

Reply to Arthur Hawley by Neil Simmons

November 7, 2005

To the Saints:

Recently, a pastor called me on the phone to ask me what was true about a letter Arthur Hawley had sent to some of the members of his congregation. Shortly after, another pastor called me about the same thing; and then a neighbor lady rang my door bell holding the same handful of letters sent by Arthur Hawley.

Because so many individuals are distressed I was prompted to make a telephone call to Arthur Hawley. I fully and truthfully refuted all of his allegations and accusations. I required of him that he write a retraction and call back people he had previously deceived to explain that he had misinformed them.

I have waited a decent interval for his retraction. I warned him that if he did not retract his unfounded allegations I would publicly post my answer even if it were embarrassing to him. Because he has not desisted from his attacks upon me, I am taking this opportunity to set the record straight.

Hawley titles his letter: *Neil Simmons asks the Community of Christ to accept the Joint Conference Members.*

Hawley makes his accusations based on the assumption that there is a connection with the coming conference of branches scheduled for November 10-13, 2005; and a series of meetings that have been between some members of the restoration branches and the Community of Christ committee for Peace and Justice.

He attacks me by asserting that I was a representative of the joint conference of branches when I spoke to the committee for Peace and Justice. That is a deliberate deception by Hawley, because he knows that I do not represent the joint conference of branches. I was not present when the committee voted on August 20, 2005 to effect the plans for that joint conference of branches. I was home celebrating my mother's birthday.

The keynote address which I made to the Community of Christ committee for Peace and Justice at Odessa Hills Camp on September 16, 2005 was totally my own personal agenda. I did not speak for anyone but myself. I had been asked by Diane Kyser of the Community of Christ to present to the members of the committee an opening statement which would stimulate discussion about ways to heal some of the differences between the Independent Branches and the Community of Christ.

At Odessa, my proposal was directed to the Community of Christ leadership. It was not written to the Restoration Branches. Some things written in the paper I chose not to say when I presented it. I said some things which are not written in the paper. Remember, the reason we were meeting was to discuss acceptable gestures of reconciliation which the Community of Christ could **offer** the Restoration Branches.

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Hawley accuses me, saying, “*He (Neil Simmons) hopes the restoration branches will join the Joint Conference and be under the umbrella /”central tree,” as he calls it, of the CoC.* But, Hawley is deliberately trying to confuse people by saying the group discussions with the Community of Christ, and the joint conference of branches are connected through Neil Simmons. That statement is a lie. He knows better.

Hawley says that my proposals remind him of the deception the liberal RLDS leaders used in 1984. I find the statement offensive. I am not “*producing a revelation*” and any connection to the temple and priesthood for women is simply in Hawley’s own confused mind. There is nothing in my address to the Community of Christ leadership that is deceptive. Any alleged relationship with the events of 1984 is ridiculous.

Hawley says, Neil Simmons asked the C o C to accept the joint conference branches’ priesthood, as members of the C o C by “*rescending (sic)” the silences.*” He then says, “ if we accepted the un-silences we “*would lose everything.*”

I ask, what would we lose if the Community of Christ said they would revoke the unrighteous actions of the leadership of twenty years ago and acknowledge that an error in judgment had occurred? What is wrong with that?

Still, it is important to understand what I did ask. I asked for a legal solution to a legal problem. The problem is: If the branches we call Restoration Branches are actually all that is left of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (this appears to be true), then the people who have charge of the legal structures of the church and the by-laws of said organization ought to:

1. Restore members of Priesthood to their office,
2. Restore the membership's voting privileges, and
3. Restore the name of the church to the Restoration Branches.

With respect to revoking the old priesthood silences: I made that request to establish the fact that priesthood would have **legal** authority in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ should that name be given to the independent branches. Those at the meeting understood that this was a **legal** matter. It had nothing to do with the spiritual authority of the priesthood in the Restoration Branches.

Likewise, the members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints **legally** are denied voice and vote. Thus, it would make sense to also restore their voting privileges if the name were to be conferred.

According to my paper, accepting the name does not put the branches under the authority of the Community of Christ. Instead, it becomes the means to delineate the identity boundary between the Community of Christ and the Restoration Branches.

In my proposal I clearly stated that the name would have to be offered without any strings--it would have to be given “**without encumbrances**” to the Restoration Branches. Nothing I said

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could reasonably be interpreted that the Restoration branches would therefore be under the rule of the Community of Christ.

I did say that the name, if offered, would have to be given to some kind of conference of restoration branches. If not a conference, to whom would they offer the name?

I did say that the president of the Community of Christ should have voice in that conference to explain what the offer meant. How else could the offer be explained to the delegates? That does not give the President of the Community of Christ any power upon that conference. Like the mayor of Independence who addresses the World Conference, the president would address the conference.

I did suggest to the Community of Christ leadership that if they offered the name to the Restoration Branches, it should not be open-ended as to time. Two years is plenty of time for the branches to decide whether they want the name or not.

Hawley writes against me saying, *“Here is proof in the words of Neil Simmons that the joint conference wants to start another church, have their own president, bishop, apostles, and of course the seventy want their own quorum, which would all be under the central tree / umbrella of the C o C.”*

Hawley here accuses me of trying to start **another** church, when he had just accused me of trying to drag all the restoration branches back under the Community of Christ church. He can't have it both ways.

Hawley is the one who is doing everything he can to destroy the unity of the saints, by alleging conspiracy and deception.

It is fair to ask Hawley to what church does he belong? What is the central tree to which his branch belongs? Where did he get his authority? Who ordained him, and out of what church did he get his authority?

Hawley would have to acknowledge that he is a member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and that his priesthood must be traced to that same church. If that is the case, then why would Hawley be fighting against regaining legal use of the name?

In his letter attacking me, he identifies himself with Richard Price, the editor of the Vision Magazine. He alleges that the two of them saved 70 percent of the church members from joining a new church. What is the church is he supposedly saving people to?

Yet, in a highly publicized trial, Richard Price was expelled from the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He is not a member of that church. Therefore by what authority does he claim to speak to anyone about the church?

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What prophet named either of these men, to be the “watchman or guardian” of the rights of the people? Beware of this hypocrisy for it comes of evil. Beware the wolf who devours the sheep while pretending to be a lamb.

Remember, the people he routinely attacks are willing to go to Latin America, Cuba, Africa, Nepal and other difficult and far away places, enduring real hardships and personal danger in order to teach the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

I am trying to live by the Lord’s injunction to “pray for them that despitefully use you.” Even as I do so, I still need to highlight to the members of the church that Hawley says nothing positive.

Hawley does not preach the gospel. He does not bring people to the Angel Message. He drives everyone away, including his own family. At one time or another, he has attacked every priesthood leader who has stood for truth and for ministry to the Lord’s people.

I ask, what soul has this man ever brought to the Lord? He cannot even say that he has brought his own soul to the Lord, because he has forgotten the second commandment, to love his neighbor as himself. And he is a very long way from practicing the commandment to love his enemies.

Hawley portrays himself as the savior of the church. He is the destroyer. He, and others like him, sow doubt, distrust and division; but never love, patience, tolerance, or affection for the sinner. John saw the devil who was cast out of heaven and it was said of the adversary that he "accused the brethren day and night before God." Beware of the accuser of the brethren of the church.

Neil Simmons