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**Response to Calvert**

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To the Editor:

Calvert has a legitimate complaint. I declared her book was “important” but said not enough about why. Calvert establishes the sway of Quaker thought in the Constitution by showing that Quakers initiated the idea of a perpetual popular regime changeable only by peaceful, if disruptive, persuasion. She also shows that John Dickinson used these ideas to urge ratification of the Constitution in his *The Letters of Fabius*.

She also shows the religious reasons why the Quakers in Pennsylvania invited many different people to settle, yet kept rule to themselves. While revealing the exclusivity of Quaker rule, she argues “. . . until the eve of the American Revolution their hegemony provoked frequent attacks, but these too only strengthened it (169).” In fact, the Quaker Party shattered in 1764 and was shaky in the 1750s, and ultimately the regime collapsed spectacularly, becoming in the 1770s America’s first failed state as Peter Silver has shown. Calvert overstates the effectiveness of Quaker welfare to win over Pennsylvania residents, as opposed to French intellectuals. Therefore, it becomes unclear whether Dickinson’s cautiousness reflected Quaker political ideas or was a response to the chaos they produced.

Calvert presents Dickinson as a quasi-pacifist but, according to her own portrayal, his position was that subaltern groups had the right and obligation to peacefully challenge and nullify unjust laws and then, when the defied authority sent armed enforcers, to mount a violent defense. This is closer to the views of John Adams than to those of Martin Luther King, and was a recipe for revolution.

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