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Front Matter -- Quaker Religious Thought, no. 98

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QUAKER RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

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Paul Anderson

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QUAKER RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

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Sponsored by the Quaker Theological Discussion Group

(<http://theo-discuss.quaker.org/>)

The purpose of the Quaker Theological Discussion Group is to explore the meaning and implications of our Quaker faith and religious experience through discussion and publication. This search for unity in the claim of truth upon us concerns both the content and application of our faith.

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This issue of *QRT* offers an excellent essay on the relation between the individual and the meeting, and it also provides the reader with several responses to *QRT* issue #94 on the recent quests for the historical Jesus with a special focus on the Jesus Seminar within those quests. Marty Grundy's essay was delivered as the plenary address of last year's annual sessions of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, and its implications extend to pastoral meetings as well as unprogrammed ones. At stake in the consideration of membership and participation in the meeting is a set of essential relationships, and Grundy challenges consumerist mentalities helpfully, providing clarity for Friends and others who consider her contribution seriously.

The responses to the historical Jesus essay in 2000 were invited as a result of Herbert Standing's letter to the editor requesting a broader set of opinions, including a contribution from someone in the Jesus Seminar. I am delighted that Marcus Borg, a former Fellow of the Jesus Seminar and a well-known speaker and writer, has agreed to contribute an essay to *QRT*. In this essay, Borg points out where he agrees and disagrees with my essay and goes on to suggest implications of the Jesus Seminar's work. The second response is offered by Mark Allen Powell, the present chair of the Historical Jesus Section of the Society of Biblical Literature, a position held by Marcus Borg several years earlier. As the chair of that larger and more permeable group of Jesus scholars, Powell gives us a helpful view of how Jesus scholars in general view the contribution of the Jesus Seminar in particular and where Jesus studies seem to be going in the future. Borg comments rightly that Powell's book on Jesus studies is the best and most balanced treatment available. I then invited a third response from Gary Kinkel, who had sent me an earlier theological critique of recent Jesus studies that he presented at the regional AAR/SBL meetings in the Midwest. I asked Kinkel to rewrite his essay as a theological response to the *QRT* essay, and he has done so helpfully. I have then written a response to the responses, hoping to pull themes and insights together and seeking to suggest to the reader possible ways of navigating some of the points of contention that exist within this important venture. What we see among these essays is that indeed, Jesus matters!

As a result of the timing of this issue and the length and complementarity of upcoming essays, the next issue of *QRT* will be a double issue, including two substantive reviews of important books by John Punshon and Rosemary Moore and a treatment of the subject: “Quakers and Science.” We might have room for one more essay on that topic if any are interested in contributing. If so, please contact me by e-mail or otherwise. Some of the themes we want to address in the future include Quaker connections with the contribution of Martin Luther King, Jr., the Friends Peace Testimony during an age of terrorism, Quaker convictions on the character of sacramentality, and seeking truth as a living reality.

The latter theme will be the subject of our upcoming QTGD meetings in Toronto, and I would be happy to receive proposals for papers to be presented on that subject by the middle of September. Our sessions will be held in Toronto, Canada, November 22-23, and information on the exact location of our meetings will be posted on our new website: <http://theo-discuss.quaker.org/>. We want to thank Susan Jeffers for managing the website for us, and again we welcome her to the Advisory Council of *Quaker Religious Thought*. For our Friday evening session (7:00-8:30pm), we will host a substantive review of Doug Gwyn’s book, *Seekers Found: Atonement in Early Quaker Experience*. For the Saturday morning session (9:00-11:30am), our subject will be: “Seeking Truth as a Living Reality,” and this subject follows directly from our discussions last year, where approaches to historiography and scientific investigation were engaged with a fair amount of energy.

Just one more comment, now, on this being the 350-year anniversary of the beginning of the Quaker movement. Who could have known the sorts of impact that would be made by a group of people in Northwest England three and a half centuries ago, as they sought to respond to the truth of God as faithfully as they could? Not only was the Christian movement affected, but the world beyond has also been touched by the witness of Friends over the years. My hope is that *QRT* and its readership might play at least a small role in keeping that vision and witness alive.

Thank you for reading, and thank you for engaging these important subjects!

—Paul Anderson,
Editor