

# **Secret, Private, and Subversive**

## **On Christian Resurgence Circle Membership**

*This essay can be viewed as an eleventh paper or a take-home gift.*

In one sense the basic message of Christianity is not a secret: we can share it in everything we say and do. We can share it in both ordinary language and Christian language. We can share it in whatever language people speak. The basic Christian message can be put in the most simple fashion: (1) your running away from Reality leads to despair; (2) you are welcome home to Reality however far away you have strayed; (3) you can find your bliss by a complete surrender to the way it is. That message is a universal truth built into the structure of the cosmos. Anyone can discover it. Many have. All the long-standing religions tend to include it.

At the same time, the typical human pattern of thinking and acting is so estranged from Reality that being at home with Reality feels like a very deep secret to those who actually experience it. We walk and talk and work in a world of people who float in almost complete illusion. The reality of the overall historical movement of human society is invisible to most people. For most people the reality of their own life in the living here and now is lost in the clouds of arrogant thinking, addictive passions, and automatic actions that are both compulsive and mean. Furthermore, as we come to realize our true nature we come to see how deeply we participate in this planet-wide estrangement that characterizes the human species.

Knowing our real lives and knowing our estrangement from our real lives is one and the same knowing. Typically, it is the wish of all humans to not be aware of either. The great majority of humanity have not the slightest inclination to know their true nature and their estrangement from that nature. They swim in estrangement unaware that estrangement exists, for it is seen as all there is. And even those of us who are drawn into this subversive awareness of our true reality and our estrangement need to admit that we resist knowing this truth completely. That is how the basic message of Christianity is a secret. We don't know it. Even though it is the basic truth of our lives, we remain in the dark.

The call to live our real lives and our answering of that call places us in a subversive relationship with the rest of humanity. We become part of a small community of people. We find ourselves plotting and planning how to tell the majority of our human companions a deep secret that they do not want to know, may hate us for telling them, may even give us trouble and opposition for revealing to them. We experience ourselves in need of regular private time for prayer and meditation and deep inquiry into the truth of our own lives and of humanity as a whole. We need to be alone. We also need to be with colleagues who share this dread secret with us and who can challenge us and support us in living honestly and powerfully from that deep awareness that claims us. This draw toward Spirit colleagues is not only a Christian experience. Buddhism, for example, though a deeply individual practice, also experiences this intense draw toward community. At the Spirit level, we humans are all drawn toward the same universal league of Spirit that we are accessing through our very different religious practices. But in this discourse I am talking to Christian practitioners.

Christians have typically organized two types of communal gatherings: (1) meetings with the masses of humanity to which all are invited, and (2) meetings that are private meetings with the few who have joined together for the sake of a deep journey into the reality of their lives. The first type of gathering has taken the form of a cathedral drama for a whole village, a congregational service open to any, a revival meeting to which everyone is urged to come. The second type of gathering has taken the form of

a monastic order, a private prayer meeting, a covenanted circle of dedicated members. Both types of gathering appear in the stories of Jesus: he addresses multitudes on the hillsides, and he instructs his disciples in private.

The Christian Resurgence Circle (which has become an emphasis of the Realistic Living organization) is a gathering of the second type. Not everyone is invited to these gatherings. The Circle is open to all races, all religious backgrounds, all genders and sexual orientations, and all ages of adult humans, yet the circle is also private and therefore closed to most people. A barrier has been set to protect the deep practices intended to take place in this gathering. This is a communion of saints – a gathering of people committed to realistic living, to Spirit discovery, to the sanctification of their entire living, to the use of a renewed Christian practice as a means to these Spirit ends, and to a mission in the world that is more subversive than a communist cell or a terrorist organization. A covenant is required of the members of these Circles. New members are required to agree to a trial membership of at least thirteen weeks. Visitors need to be persons who come from a similar awareness, persons who fit into the purpose of the meeting without being a distraction from the aims of the gathering. If a person has not been properly prepared to attend a CRC meeting, then their attendance is a distraction – the attention of the others is upon this person rather than upon the ongoing purpose of the Circle. The alternative is to ignore the visitor which is not compassionate for the visitor or for the members. Therefore, the members of a Christian Resurgence Circle need to be in consensus about visitors and new members. In most cases the Circle need not even be mentioned to anyone unless those persons are being prepared for membership in a Circle. This is not being exclusive, it is simply being realistic about the purpose of the CRC and the secret nature of the full Christian message.

Such membership policies are a departure from the usual practice of Christian churchgoers. The practices of the Christian Resurgence Circle have been derived from a deeper grasp of the Christian heritage than we expect of the typical church member. The typical Christian church building has been provided for the masses of humanity, for anyone to come for a moment or a season of refreshment or reorientation. Indeed, these meetings and their membership rules have too often disintegrated into merely pleasing large enough crowds to pay the bills for a building and its staff. The communication of the basic message of Christianity has thereby been weakened, watered down, or even excluded lest any dues-paying member be offended.

The Christian Resurgence Circle meets in a freely provided home or other intimate place. There is no paid staff. There is no reason to raise money, except for whatever actions the group wishes to support. There is no reason to meet except to provide a deep nurture of the authenticity of its members and to do the plotting, planning, and scheming of a subversive witness to the world at large. Actions for social and ecological justice will seldom be done as a single CRC or group of CRCs, but rather they will be done with other plotters and planners from many religious and secular groups.

The intensity of the Christian revelation requires the existence of intimate Circles. Ministries to the masses can only be useful if they are healed, inspired, and sustained by the energies released in such Circles. Whether church buildings and offices are even needed will (over the long haul) be decided in the secret discussions within these emerging Circles. These Circles are the basic social units for the next “living” form of Christian practice.

More needs to be said about the qualities of secret, private, and subversive. These are Spirit qualities. The Gospel of Mark was clear that the Messianic quality of Jesus was and remains a secret. Again and again this Gospel writer notes the secrecy of this dread breakthrough. The parables are not understood. Demons who see the truth of Jesus’ grandeur are hushed. Disciples are instructed not to tell anyone. Disciples say nothing

about this or that until after the occurrence of an exceeding secret happening called “resurrection.”

Yes, resurrection happens in secret to the few. The general public does not see it, does not believe it, and openly scorns it. The resurrection is not about Jesus’ corpse. It is not about something a video camera could have documented. It is a secret happening in the deep life of a few people, people who have experienced the also profound secret that this world rejects (and sometimes murders) those who witness to the truth of our existence. Something profound and secret occurred in the lives of those loyal followers of Jesus who experienced the dread execution of this remarkable person for whose cause they had left everything. They were raised from the dead. They became the life of Jesus. They continued his story. They did not disintegrate into a scattered flock of sheep with no leader. They became the leaders of a fresh installment of being their true Spirit being. They were drawn together in an astonishing new grasp of their humanity. They were turned loose into manifesting a revolutionary, subversive, hated, rejected, and yet expanding fire of fresh life in the midst of estranged humanity.

The Christian Resurgence Circle is an experiment in recovering this “resurrection.” Circle members grow in their realization that they are on a journey toward realization of the full stature of the Jesus life. Jesus is the Christ, the long awaited Messiah, because his life initiated this journey in us – this resurrection of authentic humanity in the midst of a still fallen world – a world thoroughly estranged from Reality and from the realistic living of authentic human life. Indeed, the very last option that humanity wants to take is giving up their illusions and opting for their true life. Those who embrace this cause are subversives within a humanity already well established in hidden lies. Those who embrace this cause carry a secret that needs to be told, but which few wish to know. Those who embrace this cause need private time alone and time in the company of their fellow emerging saints. This is the Christian Resurgence Circle. If this secret Spirit quality is not maintained, it is not the Circle we intend to inspire and manifest.