

BORG

Marcus J. Borg is a fellow of the Jesus Seminar and a progressive religious author. He holds a D.Phil. from Oxford University and is the Hundere Distinguished Professor of Religion and Culture, an endowed chair at Oregon State University. He lectures widely and often appears in the national news media. He has been president of the Anglican Association of Biblical Scholars and a columnist for *Beliefnet*. A best-selling writer, Borg is among the most widely known and influential voices in progressive Christianity.

Borg was born in 1942 into a Lutheran family of Swedish and Norwegian descent, the youngest of four children. He grew up in the 1940s in North Dakota, and attended Concordia College, Moorhead, a small liberal arts school in Moorhead, Minnesota. While at Moorhead he was a columnist in the school paper and held forth as a Conservative. After a close reading of the Book of Amos and its overt message of social equality, he experienced a political conversion and immediately began writing with an increasingly liberal stance. He did graduate work at Union Theological Seminary, and obtained master's and D.Phil. degrees at Oxford under George Caird. Anglican Bishop N. T. Wright had studied under the same professor, and many years later Borg and Wright were to share in coauthoring *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*, an

amicable study in contrast. Following a period of religious questioning in his mid-thirties, and numinous experiences similar to those described by Rudolf Otto, Borg became active in the Episcopal church, in which his wife serves as a priest.

Borg advocates entering into relationship *with* God as more important than belief *about* God. He has a panentheist understanding of God, which sees God as both indwelling in everything and transcendent. He teaches that a historical-metaphorical approach to the Bible is more meaningful for today's world than is the historical-grammatical approach or that of biblical literalism. He also distinguishes between the pre-Easter Jesus, who was a Jewish mystic and the founder of Christianity, and the post-Easter Jesus, who is a divine reality that Christians can still experience personally.

Borg does not believe that the Bible has to be taken literally if it is to be taken seriously. Indeed, he purports that truths can be found in the many messages and metaphors of the Bible stories even though he states that such stories may not have actually happened at all. Rather than asking what the events in certain New Testament stories actually were, he challenges his audience with another question—what effect must this man Jesus have had on the people he came into contact with for so many rich stories to have been written about him after his life?

