

## Session 9

# Contributing to Social and Ecological Justice

In addition to “witnessing love,” the action of love includes contributing to social and ecological justice. Witnessing love serves individual persons in their journey toward Spirit well-being. Embodying Spirit love also includes taking responsibility for our communal life and social structures, as well as the ecology of this grand but limited planet. I call this “justing love” and with the word “justice” I mean equity, appropriateness, and workability with regard to the cultural, political, and economic fabrics that we share. I also include ecological viability as a justice issue.

We live in a culture of individualistic overemphasis. In our enthusiasm for psychological and Spirit transformations of individuals, we neglect the health of our social systems. Some assume that a large number of personal transformations will transform social conditions. Not so. However “realized” or “enlightened” or “healed” people may be, they must still study social systems, decide which ones are best, and figure out how to change the existing systems. We cannot wait for most people to be healed; social responses are required now. We face a long list of ecological and social relations issues that are already much too long delayed. And we cannot count on only healed people to make these changes. We have to work with all people as they exist now. Social structures are not built for saints only, but for all people. Only effective social structures can provide everyone with these basic needs: food, water, shelter, transportation, and cultural opportunity. If we do not love our neighbors through social structuring, our actions of love are incomplete. Justing love is a necessary companion of witnessing love.

When we examine the lives of the members of a Christian Resurgence Circle, we usually find that they are already contributing to the maintenance and improvement of social structures. Sometimes they do this individually through income-producing work and volunteer work. Sometimes members of a CRC work together within other service organizations. Sometimes they start and shepherd their own organizations.

## Context

Context is the key gift of the CRC to each member as he or she selects projects and shapes their quality. The Spirit life of the CRC nurtures revolutionary social vision and social change strategies. I use the word “revolutionary” in this sense: Spirit living is realistic living that takes place in a world that is always obsolete in many of its functions. Realistic nurture of our Spirit life enables capacity for a social vision that is perpetually revolutionary. Some of the things we do may not be radical. Our loving actions will include ordinary care for people, minor repairs on social structures, stopgap benevolence to crying needs, protests against egregious wrongs, as well as support for major social changes. But within and beneath these repairs is a revolutionary *context*. *Spirit people see and lead the bringing-to-be of the next era in human justice and ecological sanity.*

A consensus on what that next era needs to be is arising among Spirit-inspired persons from numerous religious practices and social stations. We can participate in clarifying that consensus, and we live within a stream of consciousness already in motion. Many competent voices are already forging vision for the future and the strategies for getting there. Following is a summation of this emerging consensus about the vision and strategies needed for the next era in human justice.

## The Eco-Democracy Vision

Three basic social modes (or social operating systems) have grasped humanity: (1) the **Pre-Civilization** mode, or “**Tribal Communalism**,” (2) the **Civilization** mode, or “**Hierarchical Empire**,” and (3) the **Post-Civilization** mode, or “**Eco-Democracy**.” In one sense, these three social modes are just human patterns of thought, like software in the hardware of our brains. They are also the social modes being practiced in the real world of social functioning. The first two modes are well established; the third is still emerging. Evidence of all three practices appear daily in our media. The third is not as visible as the first two. We may have heard a vision of the Eco-Democracy mode in a Bill Moyers' TV interview or in the progressive books now flooding the market. Similarly, an occasional book or documentary revives our interest in tribal life. But almost everything else we see and hear pertains to the gifts, traumas, and flaws of the civilization mode of social organization.

The visions and practices of these three modes are sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious. They are sometimes practiced as if they were a necessary structure of nature rather than human inventions. When we see that these patterns are simply made up by human beings, we see that they can be continued, changed, or dropped.

Within any one person or social group, these three patterns may overlap. A person or group may practice parts of each one. Pre-civilization is our deep past, but it also still resides, minimally, in our present. Tribes still exist on almost every continent, often in out-of-the-way places. Post-Civilization is mostly a pattern in our minds that has been only minimally realized. For example, while many envision a fully democratic society and a solar-energy economy, we are only beginning to realize that vision. Civilization is the pattern that dominates our actual social practices today. Most people do not grasp that we can do without civilization, just as most of us have done without tribal society.

Civilization is failing as a mode of social organization. Its huge and expanding ecological footprint is already overwhelming Earth's natural supports. Its basic hierarchical class structure will not be tolerated much longer by the billions of people who live in poverty and observe power elites luxuriating in abundance. Also, the tendency of civilizations to demand uniformity of their citizenry collides with cultural and racial diversity. Civilization as a whole is an unsustainable mode of social organization. Humanity can either ride this social vehicle into the abyss or recycle its parts into a new social vehicle.

In naming the post-civilization mode “Eco-Democracy,” we assume that both ecological responsibility and democratic practice are required for a viable future. Though the details of Eco-Democracy are a consensus still being built, we can discern the minimal qualities needed for a human future, if we are to have one. Eco-Democracy means a whole new energy system emphasizing solar, wind, and other sources that do not expire and do not destabilize the atmosphere. It means that everything humans take from the Earth is returned to the Earth in an equal or better state. It means preserving our forests, prairies, valleys, mountains, plains, streams, rivers, oceans, and species diversity. It means empowered grassroots citizenship in every local community and meaningful democracy in every region and nation. It means that grueling poverty and outlandish wealth are both overcome. To the extent that we grasp its requirements, Eco-Democracy is already present as software in our minds. Indeed, Eco-Democracy has already begun, even though it is still small compared to civilization and its full realization is still in question.

## Strategies of Realization

So how do we move from our decaying civilizations to Eco-Democracy? First, we

need profound detachment from the practices of civilization, a detachment that will be mostly inward since we cannot abandon civilization just yet. We cannot simply drop out of civilization and take up living in some form of tribal life, which is no longer possible even for tribal people. We need to continue repairing civilization, preserving the best gifts of both civilization and tribal societies and passing them on to the next social mode. Step-by-step we need to grow Eco-Democracy before the gifts and resources of the dying civilizations are dissipated. The creative destiny of civilization is to become compost for the new growth of Eco-Democracy.

Those of us who are already Eco-Democratic progressives cannot win power through electoral politics at this time. We might win an office or two here or there, but the population is not yet prepared for the death of civilization. Furthermore, the current nation state must itself be changed; we cannot count on it for the changes we need. We who are becoming the Eco-Democratic progressives must prepare the rest of humanity for the passing away of civilization and for the dawning of Eco-Democracy. Here are five necessary strategies for making this huge transition:

(1) Work to assure electoral victories by the most progressive reformers within civilization. Help them to defeat the antidemocratic forces that promote corporation control of government and an under-regulated capitalism. Preserve the healthier aspects of civilization to be passed on to Eco-Democracy.

(2) Educate large portions of the population about the long-term need and provide them with the Eco-Democracy vision and with these five strategies. A progressive president may help with part of this education, but he or she cannot do it for the Eco-Democratic visionaries. The transformational education we need is far-reaching and cannot take place within the current political theater.

(3) Organize nonviolent noncooperation on key concerns until they are resolved. For example, momentum is already rising to force a moratorium on new coal-fired power plants, a key first step in the clean-energy transition.

(4) Build local community spirit and empowerment in the cracks of social space within current civilizations. Every local place with a strong communal life is a cell in the planetary Eco-Democratic revolution and a model for others.

(5) Advocate for global institutions responsive to citizens rather than to transnational corporations. Such institutions would link local life to the planetary whole.

For a viable humanity on this planet, we must do all five of these strategies beginning yesterday. Each of us needs to choose our own tiny, narrow role, but we need to see ourselves as members of a vast transitional movement doing all of these strategies and doing them well, soon, and persistently.

## **The Style of Social Change Implementation**

Witnessing love means working toward changes in individual lives. Justing love means working with the gifts of the ordinary and flawed persons who show up for the work of changing society. We emphasize their gifts for the tasks, not their need for further personal realization. We emphasize their capacities to contribute, not their need for healing and further skills. Societies are not made out of saints but out of every type of person. A good society restrains the worst within us and uses the best within us to do that restraining as well as carrying out pioneering innovations. It may take a few saints to get these massive changes started, but the aim is not to build a society of saints, but to foster social momentum among big majorities of ordinary people.

Establishment of the CRC Network itself is one of the social changes that the CRC Network is challenged to make. This is an important social action task. The appearance of one or more circles of Spirit-nurturing Christian practice changes a community,

seeding it with realism and methods for making other social changes. Though a CRC may focus on Spirit nurture for its members and on witnessing love toward its circles of acquaintances, its mission also includes social justice. Placing this ongoing mission in every community contributes greatly to social and ecological justice.

Here is a way we might honor our justing love emphasis in our weekly CRC meetings. Suppose that each CRC devotes one meeting each quarter to a report from each member on his or her contribution to the wide world. The members would give each other support and feedback. When appropriate, members could volunteer time, energy, and money to each other's projects. I offer this simple practice as an example of how the CRC community assists its members in their contributions to social and ecological justice in local communities, regions, nations, and the planet.

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This essay is only a snapshot of the social contribution dynamic in a CRC's mission to planet Earth. We envision such "outreach" as a consequence of the CRC's nurturing Spirit "inreach." Our nurture of the sainthood within us yields a capacity to envision a viable future for the whole of humanity and this planet; to form savvy strategies; to enact persistent implementations of our vision; and to be ready to let go of elements of our vision, strategy, and implementation when they are found to be inconsistent with a new aspects of our situation being revealed to us. Contributing to social and ecological justice is an ongoing dynamic of CRC life. "Justing love" is complementary to "witnessing love." These two "works of love" provide to humanity and the planet what is most needed in this and every future time. And these two works of love are aspects of the CRC as the *presence* of Spirit love in its time and place.