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AN APOLOGY FOR AUTHENTIC SPIRITUALITY

PAUL ANDERSON

The foundational theological document of the Religious Society of Friends was written by Robert Barclay (1648-90) in 1675. It was first published in Latin and distributed internationally (1676) as a means of addressing the intelligentsia of Europe; Barclay later translated it into English in 1678. Following from his *Catechism and Confession of Faith*¹ (1673) constructed upon his *Theses Theologicae* (1674), Barclay's *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* lays out fifteen theological propositions, beginning with God's disclosure to humanity and concluding with practical standards for Christian living. While Barclay's *Apology* has gone through 60 different printings² and is made accessible by Dean Freiday's readable paraphrase,³ its content deserves a fresh engagement in every generation. Thus, the goal of this essay is to pose "A Friendly Apology for the 21st Century," building on Barclay's original work while introducing present audiences to the historic testimonies and doctrines of the people called Quakers.

Finding the right way to approach this task, though, forces one to choose between several options. First, one could sketch the religious and political situation Barclay and early Friends were addressing, perform an analysis of our current environment, and pose a contextual message in a parallel way. Such an approach, however, would view Quaker faith and practice as reactionary developments rather than timeless convictions. Second, one could select an alternative apologetic form—say, a testimonial narrative rather than a set of propositions—as a more personalized form of witness. This would be of value, but the theological and biblical features of the argument would be lost. A third approach is to build on Barclay's original outline, expanding upon the scriptural passages he cites and applying them to the contemporary situation. My reason for choosing this option is that as I review his various proposals, they still seem so robust—and relevant—that they deserve to be considered today every bit as much as they did in Barclay's day. In doing so, a consolidation of his fifteen propositions into twelve provides a way forward, applying some of his biblical references and insights to today's world.⁴

No apologetic work, however, is levied in a vacuum. Even seeking to restore a movement to its original character implies a perceived departure needing to be amended.⁵ In Barclay's day, several religious and political issues were afoot that he sought to address. First, for a century and a half the Reformation had challenged the authority of the Roman Catholic Church with the authority of Scripture, leading to a variety of proof-text approaches to doctrine. This resulted in Catholic emphases upon papal authority and creedal and sacramental leveraging of spiritual promise, followed by doctrinal disputes over reasoned interpretations of Scripture and the political leveraging of religious loyalties. This was a century before the separation of church and state in the American experiment; religious adherence was both a pawn and a target of political investments. Within this situation, Barclay sought to develop a systematic presentation of authentic spirituality (the "true Christian divinity"), and in doing so, he appealed directly to the plain meaning of Scripture, introducing also the thought of leading theologians and philosophers.

Today, however, our situation is different. We live in something of a post-Christian era, with a greater sensitivity to other religions than at any time in human history. It is also a fact that modernism has sought to supplant religion—especially Christianity—with secularistic messianism leaving people hungry for spirituality despite assaults on the Judeo-Christian heritage. Therefore, *An Apology for Authentic Spirituality* may be the most fitting parallel to Barclay's original work.

In the postmodern era, however, spirituality is making a comeback, although neither biblical nor orthodox expressions of spiritual concern command the authority that they once did. Even a Judeo-Christian approach to the life of the Spirit is a case that must be argued today, while alternative traditions are welcomed uncritically; such is the ethos of the times. That being the case, appealing to people's general sense of spirituality meets people where they are. In this outlining of each of the twelve subjects below, however, the timeless message of Scripture will be connected with timely concerns of today. As Barclay engaged both Scripture and experience, so does the present essay, collapsing six of Barclay's propositions into three, resulting in a dozen topics to be addressed. We begin thus with the first conviction: the immediacy of revelation.

1. THE IMMEDIACY OF REVELATION

What is the character of authentic spirituality? It involves attending, discerning, and minding the ever-present leadings of God. Seekers today are often more open to revelation than some religious people; they just don't know how to discern what God might be saying, or even if there is a God. While the existence of God is impossible to prove, the pilgrimage of faith begins with believing that he exists and that he rewards those who authentically seek him (Heb. 11:6). For all seekers everywhere, the Good News is that the same God who has spoken in history—at many times and in many ways—has now spoken in his Son Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-2); and, because God is still speaking, people can encounter the Power of the Living God if they will but open themselves to the spiritual embrace of God's Love and Presence. Whereas many voices in the world claim to speak for God, with some even claiming to possess exclusive access to the Truth, Scripture reminds us that no one has seen God at any time, except the Son of God, Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:27; Jn. 1:18; 6:46), and that he is the one who makes God's Love accessible to the world (Jn. 3:16). We have no need of human or religious intermediaries; Christ himself *is* our High Priest, and he is come to teach his people *himself*. He restores humans to relationship with the Creator, and within that relationship we experience life itself. As Jesus prayed in John 17:3: “And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

As our *Present and Inward Teacher*, Jesus promises to lead us by means of the “Spirit of Truth,” who abides with and in believers (Jn. 14:17). Just as Jesus is described as “an advocate with the Father” (1 Jn. 2:1), the Holy Spirit is a continuing advocate, comforter and helper, sent by the Father (Jn. 14:16, 26) and the Son (Jn. 15:26; 16:7), bringing to mind the teachings of Jesus for his followers (Jn. 14:26; 15:26) and continuing to lead believers into all Truth (Jn. 16:13). Therefore, the Holy Spirit is indeed the Spirit of Christ, whose character is disclosed in the ministry of Jesus. As “the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” providing unique access to the Father (Jn. 14:6-7), Jesus is also the inclusive “Light of the World” (Jn. 8:12). As we abide in him and he in us (Jn. 15:1-13) we come to know Christ intimately, and his commandment to love one another as he has loved us becomes part of the very fabric of our being. All who know the loving work of Jesus from the inside, and who carry it out

as his partners in the world, are given the privilege of being called his “*friends*” (Jn. 15:14-15).

2. SCRIPTURE AS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

How does God speak to humanity? In addition to the directly mediated and spiritual Word in our hearts (Is. 54:13; Jn. 6:45), God also speaks through his handiwork (Ps. 19:1), through prophets and other faithful emissaries (Deut. 18:15-22), and through his written Word, which provides sustenance for the world (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4) and a Light for our paths (Ps. 119:105). Because the “prophecy of Scripture” is no mere factor of human interpretation, coming not “by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet. 1:20-21), it speaks with authority to matters of faith and practice, providing an objective referent by which to check subjective leadings. By it we become wise unto salvation; “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Valuing the inspired writing of the biblical text, however, must be accompanied by its inspired reading. Therefore, interpretation must be prayerful as well as thoughtful—employing spiritual gifts as well as intellectual ones; this is different from both critical and dogmatic readings of the Bible. A literal meaning of a text cannot be inferred without also appreciating its literary form, and meaningful applications in later generations are best conducted having considered the contextual aspects of the passage being interpreted. Indeed, immersing oneself in Scripture becomes an invaluable spiritual resource for those with spiritual hunger and intellectual thirst.⁶ The Bible, however, does not point to itself, but to Christ as the Living Word of God made flesh (Jn. 1:14). Readers of Scripture err if they fail to see its central thrust: pointing to the One through whom the Father continues to speak, through the Written Word and also beyond it (Jn. 1:1; 5:39-40). His Spirit leads authentic believers into all Truth (Jn. 16:13), and “all who are all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God” (Ro. 8:14). In that sense, while the inspired Written Word of God declares that God’s Spirit continues to speak through and beyond the Scriptures, it is the same Spirit at work. Therefore, authentic immediate leadings will not go against the clear teachings of the inspired text. As the Holy Spirit is the inspiring fountain and

source of Scripture's revelation, prayerful and inspiring readings of Scripture insure its fullest disclosure and authority.

3. THE HUMAN CONDITION AND THE NEED FOR GOD

How are humans different from other species of being, and what does it mean to be created in the image of God? Whales communicate in the ocean, and monkeys improvise in reaching for food with a tool; is human intelligence qualitatively different from other animals or just quantitatively distinct? Physically, many animals are stronger than humans, and many species demonstrate both emotive features and social organization. Is the primary human distinctive the ability to stand up straight, enabling us to use our hands with interposable fingers and thumbs, or is it something more profound? Anthropologists and biologists will explain human behaviors on the basis of animalistic drives, but have they really assessed the true character of the human condition? The one qualitative difference is that humans can ask the question, "Why?" We search for meaning and have the capacity for self transcendence. These are features of *spirituality*; they are markers of being created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). However, humans are also fallen—estranged from God and within ourselves (Gen. 2:4-3:24) and treacherous to one another (Gen. 4:1-24). In Adam's sin so sinned we all, and the wages of sin is death—spiritually and otherwise (Ro. 5:12).

And yet, the fall of humanity is not the end, but simply the beginning of the divinely initiated story of redemption. God's first action in the Garden, following the first experience of human shame, was to make clothing for Man and Woman to cover their nakedness—itsself an act of redemption (Gen. 3:21). Humans were created for fellowship with God, and our only hope lies in God's saving/revealing action toward humanity. In extending us the outward and the inward Law, God graciously provides direction for humanity, yet we also become aware of how short we fall regarding God's perfect standards (Ro. 1:16-2:29). God's gift of grace through Christ Jesus is extended to all humanity in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Ro. 5:8). It is not that we have loved God that matters; it is that God has first loved us that counts (1 Jn. 4:10). "But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many." (Ro. 5:15) To

recognize our true condition—as humans fallen-yet-beloved by our Creator—is to open ourselves to receiving God’s gift of grace, leading to eternal life (Jn. 20:31).

4. THE UNIVERSAL AND SAVING LIGHT OF CHRIST

How does God reach out in saving⁷ love to the world, and how is God’s grace conveyed? As God called out to estranged humans in the Garden, “Wherefore art thou?” (Gen. 3:9), the rest of biblical history shows a God who is on the move, seeking to restore the relationship between the Lover and the Beloved, which suffered on account of human rebellion. The God who has spoken through prophets, Scripture, nature, and the Law has now conveyed the gift of Divine Love in the only appropriate form—a living, breathing person, the onlybegotten Son, full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14-18). As the Light shines in the darkness, so the Revealer that enlightens all humanity was coming into the world (Jn. 1:9). He came unto his own, but his own received him not. Yet, all who respond to the divine initiative in faith receive the power to become the children of God—as many as believe in his name (Jn. 1:10-13). While the Light of Christ is universally accessible, however, this does not mean it is universally received. Some misunderstand the Light (Jn. 1:5), while others prefer the security of darkness over convicting exposure to the Light (Jn. 3:18-21). Still others only catch a glimpse of God’s Truth, tending to reduce the Power of God to a idolatrous forms, or to recreate the Divine Being in their own image (Is. 44:17; Ac. 17:22-31). While the Truth is always liberating (Jn. 8:31-32), it is also experienced as judgment. This involves an existential crisis. Therefore, some reject the Light lest it be exposed that their lives are built upon scaffoldings of human origin rather than the Divine Initiative (Jn. 3:19-21). Thus, human-made religion is ever scandalized by Revelation!

As the only way to the Father, though (Jn. 14:6), Jesus’ being the gate to the sheepfold (Jn. 10:10:1-5) is not a matter of divine exclusivism. God desires for all to be saved (Ezek. 18:23; Is. 49:6; Jn. 3:16; 1 Cor. 15:22; Ti. 2:11; Heb. 2:9) and for the entire world to be blessed through the seed of Abram (Gen. 12:1-3). The tension between John 14:6 and 1:9 is clarified by Jesus’ words in John 6:44: “No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day.” It does not say “no one *may* come”—a stipulation of what God requires; rather, “no one

can come”—a factor of human incapacity to reach God’s Love and Grace by means of human initiative. The only hope for humanity is the Divine Initiative—what God has done, and is doing, to restore the human-divine relationship. And, that saving/revealing action is carried out in world-changing, time-changing, space-changing ways in the flesh-becoming Word, whose ministry continues even now through the Spirit of Truth—leading us into all truth. While the saving Light of Christ is accessible to all, it also requires a human response of faith; *that* is the existential and pivotal human decision.

5. JUSTIFICATION AND REDEMPTION

How is it, then, that humans are reconciled to God, to one another, and within themselves? God’s saving grace is received solely through faith (Ro. 1:17), although its reception is manifested in our faithfulness. The Cross is a stumbling block to the religious, and while it is foolishness to the world, to those “who are being saved it is the Power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). As the Apostle says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death” (Ro. 8:1-2). While the Law of God was given to humanity in love, revealed through Moses and the Scriptures—and also naturally in the hearts of the non-religious (Ro. 2:12-14), revelation is also experienced as judgment. Indeed, both justice and grace are two sides of God’s love. Justice reflects the deserved side of love; grace is undeserved love. It is precisely because humans cannot imagine undeserved love that it must be revealed. God’s saving grace is not required as a divine regulation; it is necessitated because it goes against our conventional ways of operating in the world.

The tendency of religion, as a platform based on human initiative, is to devise a transactional mechanism by which we work out the means to attain a blessing from God—such are sacrificial systems and ritual constructs. Yet, the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away human sin but represent God’s loving provision on our account (Heb. 10:4); rather, the sacrifice of Christ has done away with all human instrumentalities and approaches to God. As it is impossible to attain the righteous standards of God on our own (Ro. 3:10), the only hope for humanity lies in what God has done toward us. Thus, “if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who

reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us” (2 Cor. 5:17-19). Therefore, humanity is saved “not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Ti. 3:5). To receive God’s loving provision by faith is to be justified by divine grace; there is no other hope for humanity.

6. SANCTIFICATION AND PERSEVERANCE

Is the Gospel about our eternal destiny alone, or does it make a difference in our lives in the here and now? On one hand, receiving the Righteousness of God by faith involves the covering of our sins and being deemed righteous apart from works (Ro. 4:1-8); on the other hand, the One who knew no sin became sin that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). Therefore, the victory over sin that we receive in Christ Jesus is to be freed from its dominion and liberated to become servants of righteousness rather than sin (Ro. 6:14, 18). “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” (Ro. 8:2)

Just as saving grace is received by faith, so is empowering grace. Works are not a precondition for receiving grace, but they do represent the genuine evidence of faith; faith without works is dead (Jam. 2:26). No one who abides in Christ continues in sin (1 Jn. 3:6), and to receive Christ is also to be filled with his empowering Spirit (Ro. 8:8-27). While God’s divine embrace is steadfast, it is also possible to depart from grace (1 Tim. 1:6) and to deny one’s faith by one’s unfaithfulness. Some sins are especially death producing (1 Jn. 5:16-20), and those who have “tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit...and then have fallen away...are crucifying again the Son of God and are holding him up to contempt” (Heb. 6:4-6). Therefore, the full Power of the Gospel not only involves receiving the gift of eternal life; it also involves receiving the gift of Abundant Life, which begins in the here and now (Jn. 10:10). Paul declares that wrongdoers will not inherit the Kingdom of God, but he also proclaims to the Corinthian believers, “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). Just as the gift of salvation

is received by grace through faith, so is the power of sanctification. Grace is received by faith alone, and faithfulness is empowered alone by grace.

7. INCLUSIVE MINISTRY

Is Gospel Ministry limited by age, gender, or training, or is it open and available to all? Indeed every follower of Christ is also called to serve him and to minister in the world on his behalf (Jn. 20:21-23). Just as Jesus commissioned his followers to “cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons,” he also commanded them to minister without payment—to freely give just as they had freely received (Matt. 10:8). The yearning of Moses was for *all* God’s people to be prophets and to be empowered by the Spirit (Nu. 11:29), and at Pentecost the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled regarding the Spirit being poured out upon young and old, male and female, slave and free person (Joel 2:28-32; Ac. 2:14-21). Every follower of Jesus is called also to minister on his behalf; a non-ministering Christian is a contradiction of terms.

While preparedness for ministry involves study and labor (2 Tim. 2:15), it also enkindles the gifts of God (2 Tim. 1:6) and instruction rooted in love, which results in “a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith” (1 Tim 1:5). Empowered ministry is a function of the gifting of the Spirit, and the Spirit gives particular gifts as needed for the edification of the church (1 Cor. 12:11). Just as there are many parts of the body, but one Head—Jesus Christ, different members of the body are to exercise their roles effectively, but coordinated with others whose roles differ—in service to the overall Head and the unitive work of the body (1 Cor. 12:12-31). Likewise, a diversity of gifts is given for the complementary edification of the whole church, and “the greater gifts” are exercised for the benefit of the many over and above the edification of the individual. Followers of Jesus thus take heart in his promise that they will receive words to speak from the Spirit in times of trial (Mk. 13:11; Lk. 12:12), bringing to mind the teachings of Jesus needed for that very hour (Jn. 14:26). By their *love* will authentic followers of Jesus be known (Jn. 13:35), and by divine love has Christ overcome the world (Jn. 14:31; 16:31). Such is the essence of Christian ministry: it is inclusive in its involvement, compassionate in its character, and inspired in its empowerment.

8. AUTHENTIC WORSHIP

What is the character of authentic worship? Authentic worship is neither a function of form nor place—neither in Jerusalem nor Samaria—it is ever in Spirit and in Truth (Jn. 4:21-24). It stands neither in the use of forms nor in their formal disuse; where two or three are gathered in the name of Christ, he is there in their midst (Matt. 18:20). God’s Temple is one not made by human hands (Ac. 7:48), but God actively seeks those who will worship him authentically and joyously as the “place” of divine abode. The peace of Christ indwells the hearts of authentic worshippers, who embrace the Word of Christ and who celebrate with spiritual songs of joy and thanksgiving his working and instruction among them (Col. 3:15-17). Just as Ezekiel’s prophecy enlivened the dry bones in the desert, those who hear the word of the Lord will spring to life (Ez. 37:4), and the fires of Pentecost will be experienced anew (Ac. 2).⁸ Therefore, transforming worship is both expressive and impressive; in worship we express our love for God and receive God’s love for us.

With the Christ events, the veil in the Temple was torn in two—from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51), allowing for all access to the Holy of Holies. The same *Shekinah*-Glory of the Lord that appeared to gathered Israel in the wilderness (Nu. 16:19) is now encountered in the presence of Christ Jesus (Jn. 1:14), who extends to his followers the Glory he received from the Father since the beginning of time (Jn. 17:5, 22-24). There is no need to bring Christ down from heaven or bring him up from the dead; rather, he is as near as our hearts and mouths, for with our hearts we believe, and with our mouths we confess our faith in him—in gratitude for what he has done for us (Ro. 10:6-10). They that wait upon the Lord *renew* their strength (Is. 40:31); in quietness and trust *is* the believer’s empowerment (Is. 30:15). The Psalmist invites us to “be still and know” that God is God (Ps. 46:10); the resurrected Lord instructed his followers to tarry, to wait, in Jerusalem until they were “clothed with power from on high” (Lk. 24:48), and that invitation still abides. Receiving the empowerment of the Holy Spirit transforms believers into effective witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the remotest parts of the earth (Ac. 1:8). Such is the effect of authentic worship, which from age to age and place to place is ever experienced *in Spirit and in Truth*.

9. BAPTISM AND TRANSFORMATION

How are believers baptized with the baptism of Jesus, and what difference does it make in their lives? John came baptizing with water, but the One coming after him baptizes “with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk.3:16; Jn. 1:26, 33); John said of Jesus’ ministry, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn. 3:30). Just as John’s message and purification in the wilderness challenged ritual cleansings in the temple precincts of Jerusalem as a protest to religious forms, Jesus cleansed the temple of its vices (Jn. 2:13-23) and spoke of inward purification. Jesus’ followers refused the ritual washing of hands before eating (Mk. 7:2), and he himself never baptized with water (Jn. 4:2). The baptism of John called for repentance (Mk. 1:4; Ac. 13:24), and while some knew the baptism of John they did not know there was a Holy Spirit. Only after being filled with the Spirit, though, were followers of Apollos in Ephesus truly “baptized” (Ac. 18:24-19:7) pointing to the essential baptism, which ever is spiritual and transformative. Disputes about the baptismal ministries of different leaders therefore arose in Corinth, with some claiming to be “of Paul,” “of Apollos,” “of Cephas,” and even “of Christ.” For this reason Paul exclaimed, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name” (1 Cor. 1:12-15). As a result, the Apostle emphasized the singular unity of *spiritual baptism*, transcending the outward forms: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph. 4:4-5). Therefore, spiritual baptism—in the early church and today—is ever the priority over outward rites and forms. Such are devised by humans, they are not required by God.

The essence of baptism, therefore, is a spiritual immersion in Christ, whereby believers are filled with the Holy Spirit and imbued with transforming Power to live above the ways of the world. Therefore, transformative baptism involves not “a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21). To participate with Christ in his baptism involves the willingness to go with him to the Cross (Mk. 10:38); to be baptized with him into his death is to also walk with him into the newness of life (Ro. 6:4); to be baptized into Christ is to clothe oneself with the character of Christ (Gal. 3:27). Being baptized into Christ thus involves a transformation of moral character rather than submission to an outward form. Just as spiritual circumcision of

the heart is the only type that is of value, being spiritually buried with Christ in his baptism is the only way to be “raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:11-12).

When the Lord commanded his followers to make disciples in all the world, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19-20), the emphasis was not on water but upon schooling them in the teachings of Christ. Indeed, Paul also distinguishes baptism from evangelism: “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power” (1 Cor. 1:17). Adding anything to Christ diminishes Christ accordingly. Authentic baptism thus involves transforming immersion in the Spirit of Christ, which may be associated with water but is never determined by it.

10. COMMUNION AND FELLOWSHIP

What does it mean to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus and to share in the communion of Christian fellowship? As the bread which Jesus offers is his flesh given for the life of the world on the Cross (Jn. 6:51), to ingest his flesh and blood is to be willing to embrace the Cross; such is the only way to be raised up with him on the last day (Jn. 6:53-58). Like baptism, when Jesus asked James and John if they were willing to share his cup with him (Mk. 10:38), the invitation was not to a religious rite but to a martyrological witness. Indeed, at the last supper the Lord is remembered as displacing the focus on the Passover lamb with the significance of his own suffering and death. As such, though, he was not instituting a new ritual; he was supplanting all rites with the Christ Events—the pivotal fulcrum of history itself. As often as believers participate in the Passover meal, they are to remember not the sacrificial lamb of the days of Moses, nor even to focus on the contents of their plates; they are to focus on the Lamb-slain-for-the-life-of-the-world—Jesus, whose sacrifice displaces the need for all others. Mark emphasizes “my blood of the covenant” at the last supper (Mk. 14:24); Luke ritualizes the emphasis, shifting it from the *content* (the blood) to the *container* of the contents (the cup): “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Lk. 22:20). It was only after table fellowship meals were abused by Christians in Corinth (1 Cor. 11:17-22) that Paul instructed believers

to eat at home and instituted a symbolic meal of remembrance (1 Cor. 11:23-34). The witness of the Beloved Disciple, who leaned against the breast of Jesus, omits the institution of a meal of remembrance at the last supper; rather, the emphasis in John is serving one another, symbolized by the leader washing the feet of others (Jn. 13:1-17).

Ironically, the focus on sacramental means to unity often divides groups from one another, when their intended purpose is to instill unity and loving fellowship.⁹ God's loving presence is expressed and experienced incarnationally—by means of living, breathing persons rather than inanimate rites and objects. As a physical manifestation of a spiritual reality, God has spoken most fully through a *person*—his Son, who makes God's love known to the world (Jn. 1:14). In him we behold the exact representation of the Divine Being (Heb. 1:3), as the fullness of God in him dwells (Col. 1:19). And, just as God dwells not in temples made with human hand (Ac. 17:24), but in the hearts of believers, Jesus promises to abide with his disciples and also within them.

While the veil in the temple was torn asunder in the Christ Events, it is too readily stitched back up again by well-meaning folk, who supplant one overturned religious system with another. As a sacramental reality, Christ is *fully present* in the gathered community of believers, and attempts to symbolize that reality by inanimate means actually detract from the true evidence of his Real Presence—the *fruit of the Spirit*: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). If one were to ask how Jesus' followers are to be known in the world the answer is an incarnational one, not a ritual one: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:35). There can be no truer *sign* of the Divine Presence, which is why God sent his Son as the embodiment of his love for the world; likewise, Jesus sends his *friends* as extensions of his love and as sacramental balm for the healing of the world. The operative question is not whether believers will partake of the church's sacraments; it is whether we will *become* living sacraments in the world as furtherers of the incarnated presence and love of God.

11. LIBERTY, CONSCIENCE, AND GOVERNMENTS

What is the relationship between power, authority, and truth? God indeed works through governments and institutions (Ro. 13:1-7), but

no human leader or organization is to be worshiped; that honor is reserved for God alone (Rev. 13:1-18; 4:1-11). Jesus came proclaiming the Kingdom of God (Mk. 1:15), calling for humanity to take note, tune in, and turn around. Humans are invited into partnership with God in healing and restoring the world; the active Leadership of God is here, and it is now. All people everywhere are thus invited to attend, discern, and mind the Divine Will, calling others to do the same. Jesus' Kingdom, however, is one of Truth, and this is why his followers do not resort to violence or force (Jn. 18:36-37). To abide in Jesus' Word is to know the truth, and the truth is always liberating (Jn. 8:31-32). Even in his own teaching, Jesus issued neither intimidating threats nor incentivizing bribes; his teaching was compelling on the basis of its authenticity and conveyance of the Truth. Therein lay his authority (Matt. 7:29; Mk. 1:22; Jn. 7:46), and so it is within every culture. Likewise, the Holy Spirit convicts by leading people into Truth (Jn. 16:8), and authentic conviction is ever a function of being convinced of the Truth.

Therefore, leaders are empowered to lead as a factor of their responsibility, and the authority they exercise is always a function of their serving and furthering the Truth. We are not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds—our understandings (Ro. 12:2). When facing adversity, followers of Jesus are instructed to bless those who persecute, to live at harmony with others, neither being haughty nor overcome with evil, and to live peaceably with all. The Apostle declares, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Ro. 12:14-21). Thus, the exhortation to submit to authorities is hemmed by admonitions to love one's enemies and to love one another (Ro. 12:20; 13:8). Being willing to suffer for the sake of conscience is the calling of every believer (1 Pet. 3:14-17). We must also work for the triumph of truth and liberty of conscience in society and within organizations, for openness and sensitivity to the Prophetic Word serves well the Truth and all who are served by governments and institutions alike. All expressions of perceived truth are a gift to be appreciated by leaders, even if uncomfortable. Likewise, critical input is contributed as a factor of love and helpfulness, believing that the Spirit's Truth-furthering work is both convicting and liberating. The Spirit of Truth guides the meeting for worship in which business is conducted and likewise liberates the structures of society if we will but attend, discern, and mind the Divine Will.

12. LIVING WITH INTEGRITY

In the light of authentic spirituality, how ought we live? While neither salvation nor sanctification are obtained through works—Divine Grace is ever received through faith—their truest markers are the works and character of those whose lives are being transformed into the likeness of Christ Jesus. By the fruit is the tree known (Mt. 12:33), and by the fruit of the Spirit is authentic spirituality to be judged. There can be no counterfeit to love, patience, goodness, and the like; to be immersed in the One in whom we “live and move and have our being” is to cultivate an embodiment of the ways of the One whose offspring we are (Ac. 17:28). Indeed, the Kingdom of God can never be furthered by any means contrary to the Way of the Kingdom; therefore, those who have been liberated by the Spirit of Truth are called to live with integrity and authenticity with relation to God, to others, to self, and to society. Authentic spirituality always involves abiding in the Truth and living out of it: not ordered by calculated outcomes, but by faithfulness to the Way of Christ, whatever the cost or reward. In doing “nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,” but in humility regarding others as better than ourselves, we look not to our own interests, but to the interests of others (Phil. 2:3-4). We seek not conformity to the world (Ro. 12:2), but transformity into the mind “that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, . . . he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.” As God raised him from the dead, he is also raised up in our lives as he becomes for us an Inward Center by which we work outwardly our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:5-12).

Authentic *relationship with God* implies an ongoing “Yes” to God’s decisive YES to the world—living receptively and responsively to the Love and Initiative of God. We do not take the name of God in vain or detract from its authority by swearing (Ex. 20:7; Jam. 5:12), but we rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4) that our lives might be unto him a sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15). The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and intimacy with the Holy One is the well-spring of understanding (Prov. 9:10). Authentic *self-appraisal* involves abiding in the truth—convinced of both sin and of righteousness (Jn. 16:8). What is the source of wars and violence in the world? It is lust, and coveting, and striving to rise above others whom God also

loves (Jam. 4:1-3). Therefore, living and speaking plainly, acting and dressing modestly, foregoing the seeking of honors, and letting one's "Yes" be yes and one's "No" be no (Matt. 5:37) becomes a living testimony to the Truth we profess. We seek to dwell on whatever is pleasing, commendable, excellent, worthy of praise—being content in every circumstance—believing that God thereby supplies our needs according to his riches in glory (Phil. 4:8, 11, 19). Authentic *regard of others* involves doing unto others as we would desire for ourselves (Matt. 7:12; Lk. 6:32), extending the same grace and forgiveness as we would like to receive from God (Matt. 6:12; Lk. 11:4), loving God and neighbor (Lk. 10:27) and loving others as Christ has first loved us (Jn. 13:34; 15:12, 17; Ro. 12:9; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Pet. 3:8; 1 Jn. 3:11; 4:7-12). Authentic *relation to society* shows neither favoritism and flattery nor threats and coercion. It speaks the truth in plainness and love, appealing to conscience for the sake of Truth. It takes no part in "the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11) but exposes them to the Light, seeking the redemption of all and the prevailing of justice in the land. It addresses the needs of the poor, the captives, the hungry, the homeless—energized and empowered by the Love of Christ (Matt. 25:31-46). On the Lord's Holy Mountain shall the lion and the lamb dwell together in harmony (Is. 65:25), and his requirement is "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8).

CONCLUSION

As an appeal to the reader, there is *nothing personal* in this apology for authentic spirituality; one has no personal investment in what others do with the Truth, other than seeking to represent it well and desiring the prospering of Love, Joy, Peace, and Goodness for the reader. On the other hand, the appeal is *totally personal*, in that the concerns herein expressed arise from experience and have everything to do with the most important of relationships and their experiential restoration. While these convictions arise out of the Jewish-Christian tradition, the universal work of Christ Jesus extends beyond Judaism and Christianity alike. They fulfill God's promise to Abram, that through his seed the world should be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3), and this promise extends to all peoples, lands, faiths, and the lack thereof. In that sense, the heart of Christian (and Quaker) faith and practice is not adherence to a particular religion; it has everything to do with living receptively

and responsively to the present work of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, leading us into the Truth, which ever sets us free. Indeed, the God who has spoken in many times and in many ways continues to speak, and those who wait upon the Lord find evil diminishing and the good within raised up. As Caroline Fox has said, “Live up to the Light thou hast, and more will be granted thee.”¹⁰

ENDNOTES

- 1 First published in 1673, *A Catechism and Confession of Faith* (see *A New Edition Edited in Modern English*, by Dean Freiday and Arthur O. Roberts, Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 2001) sought to pose an alternative to the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) as well as the Longer and Shorter Catechisms (completed in 1647). Barclay’s *Confession*, however, is addressed to Roman Catholic and Protestant audiences, distinguishing the doctrines of Friends from Socinians (Unitarians), Pelagians (those denying the fall of humanity), and Arminians (those claiming perfection).
- 2 Licia Kuenning, “Editor’s Introduction,” p. iii in *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, by Robert Barclay (Glenside, PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002). The original title in the 1678 printing was: “AN APOLOGY For the True CHRISTIAN DIVINITY, As the same is held forth, and preached by the People, *Called, in Scorn*, QUAKERS: Being a full Explanation and Vindication of their Principles and Doctrines, by many Arguments, Deduced from Scripture and right Reason, and the Testimony of famous Authors, both ancient and modern, with a full answer to the strongest objections usually made against them, Presented to the KING. Written and Published in Latine, for the information of Strangers, by ROBERT BARCLAY. And now put into our own Language, for the benefit of his Country-men.”
- 3 Dean Freiday, *Barclay’s Apology in Modern English* (first published in 1967; Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 1991).
- 4 The first two, on “the True Fountain of Knowledge” and “Immediate Revelation” are combined into “the Immediacy of Revelation”; Propositions 5 & 6, on “the Universal Redemption by Christ” and “the Saving and Spiritual Light wherewith every man is enlightened” are combined into “the Universal and Saving Light of Christ”; Propositions 8 & 9, on “Perfection” and “Perseverance and the Possibility of Falling from Grace” are combined into “Sanctification and Perseverance.” Just as Barclay expanded his *Apology* upon the *Theses Theologicae*, the present essay builds upon the biblical passages listed in Barclay’s *Theses Theologicae* and expands upon them (limiting treatments of each topic to two paragraphs or so) drawing in other concerns and applications that seem relevant to the day.
- 5 For instance, George Fox’s *Book of Miracles* endeavors to show that the miracles of Jesus and the Apostles narrated in the canonical Gospels and Acts were continuous with his own ministry as a means of showing the rebirth of Apostolic Christianity (see “Forward” by Paul Anderson in *George Fox’s Book of Miracles*, Philadelphia & London: Quakers United in Publication, 2000, xviii-xxvii). Likewise, William Penn produced a short history of the Friends movement in 1696, fifty years after its beginning, in his *Primitive Christianity Revived in the Faith and Practice of the People Called Quakers*.
- 6 William Penn said of George Fox that in his opening of the Scriptures, he “would go to the marrow of things, and show the mind, harmony and fulfilling of them with much plainness, and to great comfort and edification.” *The Rise and Progress of the People*

Called Quakers (reprinted with an introduction by James Newby; Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1976), 58.

7 I follow here and in the title of this section Arthur Roberts' admonition to include the word "saving" with reference to the Light of Christ. He is right; it is not simply illuminative and guiding, but the Light of Christ is also salvific in its effect.

8 Indeed, Barclay's own experience in a Friends meeting for worship is described as follows (*Apology*, Prop. 11:7):

...when I came into the silent assemblies of God's people I felt a secret power among them which touched my heart, and as I gave way unto it, I found the evil weakening in me and the good raised up, and so I became thus knit and united unto them, hungering more and more after the increase of this Power and Life whereby I might feel myself perfectly redeemed: and indeed this is the surest way to become a Christian, to whom afterwards the knowledge and understanding of principles will not be wanting but will grow up so much as is needful, as the natural fruit of this good root, and such a knowledge will not be barren nor unfruitful after this manner.

9 The word "sacrament" is from the Latin word *sacramentum*, which is a translation of the Greek word *mysterion*. In none of the New Testament references to the "mystery" of God is there any reference made to a ritual, or even baptism or communion. In most of the references, Paul is describing the "mystery" that God has united the Jews and the Gentiles by means of the Christ Events (Ro. 11:25; 16:25-27; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Eph. 3:1-15; 5:31-33; Col. 1:25-27; 4:1-4; 1 Tim. 3:16). On one hand, God's working through Christ in making all things new is described as the mystery which Paul proclaims: his work is all sufficient. On the other hand, the main effect of Christ's work is the breaking down of social division and enmity in the world: Gentiles are reconciled with Jews, slaves are reconciled with masters, and husbands are reconciled with wives. These are spiritual realities, and their truest manifestation is incarnational: God's revealed love is expressed in the person of Jesus; God's loving presence is felt in the community of believers.

10 Caroline Fox, as written in her journal in 1841 (*Quaker Faith and Practice*, 3rd edn.; London: Britain Yearly Meeting, 2005), 26.04.