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### *Your Name*

Christianity has gone through a number of significant metamorphoses over the last two millennia, some of them radical enough to permanently change the nature of the West's foremost religion. Another radical change is beginning to swell through the sea of mainstream Christianity as increasing numbers of thoughtful Christians challenge the prevailing doctrines of separation and exclusion, preferring instead to focus on the personal change that comes from a sincere attempt to emulate the life of Jesus.

The Phoenix Affirmations send forth a powerful note in this chorus of souls seeking a higher expression of their spiritual being. The twelve Affirmations are based on the core principles of Christian faith and on the Bible's three pillars of love: love of God, love of neighbor, and love of self. They reflect a commitment to justice, stewardship, artistic expression, and openness to other faiths. Taken in a broad spirit of inclusion— replacing Christian doctrinal terms with one's choice— the Phoenix Affirmations should resonate with all who are drawn towards a Path of deeper connection and meaning.

One critical dimension of the Affirmations is their explicit recognition that spiritual meaning does not require adherence to the separative doctrines of conventional Christianity; it does not require belief in the typical Christian view of a rigid 'truth' that allows only one path to spiritual understanding. A tolerance for the possibility of other legitimate and meaningful spiritual paths does not erode or challenge the true Christian path: indeed, a healthy and robust Christian life is enhanced by the recognition that other paths can lead to a deep and personally meaningful spiritual life. Acknowledging an ultimate truth, the Phoenix Affirmations challenge the notion of a single path to God, likening it to:

"...a climber on one side of the mountain trying to speak with authority about paths on the other side of the mountain that the climber has never been on. The climber may have read about these paths in books. The climber may even have spoken with people on another side of the mountain. All this may lead the climber to believe that the paths seem to be heading to the same place. But any serious climber knows that only those who have climbed the path can speak with authority about where it leads and how to get there."<sup>1</sup>

Christianity faces both a tremendous opportunity— to evolve with and play a leading role in the unfolding of human consciousness— and a critical challenge: to stay relevant and meaningful as that unfolding reveals the awesome grandeur of consciousness on a cosmic

<sup>1</sup> \*The Phoenix Affirmations: A New Vision for the Future of Christianity,\*  
Eric Elnes p. 9

scale. The Phoenix Affirmations is a bold and significant step down the path of integrating Christianity with the real world, particularly in its explicit acceptance of those who seek meaning on other Paths and the rejection of biblical inerrancy. The Affirmations are reprinted here with permission of Crosswalk America:

### *Affirmation One*

Walking fully in the Path of Jesus without denying the legitimacy of other paths that God may provide for humanity.

AS CHRISTIANS WE FIND spiritual awakening, challenge, growth, and fulfillment in Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection. While we have accepted the Path of Jesus as our path, we do not deny the legitimacy of other paths God may provide humanity. Where possible, we seek lively dialogue with those of other faiths for mutual benefit and fellowship.

WE AFFIRM that the Path of Jesus is found wherever love of God, neighbor, and self are practiced together. Whether or not the path bears the name of Jesus, such paths bear the identity of Christ.

WE CONFESS that we have stepped away from Christ's Path whenever we have failed to practice love of God, neighbor, and self or have claimed Christianity is the only way, even as we claim it to be our way.

### *Affirmation Two*

Listening for God's Word, which comes through daily prayer and meditation, studying the ancient testimonies which we call Scripture, and attending to God's present activity in the world.

AS CHRISTIANS, WE LISTEN for God's Word in the living presence of the Holy Spirit, praying every day, and discerning God's present activity in our world. We also study and revere the ancient records that we call Scripture, recognizing that they were formed in distinct historical and cultural contexts yet were informed by God's Spirit, which transcends all ages and times. Most of all, we seek the meaning of salvation, of Jesus' life, death and resurrection as presented in Scripture and discerned in daily life.

WE AFFIRM that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers engage in daily prayer and meditation, as well as personal and community study and interpretation of Scripture, as central ways God's continuing voice is discerned in everyday life.

WE CONFESS that we have moved away from Christ's Path when we have claimed that God's Word is restricted to what may be contained in a written document or that either the recording of God's Word in Scripture or our interpretation of it is infallible. Further, we

have moved away from the Path when we have allowed the mere fact of Scripture's fallibility, or our own, to dissuade us from seeking God's Word in Scripture, prayer, and reflection on daily life."

### *Affirmation Three*

Celebrating the God whose Spirit pervades and whose glory is reflected in all of God's Creation, including the earth and its ecosystems, the sacred and the secular, the Christian and the non-Christian, the human and the non-human.

AS CHRISTIANS, WE SEEK to act as righteous stewards of the earth and its ecosystems. We celebrate the reflections of the Creator's glory in both the sacred and the secular, human and non-human, Christian and non-Christian.

WE AFFIRM that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers act as caring stewards of the earth, and where the presence of the living Christ is celebrated wherever Christ's spirit manifests itself, transcending all preconceived human categories.

WE CONFESS that we have stepped away from the Path when we have ignored our role as stewards of the earth, or have interpreted Scripture in a way that fails to account for the sacredness of the earth or the integrity of its ecosystems. We have further moved away whenever we have claimed that the glorification and praise of God is limited only to that which is consciously and overtly Christian.

### *Affirmation Four*

Expressing our love in worship that is as sincere, vibrant, and artful as it is scriptural.

AS CHRISTIANS, WE STRIVE to respond to God's artistry in Creation by integrating the arts in worship, education and proclamation. We encourage the reclaiming of artistry and artistic expression in all Christian endeavors, both personal and communal.

WE AFFIRM that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers make sincere and vibrant worship of God as central to the life of their community as Jesus did. We further affirm artistic expression as a way of reflecting God's creativity, joy, and prophetic voice in what may be seen, heard, felt, tasted, sung and spoken.

WE CONFESS that we have moved away from Christ's Path when we have failed to make worship the product of our best efforts to experience and express love for God, neighbor and self in community with others. We have moved further from this path when we have considered the arts as trivial or merely tangential to the life of a mature Christian community.

*Affirmation Five*

Engaging people authentically, as Jesus did, treating all as creations made in God's very image, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental ability, nationality, or economic class.

AS CHRISTIANS, WE WELCOME those of every race, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical and mental ability, nationality, and economic class into the full life of our community.

WE AFFIRM that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers uplift and celebrate the worth and integrity of all people as created in God's very image and likeness. We further affirm that Christ's Path includes treating people authentically rather than as mere categories or classes, challenging and inspiring all people to live according to their high identity.

WE CONFESS that we have stepped away from this Path whenever we have failed to recognize the essential goodness of God's Creation by treating some classes of human beings as more godly than others. We have moved further from Christ's Path when we have treated people superficially, as objects to be used rather than human beings with depth and distinction.

*Affirmation Six*

Standing, as Jesus does, with the outcast and oppressed, the denigrated and afflicted, seeking peace and justice with or without the support of others;

AS CHRISTIANS, WE ADVOCATE FOR and care for those who experience oppression and poverty, either physically or spiritually, within our faith communities, our country, and the world. We recognize the local congregation as the primary context for offering such care, even as we seek to extend it beyond our faith communities into the wider world.

WE AFFIRM that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers honor the essential unity of spirit and matter by connecting worship and theology with concrete acts of justice and righteousness, kindness and humility, with or without the support of others.

WE CONFESS that we have moved away from this Path when we have suggested that Christianity is concerned with only the spiritual in contrast to the material, or vice-versa. We have moved further away when we have celebrated blessings given by God without also acknowledging responsibilities that come with blessing.

*Affirmation Seven*

Preserving religious freedom and the Church's ability to speak prophetically to government by resisting the commingling of Church and State;

AS CHRISTIANS, WE STRIVE to live as responsible citizens of our country, just as we seek to live as Christ's disciples. We celebrate the separation of Church and State as much for the protection of the Church, and other faith communities, as the State.

WE AFFIRM that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers honor the role of the State in maintaining justice and peace, so far as human discernment and ability make possible. We affirm the separation of Church and State, even as we endeavor to support the state in as far as Christian conscience allows.

WE CONFESS that we have moved away from this Path when we have confused the role of the State with that of the Church. We have moved further from the Path when we have renounced the Church's calling to speak prophetically to the State by suggesting that the Church should or could take on the nature, tasks and dignity which belong to the State, thus becoming itself an organ of the State.

*Affirmation Eight*

Walking humbly with God, acknowledging our own shortcomings while honestly seeking to understand and call forth the best in others, including those who consider us their enemies;

AS CHRISTIANS, WE RECOGNIZE that we are misfits both with respect to God's Realm and the world. We are misfits with respect to God's Realm in that we rarely live up to the principles and ideals we espouse. We are misfits with respect to the world in that the ideals for which we strive frequently do not conform to the ways of the world.

WE AFFIRM that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers love those who consider them their enemies as much as they love themselves, striving humbly to embody the "fruits of the Spirit": love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

WE CONFESS that we have moved away from this Path when we have promoted a notion that people of faith are morally or ethically superior to those without faith. Further, we have moved away when we have supported any cause, no matter how just or righteous, without reflecting the "fruits of the Spirit" toward all.

*Affirmation Nine*

Basing our lives on the faith that, in Christ, all things are made new, and that we, and all people, are loved beyond our wildest imagination - for eternity.

AS CHRISTIANS, WE BEAR witness to, and nurture faith in, all persons who are hungry for, or open to the revelation, love, and salvation of God in Christ. We do not seek to evangelize those who have no desire to explore the Christian Path. We trust, rather, that God's love, grace and invitation, has been, and will be, revealed in other paths, witnesses and times.

WE AFFIRM that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers are continually discovering, and rediscovering that they - and all people - are loved beyond their wildest imagination, and they determine to live their lives according to this discovery. We find in this discovery and surrender the very essence of salvation, which is a process, not an end-point, within an eternal journey.

WE CONFESS that we have moved away from this Path whenever we have denied God's love for all people, or have denied the effectiveness of God's eternal will that all be saved. We have moved further from Christ's path when we have not actively borne witness to God's love and grace with those who seek it.

*Affirmation Ten*

Claiming the sacredness of both our minds and our hearts, recognizing that faith and science, doubt and belief serve the pursuit of truth;

AS CHRISTIANS, WE SEEK to develop intellectually as sincerely as we seek emotional development. We further seek to clarify that the truths contained in Scripture are not conveyed primarily through scientific revelations, but through wisdom which may be gleaned frequently in story and song, symbol and parable.

WE AFFIRM that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers value the pursuit of wisdom, which is found at the intersection of head and heart, where God seeks relationship with the human soul.

WE CONFESS that we have moved away from this Path when we have denied either the role of the mind, or that of the heart, in the seeking of wisdom. Further, we have moved off the Path when we have denigrated the role of doubt or pursuit of scientific knowledge as if they were enemies rather than allies of faith.

*Affirmation Eleven*

Caring for our bodies, and insisting on taking time to enjoy the benefits of prayer, reflection, worship and recreation in addition to work;

AS CHRISTIANS, WE STRIVE to embrace and embody ways of living that promote the health of the body, the joy of living, and the benefits attained when work is combined with rest and recreation, reflection and prayer. We do this for our sake, for the sake of others, for the sake of the earth, and for the sake of Christ.

WE AFFIRM that the Path of Jesus is found where Christ's followers care for their bodies as temples of the holy, and take time to pray and play, to worship, and to reflect, as essential parts of their vocation.

WE CONFESS that we have moved away from this Path when we have supported the ethics of Pharaoh over the ethics of God by promoting systems of production and consumption without attending to the disciplines of rest and recreation, reflection and prayer. We have further moved from the Path when we have denigrated or abused our bodies, or those of others, or denied the rights and responsibilities of others to make decisions about how they care for the bodies God gave them.

### *Affirmation Twelve*

Acting on the faith that we are born with a meaning and purpose; a vocation and ministry that serves to strengthen and extend God's realm of love.

AS CHRISTIANS, WE PRACTICE prayer as a daily discipline, seeking in prayer both to enjoy God's presence and to discern God's will for our lives and our faith communities. We accept it as one of our highest responsibilities and privileges to help those in our communities of faith discern God's direction for their lives, and to celebrate and value their discernment in the worship and missional life of the church. In every available way, we seek to help people develop and use their diverse callings as an expression of their faith.

WE AFFIRM that the Path of Jesus is found where all of Christ's followers are understood to be called into a ministry. God's intention for us can be found and followed, however haltingly and imperfectly, in obedience to the guidance and insights, which come in prayer. We hold this conviction to be true of the Church as well as of each of its members.