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A Letter to the Editor

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A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Paul Anderson,

I have read your paper, “On Jesus: Quests for Historicity, and the History of Recent Quests” in the February 2000 issue of *Quaker Religious Thought*. While your historical review of the subject seems to be adequate, and your bibliography seems to be quite inclusive of diverse points of view, your criticism of the Jesus Seminar seems to require a reply by one or more scholars who are generally supportive of the Seminar.

I live in an isolated situation and have little opportunity to participate in the academic world. I try to read leading Friends works as they are published and was able to get away one weekend this past summer to attend a meeting of Quaker historians and archivists at Earlham College, where I met some of the Quaker scholars whom I used to know when I was working as a Catalog Librarian at Haverford College, 1969-1985. I subscribe to the *Christian Century* and have read some of the writings of Marcus Borg, Walter Wink, and John Dominic Crossan, as well as the book, *The Five Gospels*. I was able to hear John Dominic Crossan lecture for several hours at a weekend he spent at a Congregational Church in Ames, Iowa last winter and found his presentation to be quite acceptable and well grounded.

Bruce Birchard, Executive Secretary of the Friends General Conference, in his 1997 Pendle Hill Pamphlet, “The Burning Oneness Binding Everything,” has written of his appreciation of the work of Marcus Borg. I heard a professor at nearby Simpson College at Indianola, Iowa lecture in opposition to the Jesus Seminar. I bought a copy of the book by Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus*, and also a copy of the dialogue between Marcus Borg and N. T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus, Two Visions*. I have the impression that there is something of a chasm between those who support the work of the Jesus Seminar and those who deprecate this work. Those like myself, in the theological hinterland, should be aware of both sides.

It seems that those who would be Quaker theologians must always remember the words of George Fox, that to be bred at Oxford and Cambridge is not enough to make a man fit to be a minister of Christ. While academic degrees may indicate some preparation for constructive theological debate, they are not enough. In my younger

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years I endeavored to do some academic work in the field of religion and philosophy. I received a Master of Arts degree from Haverford College in 1951, writing a Master's thesis on the thought of Robert Barclay, with Howard Brinton as my advisor. In 1964 I received a Bachelor of Divinity from the Divinity School of Drake University in Des Moines (the Divinity School has since been merged with other Disciples of Christ institutions). However, to be really understanding of the current theological scene, one must be involved in contemporary debate with those who are familiar with the current theological terrain. One should not ignore conventional theological thought. Neither should one latch on to all of the latest theories, but always seek for the experience of the Living Truth.

Herbert Standing