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A TRIBUTE TO DEAN FREIDAY

ARTHUR O. ROBERTS

Lay theologian. In considering the task of the church: proclamation, fellowship, service, Dean Freiday contributed preeminently to the first, particularly by writing. As a lay theologian he took seriously Jesus' call to love God with one's mind. He prepared through study of theological literature, ancient and contemporary. He disciplined himself to do research with integrity and, in various written venues, to articulate credible expositions of the Christian faith. In the best sense of the word, Dean was an apologist—a defender of the faith, an ally of Church scholars from Athenagoras to contemporary theologians, a guardian of evangelical biblical exposition, a champion of Quaker contributions to the Christian community of faith. In an era marked by disparagement of theology, Dean's cautionary counsel is cogent, and timely: "A reluctance to be too precise about beliefs has resulted in indifference" (*QRT* #60, 2).

Mentor. Dean served as a mentor to graduate students, persons such as Allen Hilton, Susan Kendall, Steve Perisho, Paul Anderson, and Harold and Nancy Thomas. The latter recall his encouraging visits while they were at Fuller Seminary, when he came west for ecumenical conferences. For these students he modeled scholarly integrity. He encouraged them. Once I wrote Dean regarding certain students at Princeton: "Thanks for your pastoral care. It means more than you may realize.... If they can't come to Manasquan often, think of your efforts as a sacrifice hit to get them home professionally—or at least to second base." (Corr. 11/21/88)

Quaker scholar. His scholarship extended from a 1967 publication of *Barclay's Apology in Modern English* to his co-authorship of *Barclay's Catechism and Confession of Faith* in 2001. He became co-editor, with Vail Palmer, of *Quaker Religious Thought* in 1979; and full editor from 1983 through 1989. In addition to facilitating articles by others, he added his own creative input. In issue #49 (1980) for example, is a thoughtful exposition of "The 'Everlasting Gospel' proclaimed by George Fox." Demonstrating careful research, Dean concludes, summarizing Fox's exposition, that "Christ's sway extends to all of existence and all of creation... as pertinent in the twentieth or twenty-first century as in the first, or the seventeenth...." (35).

Agent for renewal and greater unity among Friends. In an evocative article, “Christ is Still the Answer” (*Truth’s Bright Embrace*, Newberg, OR: George Fox University Press, 1996, 181-92) Dean noted that “one of the most significant developments among American Friends during this last century” was the 1970 St. Louis Conference, highlighted by Everett Cattell’s passionate call for unity “under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.” He noted how this gathering, and follow-up “Faith and Life Conferences,” brought together Friends from across the full spectrum. He laments that in the face of various attacks on belief, e.g. “the death of God,” “new ageism,” and new forms of secularism, etc, Quakers have not together found those “paths toward a Quaker future” called for by Arthur Roberts in an article by that title published by three major American Quaker magazines. Dean was concerned that gains made by the Faith and Life movement not be lost. I assured him that movements *may* lose themselves over time only to become leaven within the hearts of young people who study Quaker history. We do well to ponder Dean Freiday’s concluding queries (*TBE*, 189-91). “Are we on the ‘cutting edge’ or ‘like a ship without a rudder?’” “Are we prioritizing our callings or idolizing our structures?” “Are we picking up the gimmicks of lukewarm Protestantism” and “avoiding deeper involvement in social justice?” “Is Christ the dynamic Lord of our lives, not just a notional tenet of faith?”

Ecumenist. Dean participated theologically and fraternally within the larger Christian movement, often championing the viability of Quaker beliefs before the Faith and Order Commission of the NCCC and in Roman Catholic dialogue. In a pamphlet published by his Yearly Meeting (New York, 1985) he wrote: “No other statement is as thoroughly documented in the New Testament as that John baptized “with water” but Christ would baptize “with the Holy Spirit. It occurs in each of the Gospels and twice in Acts.” His interfaith contacts were both gracious and tenacious! For him the family of Friends is part of the church catholic.

Encourager. I followed him as editor of *Quaker Religious Thought*. He wrote encouraging letters. “Phenomenally well,” was his assessment a year after I took his place. Exaggerated, but reinforcing (a trait discovered when we first became acquainted—I think it was when I gave the Shrewsbury, New Jersey, lecture in 1965). His encouragement even included sending food! “Today I ate four delicious muffins made from the mix you sent,” I once responded,

“Thank you! Two I ate with molasses, two with honey. I prefer the former.” (corr. 6/8/94) He met me at Baltimore Yearly Meeting in 1988 when I spoke there. We corresponded for many years, recently by telephone. Like most scholars, at times he could be prolix, but he could also encapsulate insights! Referring to a book by British Quaker scholar John Punshon, Dean wrote: “Not only does he go a long way toward reconciling the two varieties of Quaker ministry, but he does so in a highly readable personal-experience style.” (corr. 8/17/85)

The Legacy. Upon learning of Dean’s death, Paul Anderson, editor of *QRT*, sent this letter to many of us:

Dean co-edited and edited *Quaker Religious Thought* from 1978-1989, and he was the co-founder and organizer of the Catholic and Quaker Studies series. His books include *Barclay’s Apology in Modern English*, *Nothing Without Christ*, and *Speaking as a Friend*. Two years ago Dean donated his library of over 4,000 books to the Great Lakes School of Theology in Bujumbura, Burundi; Ron Stansell and others helped sort and mail the books to this center of Friends theological training in Africa. Dean’s contributions will be deeply missed by Friends and others who shared his vision for the larger work of Christ.

Dean was a wonderful encouragement to so many of us and a powerful example of seeking to be a witness to the truth one has received. We shall miss Dean Freiday, and yet we will always be indebted to his many contributions and faithfulness.

How fitting that Paula Hampton, editor of the devotional magazine, *Fruit of the Vine*, for the first week of April, 2008, chose readings from *Barclay’s Apology in Modern English*, with appropriate Scripture passages and historical notation! In editing this work, first published in 1967, and reprinted in 1991, Dean Freiday preserved for posterity the Christian witness of one of the church’s great scholars, and preserved for continued “instruction in righteousness” distinctive biblical teachings. I count it a highlight of my own scholarly career to have joined with Dean in preparing a new edition (also in modern English) of *Barclay’s Catechism and Confession of Faith* (Barclay Press, 2001).

The significance for Friends of that brilliant, Christ-centered, *seventeenth* century private scholar is symbolized in our era by the renaming of a Quaker college and a major Friends publisher. Our generations have been blessed by the Christ-centered scholarship of a

brilliant *twentieth* century private scholar. As a centuries-spanning team, Robert Barclay and Dean Freiday have clarified our Quaker heritage, kept it vibrant, and provided guidance for effective contemporary Christian witness. Both held to the Spirit-given character of Scripture. (Dean was not adverse to chiding his 17th century colleague, however, for choosing a well-intended but oft misunderstood term, “secondary,” to describe the relationship of Scripture and Spirit.) Dean honored his literary friend by underscoring Barclay’s contextual insight, “If the same Spirit who inspired the Scriptures is the source of continuing revelation, that revelation will not contradict the written witness” (“Robert Barclay and the Bible” in *QRT* #97). Both men testified that the true Church is gathered not only “into the principles of truth but also into the power and life and Spirit of Christ.” Robert and Dean now share fellowship in the Church Triumphant.

Principles and power—I like that combination. Praise the Lord!

TRUTH HAS PROSPERED

I give tribute to Dean Freiday, devoted theologian,
 who taught us, locally and around the world,
 that the church is *Nothing Without Christ*.
 Within a culture of unbelief he has proclaimed
 biblically, rationally, and experientially,
 “Christ is still the answer.”
 Sandy’s “Jim” was a meticulous scholar.
 As one friend observed, Dean could
 “stuff Quaker theology into a 1,000 word package.”
 But also, by patient research and good writing,
 he clarified for many folks normative Quaker faith,
 by publishing in modern English the writings
 of renowned 17th century scholar, Robert Barclay,
 by papers and dialogue at various conferences,
 and by editing *Quaker Religious Thought*.
 How reassuring for all of us, that, indeed,

Christ, the incarnate Word of God,
the “universal and saving Light,”
is still the answer! What a boon to us
earnest but sometimes confused Quakers!
In ecumenical circles Dean Freiday shared
seminal Quaker insights and strengthened
bonds with Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant
Christians. Surely, under Dean’s ministry,
from Manasquan to Bujumbura,
“Truth has prospered!”