

Symposium Paper Number One

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The Circle You Need

Let us suppose that you have already decided that the first priority of your life is Spirit maturity. Let us suppose that you are like that man in Jesus' parable that found a valuable treasure hidden in a field and then sold all that he had to buy that field. Let us suppose that for you Spirit maturity is like that treasure; it claims priority over all else.

Secondly, let us suppose that you have decided to make Christianity your religious home. There are many good reasons for doing this: familiarity, experience of its healing strengths, or simply finding in this heritage the Spirit poetry with which you have (for whatever reasons) fallen in love.

Next, a third decision comes into view. What sort of Christian religious community do you need? The Symposium on Christian Resurgence for Century Twenty-One came into being to focus on this issue. This research group has given a name to the Christian community needed: "The Christian Resurgence Circle." What is the Christian Resurgence Circle? It is the Circle you need. If it is not the Circle you need, it is not the Christian Resurgence Circle.

This means that the Christian Resurgence Circle is not a program invented for "other" people. It is a religious practice needed by its inventors. If we who are inventing this Circle don't crucially need it, it is not a Christian Resurgence Circle that we are inventing.

Most awakening Christians have become clear that the typical local congregation of Christendom is not what we need. Perhaps it provides a good sermon from time to time. Perhaps it provides a good study group from time to time. Perhaps from time to time it allows us to meet other searchers. Perhaps from time to time it engages us in doing something meaningful for others. But in the main, it nauseates us with its obsolete language; with its preoccupation with avoiding controversy in order to retain members and money; with its emphasis on swallowing incomprehensible beliefs; with its unwillingness to hear honest questions and respect honest doubts; with its lack of intimate circles of safety in which we can share our actual life struggles without meeting misunderstanding, rejection, and even contempt. Perhaps we are also discouraged with the lack of support for "the priesthood of all believers" – the understanding that every member of "the body of Christ" is a potential source of Spirit inspiration for every other member.

All these negative reactions to the Christian communities we have experienced are clues to finding the Christian community we need. The most obvious clue is the vision that we need an intimate Circle. We need to be sitting equidistant from some center of focus rather than in rows listening to voices from a raised pulpit. We need to be small in numbers (24 or less; 12 is ideal, even 3 or 4 will do). We need time together on a regular basis. We need to have processes that allow honest sharing, honest probing, honest and relevant challenges from one another. We need a Circle.

The quality of this Circle is also an important aspect of what we need. We can quickly discover that we need a Circle that meets weekly for a couple of hours. We need to attend this Circle every week except for very important exceptions. We need to come prepared to do Spirit exploration and make Spirit commitments that affect all of our living. We need to give leadership and receive leadership from others. We need to become Spirit leadership. We need to become Spirit followers. We need to keep Spirit and Spirit maturity central in our Circle activities.

And we need, if we are serious about being a Christian Circle, to study and hopefully master the very best of Christian theology. We need to know how to liberate the Bible from its contemporary literalistic misunderstandings. We need to know how to translate the ancient metaphorical language of the Bible into the sort of religious poetry that makes contact with our lives today. We need to know how to say what we mean by "God" in such an obvious way that anyone can grasp what we are talking about. We need to know why and how Jesus was an event of importance in the history of the world. We need to know what calling him "the Christ" meant then and means now. We need to know what we are pointing to with "The Holy Spirit" and with each aspect of this Spirit: Faith or Trust, Freedom, Love or Compassion, Peace or Tranquility, Bliss or Joy. We need to know what we mean by the opposite of all these qualities: by delusion, bondage, and malice, by escape, estrangement, and despair. In a word, we need to recognize "the sickness of sin" when we see it, and we need to recognize the healing of "sin" in our lives.

Such competencies require that each Christian Resurgence Circle see itself as part of a larger community of Circles and experienced Spirit Guides. The Circle we need is not just another group like many of the groups we have already experienced. The Circle we need is a Spirit Body. As pointed out in a New Testament saying, when two or three gather together in the manner needed, Christ is there in the midst of them. We become the Body of Christ. We become the Resurrection. We need to know what this means and recognize it when it happens.

So if you are someone who has chosen to make Spirit maturity a priority in your life and want to do this through some sort of relevant Christian practice, we invite you to contact us about attending one of our continental Symposium meetings and/or organizing in your local place the Circle you need.

For probing further the topic of Christian resurgence, read Gene Marshall's *The Call of the Awe* (available from iUniverse.com or call 1-877-823-9235). Also read *When Awed Ones Gather*, a free e-matter download from: RelalisticLiving.com/PDF/AweIIPDF/