘acquisition’ of churches in other countries. In India, the Philippines, Haiti, Nigeria, Liberia and other places, local ‘religious entrepreneurs’ who had started their own denominations brought their flock into the RLDS Church (Howard 1993; Bolton 2005). While many of these leaders probably had genuine conversions, many also may have been attracted by the money, power, legitimacy and opportunity to travel that came from affiliation with an international church. A key element of Coca Cola corporation’s international

expansion has been its buying up of local soft drinks and bottling companies, rebranding them as Coca Cola subsidiaries and incorporating them into the multinational Coca Cola network.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the RLDS church 'acquired' already-established local churches and has tried to incorporate them into its international 'brand' through ministerial education, distribution of publications and exposure of local congregants to church missionaries and conferences.

In many cases the structures, polities, practice and doctrine of these local churches have had considerable sticking power. For instance, in Haiti, the church structures resembles more the evangelical and Pentecostal roots of the local church that was subsumed into the RLDS church in the 1960s. This contributes to a diversity of polity and doctrine around the world, adding layers of institutional complexity. The global Community of Christ thus sometimes more resembles a network of national churches rather than a hierarchical denomination.

Moreover, much of the Community of Christ's social ministry has been outsourced to quasi-affiliated institutions, mirroring a trend described by some as an "NGOization" of churches in the developing world (K'Ahenda 2001). As a way to access funds that would be unavailable to the church itself and manage social programs more efficiently outside the traditional church hierarchy, Neff innovated the use of non-profit institutions and special designated funds for social ministry, founding Missions Health Foundation, Community One Resources Development, Outreach International and Global Community (Bolton 2005, pp. 101-114, 142-146).

Today, organizations like Outreach International, World Accord, SaintsCare, Outreach Europe, Children's Peace Pavilion, Camp Quality, Health Ministries Association and HealthEd Connect all have varying levels of affiliation with the Community of Christ and carry out peace and social justice activities. However, they draw on outside funding and many of them try to mask or avoid close association with the church. For instance, Outreach International's descriptions of Participatory Human Development, 'Sustainable Good', building community and helping the poor achieve self-sufficiency sound much like the vision earlier church leaders had of Zion, except stripped of its religious and specifically Restoration language.<sup>13</sup>

Interestingly, the building of new visitor's center for the Kirtland Temple – itself an earlier expression of the Restoration movement's yearning for Zion – was not led solely by the church institution. Rather, it was in large part funded and organized through the Community of Christ Historic Sites Foundation, an affiliated non-profit that also helps preserve the sites of Restoration Zion experiments in Nauvoo,

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<sup>12</sup> e.g. Catherine Mars. (11 October 2006) "Coca-Cola snaps up European bottled water companies – will PepsiCo follow suit?" *EuroMonitor*.  
<[http://www.euromonitor.com/Coca\\_Cola\\_snaps\\_up\\_European\\_bottled\\_water\\_companies\\_will\\_PepsiCo\\_follow\\_suit](http://www.euromonitor.com/Coca_Cola_snaps_up_European_bottled_water_companies_will_PepsiCo_follow_suit)>; Anon. (31 July 2009) "Coca-Cola looking to buy Germany's Bionade." *The Local*.  
<<http://www.thelocal.de/money/20090731-20957.html>>.

<sup>13</sup> See: <http://www.outreach-international.org>

Independence and Lamoni.<sup>14</sup> Upkeep and management of the Community of Christ historic Zion centers has thus also been partially outsourced.

Similarly, when on 5 April 2009, the church's president Steve Veazey called for a renewed "focus on promoting peaceful Christian community as the hope of Zion", he announced that he would convene a summit on peace issues with Peace Support Network, Outreach International, World Accord, Graceland University, and the Seminary, "just to name a few."<sup>15</sup> In other words, the church now envisions the structure of Zion as a kind of disparate and shifting network – Network Zion, if you will – of quasi-affiliated institutions with overlapping values. This is demonstrated too in the church's limited efforts to engage in social justice advocacy in Washington DC. Rather than setting up its own advocacy office, it has funded or seconded workers to Bread for the World, Jim Wallis' Call to Renewal and the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) – it has outsourced its advocacy for Zion principles. This can magnify the impact of the church – networks can be 'force multipliers', enabling groups to project power through alliances and coalitions. But networks also diffuse responsibility and can make it easy to avoid accountability by taking credit for successes and blames mistakes on their coalition partners.

At the church's 'peace summit,' held in September 2009, the church announced the creation of further organization, PeacePathways, "which plans to use the Web to link various groups in the cause of peace."<sup>16</sup> This points to a further way in which Zion has been de-spatialized. Like so much of public life in the era of globalization, considerable discussion of the Community of Christ's role in society now occurs on the internet, in the Facebook group, the church's web site and what is affectionately known by young tech-savvy church members as the Blogitorium. One particularly active forum (gathering place?) is the *Saints Herald* blog (named after the church magazine's former name, but run by an unofficial network of private volunteers), which has a lively ongoing discussion of what it means to be a peace and justice church in the modern world.<sup>17</sup> But one has to ask whether a 'CyberZion' is adequate – can it be as meaningful as social ministries implemented in the material world in a specific place?

### **Liberalization and Deregulation**

Globalization, at least in its economic form, has been driven by the liberalization and deregulation of restrictions on trade and finance. This has been accompanied in many countries by a definitive move away from public ownership of economic institutions, with a belief that only the free market can deliver higher levels of wealth and wellbeing (Friedman 2000; Stiglitz 2002; Wolf 2004).

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<sup>14</sup> See: <http://www.historicsitesfoundation.org>

<sup>15</sup> Steve Veazey. (5 April 2009) "A Defining Moment." *Community of Christ*. <[http://www.CofChrist.org/presidency/sermons/\\_040509Veazey.asp](http://www.CofChrist.org/presidency/sermons/_040509Veazey.asp)>.

<sup>16</sup> Greg Clark. (2009) "Summit Connects Peacemakers, Creates Options." *Community of Christ*. <<http://www.cofchrist.org/news/2009/nov/peaceSummit.asp>>.

<sup>17</sup> See: <http://www.saintsherald.com>

I believe that one motivating factor behind the dismantling of the 'Zionic' institutions of social welfare in Independence is the growing belief within the Bishopric that such functions are better served by the private sector than by an institution held 'in common' by the church membership. Just as state-owned assets and enterprises have been privatized around the globe in the name of market liberalization, the church leadership has come to believe that it is not the role of the church to correct 'market failures' in a classic Keynesian sense.<sup>18</sup>

In some of the early international missions, there was some attempt by RLDS missionaries to transplant the Zionic socio-economic institutions into new places. From 1958 in Honduras, the Blumensheins and many church members afterwards established "La Buena Fe," a mission outpost that developed a shared public infrastructure of farmland, education, health clinics in a valley southwest of Lake Yojoa (World Accord 2006; Health Ministries Association 2007). In the Philippines, following the displacement of church members in a counterinsurgency operation in 1972, Neff and the Philippine church bought 16 hectares of land in Simimbaan, Isabela, and resettled 20 families there, eventually developing a Farmer's Organization, a nutrition program and a cooperative store (Bolton 2005, pp. 76-79). However, this approach of solving social problems through communal experiments has faded through the years. When Haitian church members faced the destruction of their housing, schools and hospitals after the 2010 earthquake, I never heard any church leader suggest the answer would be to buy land and resettle church members in a new Zionic community.

Economic liberalization has been accompanied, at least in many parts of the world, by a liberalization of political systems, with more countries paying at least lip service to democratic elections and human rights (Huntington 1991). Many advocates of globalization argue that the expansion of freedoms is a social good that must be advanced all over the globe. This has been accompanied by a sort of deregulation of culture, with traditional norms on gender, sexuality, class and race being challenged by global liberalism.

The Community of Christ has similarly experienced a deregulation of the norms that were once considered central to 'Zionic living.' In the traditional geographic core, the church has seen enormous cultural change, deconstructing notions of patriarchy; relaxing attitudes about sexuality, coffee and alcohol; opening conditions for communion and membership and deemphasizing the Book of Mormon. These were all deregulations that Charles Neff would have heartily endorsed.

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<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, in the last few years there has been a swing in the opposite direction in Finance Ministries and Central Banks around the world, as many countries have embraced a greater role of the state in the market in the light of the economic downturn. It remains to be seen whether this renewed openness to public ownership of parts of the economy and intervention to correct market failures will spur a similar revival in the church of 'Zionic' economic institutions.

However, cultural nationalists and religious conservatives of many different stripes have questioned whether liberalization is merely a ruse for the export of Western secular culture (Barber 1996; Goff 2007). Globalization for many has been synonymous with the corrosion of values and commodification of culture, with traditional storytelling threatened by Hollywood and pornography and local foods jettisoned for McDonalds and KFC.

Similarly, the liberalization of the church's regulations on behavior has alienated many conservatives, who feel it is simply a form of creeping secularization, a watering down of the faith. What is special or distinctive about the Community of Christ if it has little to distinguish itself in disciplinary terms from Mainline or secular culture? Deregulation has prompted the fundamentalist – 'Restorationist' – backlash that led to the church's schism in 1984. Interestingly, reactions to globalization often take global forms, whether they are indigenous people's movements linking up with international advocacy organizations or in Al Qaeda's sophisticated use of global media, underground trafficking networks and financial systems. Similarly, the Restorationists have engaged in international mission.<sup>19</sup> This often involves peeling away disgruntled members of the Community of Christ around the world – in effect a globalization of the conflict in the traditional geographic core.

Ultimately, the church will have to ask whether a 'Deregulated Zion' provide the material wellbeing and a sense of disciplined discipleship in a time of uncertainty and shifting mores.

### **Zionic Futures in a Globalized World**

Zion as a concept is a curious mixture of the sacred and profane. It is inspired by a religious vision and yet seeks to be enacted in the secular world of society, economy and politics. This means that every generation has to determine how to push forward this vision within the constraints of their time.

As globalization restructures the world's social systems, it has many negative impacts – from instability, conflict and inequality. However, it also offers great potential for progressive actors to link up and work together, to break down barriers of nation, race, gender and sexual orientation, unleashing new opportunities for collaboration. Most importantly, it is the dominant system of our age and the Community of Christ will have to think carefully about how it will adapt, resist, compromise with and/or change it. As Neff argued in the 1960s, the church must 'discern the signs of the times' in order "to understand what the church is

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<sup>19</sup> e.g. Joint Conference of Restoration Branches. (2008) "Evangelism."  
<<http://conferenceofbranches.org/evangelism/index.html>>.

called to be and do in this particular moment in time”<sup>20</sup> to determinate “What does it mean to be the Body of Christ in this place?”<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, while this may not be appropriate for a history conference, I would like to suggest that there are at least three things the Community of Christ will need to do to survive and be relevant in our age of globalization.

Firstly, it will have to develop a strong sense of its identity and project a coherent and inspiring religious vision for the world today. Globalization has made it very difficult for small businesses to compete if they can only offer middle of the road products. A small bottling plant cannot compete with Coca Cola if it churns out boring, ordinary soft drinks. It can only survive by producing something cheap and tacky or by appealing to a high quality niche market. The Community of Christ will cease to have meaning and purpose if it deconstructs the radical elements of its Zion message and tacks to the center (cf. Jones 1996). It simply cannot compete in the category of ‘vanilla Christianity’ – there are plenty of large Mainline religious institutions that are better funded and do not carry the stigma of Mormon roots. I want to suggest that the Community of Christ needs to rediscover the bold, creative, prophetic and risky vision of people like Frederick M. Smith and Charles D. Neff who thundered against the social injustices of their day and proposed radical solutions. I believe that the concept of Zion provides a coherent, distinctive and incredibly rich seam of meaning. While its parochial elements may no longer be relevant, its uncompromising call for social and economic justice still resonates in our time of growing inequality and pervasive human conflict. Indeed, it is ironic that to read Frederick M. Smith’s surprisingly radical and articulate “Zion Series” radio sermons, one has to turn to the website of the Remnant Church (a Restorationist faction), not the Community of Christ.<sup>22</sup>

Secondly, the church will have to struggle with how to model Zion in a culturally diverse manner. It will have to discern how to be globally and locally relevant simultaneously and how to struggle through difficult cross-cultural conversations while maintaining unity and coherence. The weakness of rooting Zion in Independence, or ‘Zionic experiments’ like Harvest Hills (Christenson 1997), is its overwhelmingly white American dominance. As Neff urged it back in the 1970s, the church will have to learn how to be radically inclusive and cross-culturally savvy (Neff 1974).

Finally, the church will have to become deeply adept at operating within networks, leveraging alliances with other institutions – local, national and global – to achieve social justice ends. Neff’s experimentation with Outreach International, Global

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<sup>20</sup> Joint Council of the First Presidency and the Council of Twelve. (18 April 1966) “Statement on Objectives for the Church.” *World Conference Bulletin*. p. 288. This statement was drafted by Neff.

<sup>21</sup> Charles D. Neff. (September 1974) “The Church and Culture.” *Saints’ Herald*. p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> See: <http://www.theremnantchurch.com> The “Zion Series” are listed in the bottom left-hand corner of the page.

Community, Kansas City Interfaith Peace Alliance offers a glimpse of the way forward. He was ahead of his time in understanding the need to build linkages with other institutions (such as UNICEF, the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction and local governments) and find funding outside the church network. The church should seek out and build relationships with other like-minded partners – other peace churches, NGOs, even progressive states like the Scandinavian countries – to implement its Zionism on a global scale. But it will also need to learn how to do this in a sophisticated and strategic manner, not in a piecemeal way, or simply as a way of avoiding responsibility. Much of the initiative for this will probably have to come from individual members. For instance, John Hamer, has almost singlehandedly revived Community of Christ publishing through a quasi-affiliated structure of the John Whitmer Historical Association, not the institutional church. He has used a savvy understanding of the internet-heavy, outsourced nature of the modern publishing business to revitalize publication of well-written books about the Community of Christ. Strikingly, this strategy has been *post facto* adopted by the church, which has allowed some of his latest productions to bear the Herald House imprint.<sup>23</sup>

In short, globalization and the internationalization of the church have posed a considerable challenge to the church's traditional notions of Zion. The result has been a gutting, watering down, and hollowing out of the concept until it no longer has much meaning or material relevance to the average church member. However, I think that, perhaps counter-intuitively, the salvation, rejuvenation and revitalization of the church in light of globalization can only come from a renewed focus on the 'cause of Zion.' It is probably far more deeply rooted in the Community of Christ heritage than 'peace' (Bolton 2009). The Community of Christ historically has said little of interest or originality on peace. By contrast, Zion offers something truly distinctive and far more substantive, edgy and exciting than the somewhat mundane pleasantries in the church's "We Share" document.<sup>24</sup> The challenge will be how the church can translate and implement a concept rooted in the 19th and early 20th century in an era of 21st century globalization.

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<sup>23</sup> e.g. David J. Howlett, Barbara B. Walden & John C. Hamer. (2010) *Community of Christ: An Illustrated History*. Independence, MO, Herald Publishing House.

<sup>24</sup> Community of Christ. (2009) "We Share: Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs." <<http://www.cofchrist.org/discernment/weshare/weshare.pdf>>.

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