AN EXPLORATION OF BRITISH QUAKER LIFE STORIES/FAITH JOURNEYS: 'PERFORMATIVE BELIEF' IN A PLACE OF BELONGING.

BY

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Abstract

The study focuses on contemporary British Quaker Members and Attenders. By listening to or reading the life stories/faith journeys it has been possible to gain primary resource material. The material responded to the research question about the roots of Quaker association. The study involved 48 interviews and 85 written accounts in response to requests to Quaker Meetings. The study found a group of people who were attached to their Meetings and were open to continuous transformation in a communal context. The importance of respondents' background and experiences, including religious ones, was paramount in their becoming associated with Quakers. This included continuity and coincidences in experience. Believing for them was 'performative' rather than propositional and was as much socially fundamental as it was individual. The people received a lot from Quakers but there was reciprocity. There was a deep spiritual sense rather than adherence to any grand theological narrative. Quakerism was considered in the light of such metaphors as 'bridge', 'journey' and 'story'. The study concludes that Quakers are uniquely attracted to a place of belonging, where they feel a sense of arriving and continuing to search. I propose that this combination be called a 'summative and formative experience'.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the dialogue with Professor Pink Dandelion over two years and for the careful comments of Dr Amy Daughton.

I am grateful to the many Meetings that provided material in various forms.

Lunch has been provided and sitting round and talking and listening has been a great privilege.

Peggy Heeks died towards the end of the study. It is people like her that have been most helpful.

Erica my wife has been supportive and patient, not least in looking for Quaker Meeting Houses which has not always been easy as they were built to be secretive.

I am happy to be a mature student. Following Albert Schweitzer, I have taught and learnt at the same time and sometimes in the same institutions as was the case with Schweitzer.

I am grateful to my wife quoting the lyrics from an Enya song [*My life goes on in endless song*] in a ministry after those over seventy were told to isolate themselves due to the coronavirus.

Holton,

Oxford

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INTRODUCTION

The Religious Society of Friends, like many other faith groups, can be placed against a generally declining number of adherents. This factor has been considered in the light of what many refer to as a secular society. Secularization is a contested concept with a variety of interpretations. Some look for a particular moment when church decline started[1], while others look for a plethora of factors such as urbanization, increased leisure, consumerism, television, sporting events, or a critical approach to religious matters. Hugh McLeod is sympathetic to this more general approach.[2] Callum Brown and Michael Snape have provided a useful collection of studies on secularization.[3] While some continue to subscribe to the secularization thesis,[4] others are inclined to think differently. It is not that people have become more secular but that they have moved their spirituality away from the church. Grace Davie made the phrase 'believing but not belonging' popular in the 1990s.[5] Steve Bruce considers that it is not secular ideas but 'the general relativism that supposes that all ideologies are equally true that is significant'.[6] Whatever the factors the decline is of concern; this specific study of Quakers is of academic value to those interested in the reasons for people associating with such a group. It is worth observing how Quakers present themselves to others and how they

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[1] Callum Brown considers that there was a decisive moment in the 1960s when women began to leave the church, which had an effect on children attending. See Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge,2000). Steve Bruce considers the seeds of decline to be a lot earlier involving the effects of The Second World War in *Secularisation: in defence of an unfashionable theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,2011), 73.

[2] Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf (eds.) *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe 1750-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[3] Callum Brown and Michael Snape (eds.) *Secularisation in the Christian World: essays in honour of Hugh McLeod* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

[4] Bruce, *Secularisation*, 3.

[5] Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: believing without belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

[6] Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: secularisation in the west* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 117.

welcome others to their Meetings. It takes two people to engage in a welcome, with one as welcomer and the other as the welcomed. These two positions interacted and came together in this study. The study is concerned with how and why people became associated with Quakerism, which I found to be fascinating, and consider it to be significant to other faith groups within a secular society.

Quakers enjoy asking the question about why they are Quakers. A badge was produced with the caption, 'I'm a Quaker, ask me why?'[7] This shows that they are content with their distinctiveness. When people visit a Meeting for the first time it is common to be greeted with the question 'Have you been to a Meeting before?' There are certain things that people need to know before entering the Meeting with its arrangement of benches or chairs. In relation to the question on the badge this is exactly what I asked. The question was asked because it is a significant one for Quakers, as many people join later in life, coming with assumptions and wishes. They may transform the mood of the Meeting. It is appropriate to enquire about motivation when it may change the identity of the Meeting.

The study allowed Quakers to speak about what was familiar to them. As with other religious people early experiences were significant; the Meeting was a key attraction, as was social action expressed through the Meeting. There is much debate in Quakerism about what is understood by 'god' with theist and non-theist positions. The study allows the reader to probe current links between Quaker life stories, practice, and belief.

[7] An example of the badge forms part of the poster in Appendix J

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A characteristic of Quakers is the way that they question what is being suggested. The study looked at life stories/faith journeys. Some felt unhappy with the concept of 'journey' as this assumed an end position. A lot was learnt about Quakers from the way they participated in the study. While some observations were to be expected there were others which provided an intriguing new perspective.

The above comments need to be placed in the context of the people who were self-selecting for this study. The average age of those participating was 69.[8] These people may have come to Quakerism as birthright Quakers but also later in life. The latter are particularly useful when addressing the question of motivation for journeying with Quakers in later life.

What we have is a snapshot of a specific group that has not been studied before. By analysing in-depth interviews and accounts I have been able to work with a substantial degree of 'thick description'.[9] People were willing to participate in interviews and provide written accounts. They felt that the topic was worthwhile and indicated that they would like to read about the results. It was possible to share the final draft thesis with respondents, which allowed for a continuing dialogue. I was fortunate to be in the position to follow up leads and feel privileged to have such an interesting and thoughtful cohort from various parts of Britain, predominantly the south. At a personal level, the aim was to share my story through the journey of others.

[8] This can be placed in the context of the average age of Quakers which is 64. see British Quaker Survey: Section E Question 39 http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/national-quaker-survey.html [accessed 5/11/2018].
[9] See Clifford Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Hutchinson, 1975).

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

I searched for literature that had addressed the topic of contemporary Quaker life stories/faith journeys, while reflecting on the sort of literature that had influenced my thinking and prepared me for the study. As the literature has played such an important part in the research design there are places in this chapter where I have indicated how the methodology developed in the context of the literature. The literature and the methodology are so intertwined that I consider that appropriate and beneficial to the reader.

The literature review provided a stimulus for the study and a contextual framework for the methodology. The first section outlines the surveys that were conducted between 1990 and 2018. These covered a wide range of questions relating to Quakers and provided a background to the study of Quakers in the twenty-first century. The second section draws attention to the case studies that were collected from Quaker Meetings and from work published by individuals. This was a valuable source of data and provided a window into what it means to be a Quaker. The third section draws attention to congregational studies which formed the methodological background to the study. Following this the importance of performative belief and aspects of Quaker studies are outlined. Key texts such as *The Quaker Condition* are introduced. The question as to why people became associated with Quakers has

been asked before and thus a starting point was a literature review. Here it is a case of the literature contextualising the design of the research, as it was drawn upon to provide pointers.

1.1 Surveys

Quantitative studies have analysed data relating to Quakers, including questions as to why they attend. Those that are listed below relate to the Britain Yearly Meeting. There was however an American study by Kenneth Ives in 1980[1] which catalogued the reasons for people attending Meeting under eight types, with the main reason being open worship and belief and secondly inner light. This is mentioned here as the focus of Ives' study is reminiscent of mine and indicates that the research focus has been there for nearly forty years. It was possible to compare the areas that were similar to Ives' study and then to see what was new in my research, this being the use of narrative in the interviews and the written accounts.

1.1.1 Pink Dandelion 1993

Dandelion provided a sociological study in 1993 of Quakers concluding that the structure of the organisation is very much fixed even if the theology is not. Reference is made to a behavioural creed with a de-emphasis on belief. He speaks of the 'absolute perhaps'.[2] This can be compared to Douglas Kline who suggests that Quakers do not rely on a common

[1]Kenneth Ives. *New Friends Speak: how and why they join Friends in the mid 1970s.* Studies in Quakerism 6. (London: Friends House, 1980).
[2]Pink Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers: the silent revolution* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1996), 307. Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins, *The Quaker Condition: the sociology of a liberal religion* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publication, 2008), 34.

theology but emphasise common practice and liberal theology.[3] The conclusions of Dandelion's study were descriptive of the situation, so it is ironic that some people have considered the conclusions to be prescriptive, arguing that Quakerism is not a notion but a way, suggesting that there should be a movement from orthodoxy to orthopraxy.[4] The confusion of what is the case with what ought to be the case commits the naturalistic fallacy, and is a lesson for researchers to be aware of how their conclusions can be received. The study involved a questionnaire with 692 respondents and follow up interviews involving thirty-seven people which lasted between one and five hours per interview. My study does not attempt to replicate that of Dandelion, and the research question is different. There is no questionnaire as the quantitative element has been limited and effort put into the qualitative dimension. Instead of collecting answers from a questionnaire, responses were collected in oral and written form, with the unusual sought beyond the expected. Placing these interpretations of life stories alongside the conclusions of Dandelion's research one is reminded that he concluded belief stories can only be 'perhaps'.[5] He also wrote that his emphasis 'is not on the individual…but on the collective expression of individuals within the group'.[6] While this was also true of this thesis in that it dealt with Friends, both Members and Attenders, it allowed individuals to retain their identity apart from the group. However the communal element was found to be central to the findings.

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[3]Douglas Kline, "The Quaker Journey and the Framing of Corporate and Personal Belief," *Ethos. Journal of the Society of Psychological Anthropology* 40.3 (2012): 277-296.
[4]See a comment by Henry, "Not a Notion but a Way," *The Friend*, November 23, 2018, 10-11.
[5]Pink Dandelion, "Those Who Leave and Those Who Felt Left: the complexity of Quaker disaffiliation," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 17.2 (2002), 225.
[6]Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis*, 34.

1.1.2 Alastair Heron 1992

This comprised a survey of those who had been welcomed into Membership in 1992 in Britain Yearly Meeting.[7] Three hundred and thirty-four people were contacted, being a 60% return comprising 75 males and 125 females. The gender ratio of those approached was 40 to 60%, that of those responding 37.5 to 62.5%. The survey included age, routes to the Quaker Meeting, and religious positions. The questionnaire included a list of 'features of Quakerism' for respondents to tick as 'attractive'. The study was also concerned with issues of membership.

1.1.3 Peggy Heeks 1994

Heeks produced a statistical study of twelve Quaker Meetings in 1994,[8] which included a percentage breakdown of the expectations of those who wished to join Quakers. There were two significant preferences, with 44% listing a spiritual base and 31% fellowship.

1.1.4 York Study 2000

Friargate Friends were asked why they attend Meeting for worship in 2000 and 53 of them replied in writing. A selection of factors was included, centering around the common themes of peace, worship, and fellowship.[9] Many of the comments and analysis reflected other studies. One comment that was somewhat different was that 'Certain of the persons

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[7] Alastair Heron, *Now We Are Quakers: the experience and views of new members* (York: Quaker Outreach in Yorkshire, 1994).

[8] Peggy Heeks, *Reaching to Community: a story of twelve Quaker meetings* (Tyne and Wear: Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, 1994).

[9] David Rubinstein, *Faithful to Ourselves and the Outside World: York Quakers during the twentieth century* (York: Williams Sessions, 2002): 195.

interviewed were aware that their changing perceptions of the Religious Society of Friends reflected changes in their own personalities and outlook with the advancing years'[10]. One concluded: 'My perception is that there hasn't been as much change in the meeting as there had been in me'.[11]

1.1.5 Rosie Rutherford 2003

Dandelion's survey was repeated in 2003 by Rutherford, involving 485 respondents from British Friends. Rutherford has suggested British Quakers can be divided into three groups; traditional Quakers, secularised Quakers, and Inner Light Quakers.[12] It shows that Quakers are diverse in their religious beliefs, which will become evident in my study. It also shows that it is difficult to assign names to groups, a practice that has been avoided in this study, with themes and categories being preferred when commenting on the data.

The work of Dandelion and Rutherford was compared in an article by both of them and Mark Cary.[13] This observed that the response rate in the 2003 survey was 'substantially higher than in the first survey'.[14] The comparison of the two surveys showed a number of changes such as an ageing group of people with 'The median (middle value) age as estimated from the categories increased from 51 years to 64 years'.[15]

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[10]Ibid., 216.
[11] Ibid., 216.
[12]Mark Cary and Pink Dandelion, "Three Kinds of British Friends: a latent class analysis," *Quaker Studies* 12.2 (2007), 148.
[13]Mark Cary, Pink Dandelion, and Rosie Rutherford, "Comparing Two Surveys of Britain Yearly Meeting: 1990 and 2003," *Quaker Studies* 13.2 (2009): 238-245.
[14]Ibid., 239.
[15]Ibid., 240.

1.1.6 British Quaker Survey 2013

In 2013 the British Quaker Survey was undertaken,[16] which asked similar questions to those of 1990 and 2003. Jennifer Hampton has provided a valuable analysis of the data,[17] which showed evidence of change since the earlier surveys in the level of belief. It divided respondents into three groups entitled Traditional; Liberal; Non-theist. It included values held by those completing the questionnaire as well as information relating to class and employment. This again is valuable background material. Although mine is not comprehensively quantitative it has been possible to comment on gender, age, occupation, previous attendance at a religious centre, and education.

1.1.7 Francesca Montemaggi 2018

Recent research was undertaken in 2018 by Francesca Montemaggi.[18] There were 225 respondents to questionnaires and in addition the data set included 19 interviews over the phone or on Skype. The report was entitled *The Changing Face of Faith in Britain: how should Quakers respond?* Part one drew together material that gave an overview of the changes that have taken place in religion generally. Part two was entitled *The Spirituality of New Quakers.* The work was carried out by the Quaker Committee for Christian & Interfaith Relations and revolved around those who had been attending for less than three years. New Quakers are seen as seekers; they feel 'at home' being accepted as individuals; they value

[16] http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/national-quaker-survey.html[accessed 5/11/2018].
[17] Jennifer Hampton, "British Quaker Survey: examining religious beliefs and practices in the twenty-first century," *Quaker Studies* 19.1 (2014): 7-136.
[18] Francesca Montemaggi (ed.) *The Changing Face of Faith: how should Quakers respond?* (London: Quaker Committee on Christian and Interfaith Relations, 2018).

silent worship; they are involved in social activism in the wider community; they value the Christian roots of Quakerism; and they do not come from any particular new group or spiritual background. The conclusion drawn states that it has 'provided a glimpse of the most salient narratives among new Quakers today',[19] and contains moving accounts provided by the respondents.

While the surveys outlined above have contributed a great deal 'counting and correlating statistical variation in survey opinions does not offer understanding of the meaning of lives'.[20] The literature thus provided a spur to create a research design that would be robust enough to go beyond the figures to discover why it is that people became associated with Quakers. The way Quakers prefer to answer their own questions has influenced the open-ended nature of my study [see 2.4]. Roger Homan and Dandelion wrote regarding some of the hazards of questionnaires about religions, concluding that 'The questionnaire is inevitably the more exclusive of deviations of belief and the interview the more accommodating'.[21] The surveys provided a wealth of detail including gender balance, education, occupation and religious background. In particular they provided data that initially showed statistically why people were drawn to Quakerism. I believe the current study went beyond this but placing such statistics at the forefront helped to make clear the area of study that was to be achieved. The quantitative surveys were complemented by a qualitative approach that examined at depth the

[19]Ibid.,31.
[20]Eileen Campbell-Reed and Christian Scharen, "Ethnography on Holy Ground: how qualitative interviewing is practical theological work," *Journal of Practical Theology* 17. (2013), 234.
[21] Roger Homan and Pink Dandelion, "The Religious Basis of Resistance and Non-Response: a methodological note", *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, 12.2 (1997): 213.

experience of those coming to Quakers. To do this entailed a style of interviewing that developed that found in Dandelion and Montemaggi.

1.2. Publications

I discovered that material had been created by Meetings in relation to why people became Quakers, deserving a place alongside the surveys. The Leicester Quaker Press produced four booklets of lives, providing in-depth studies. They were however accounts by the individuals themselves without an overarching question, although they did have the advantage of an interview format, and thus provided a prototype for my research.[22] Reading Meeting also has a similar series of published booklets.[23] Quakers in Wales published *Towards the Source* which included a spiritual journey.[24] Judith Fullard Smith edited a *Kindlers* book entitled *Explorations: discovering a spiritual way* in which twelve accounts from a Meeting were brought together,[25] providing a template for further study. It would have been good to have followed the single Meeting exemplified in the book by the *Kindlers*, but a wider perspective was decided upon. A single Meeting that produced a book was that of Watford which also provided over 50 tape recordings which formed the backbone of their book.[26] There are also a number of American examples but I decided to restrict this study to Britain.[27] There were from time to time a number of entries in *The Friend* and *Quaker Voices* and *Friends Quarterly*

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[22]Leicester Friends Meeting, *My Life. My Faith* Volumes 1-4, edited by Marilyn Ricci (Leicester: Leicester Quaker Press, 2010-12).
[23] Reading Quaker Meeting, *Reading Quaker Journeys*, 2nd edition. Reading: Reading Quaker Meeting, 2016.
[24]Meeting of Friends in Wales, *Towards the Source* (Wales: Meeting of Friends in Wales, 2014).
[25]Judith Fullard Smith, (ed.) *Explorations: discovering a spiritual way* (Aberdeen: The Kindlers, 2015).
[26]Watford Quaker Meeting, *(Mostly) After the Tin Hut. In our own words: a history of Watford Quaker Meeting* (Watford: Watford Quaker Meeting, 2011).
[27]For an American example see Christine Aqoub, *Memories of the Quaker Past. Stories of Thirty-seven Senior Quakers* (available at Friends House). See also David Pulford, *How I came to Quakers.* (1993).

which appear under the title 'Why I am a Quaker?'.[28] In the case of *The Friend* these were often interviews with a well-known person. These are interesting and useful guides; it is however at the molecular/granular level that ordinary folk can contribute their thinking and emotions to the study. This is to consider sociology in terms of a micro-interactionist approach. Such an example was that of Trevor Dorey who wrote of his journey from being an Anglican vicar to a Quaker. He said that 'The Spiritual Journey is a restlessness of the heart, a solitary search for the roots of our identity, for the Ultimate Reality that gives meaning to all things including our own self'.[29]

I found it useful to select some of the published life stories, which drew attention to early influences, incidental events that were significant, as well as what attracted them. An example was the spiritual journey of Tony Philpott,[30] who admitted that much of the book followed a relatively intellectual approach but he also tried 'to refer to experiences in my own life'.[31] The book is a useful reference point in terms of what a contemporary extended study of a spiritual journey might be. Another study involved a theological reflection upon the lives of the writers, namely Timothy Ashworth and Alex Wildwood.[32] Ashworth reflected on his move from Anglicanism through Catholicism to Quaker. He reflected on his own experiences within the context of the way some Quakers are said to view Christianity, thus combining

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28See Sheila Mosley, "If Asked 'Why am I a Quaker, How am I a Quaker?': this is what I say." *Quaker Voices* 1.5 (2010): 2. This title incorporated the how and why of the study title.
29Trevor Dorey, "A Journey from Believing to Beloving," *Friends Quarterly* 2 (2018): 38. The title allows a play on the more familiar couplet of believing and belonging.
30Tony Philpott, *From Christian to Quaker: a spiritual journey from evangelical to universalist Quaker* (Winchester: Sarsen Press, 2013).
31 Ibid., 114.
32Timothy Ashworth and Alex Wildwood, *Rooted in Christianity: open to new light* (Woodbrooke Study Centre: Pronoun Press, 2009).

account of his own life with a reflection. A number of those interviewed did the same but the majority have it done for them in my study. Ashworth's way of writing provided a sampler for commenting on others. Wildwood described himself as a child of the sixties becoming an atheist before coming to Quakers. He made the comment that 'The simplest account I have heard of Quakerism is from the British Friend Carole Hamby who described it as "a life lived under guidance"'.[33] He concluded his introductory account asking 'Paradoxically, it is my very sympathy with the Quaker commitment to truth that leads me to question whether newcomers such as myself may not be subtly or blatantly distorting the traditional ways of Friends'.[34] He reflected on his own position and how it may apply to others. These life stories have provided a framework for asking the question as to why people became Quakers.

1.3 Congregational studies

The roots of this study grew from congregational studies, with church decline being one of the factors that contributed to its popularity. Researchers were anxious to record the remaining members of congregations while they were able to do so. Declining congregations have thus led to an increase in their study.[35.] The next footnote spanning two pages lists in chronological order writers who have contributed to this area of study.[36]

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33 Ibid., 34.
34 Ibid., 35.
35Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 19.
36Jackson Carroll, Carl Dudley, and William McKinney (eds.), *Handbook for Congregational Studies* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1986).
James Wind and James Lewis (eds.), *American Congregations*: *new perspectives in the study of congregations*, Vol 2 (London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
Allison Stokes and David Roozen, "The Unfolding Story of Congregation Studies," in *Carriers of Faith: Lessons from Congregational Studies,* edited by Carl Dudley, Jackson Carroll, and James Wind (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 183-192.
Nancy Ammerman, "Telling Congregational Stories," *Review of Religious Research* 35.4 (1994): 289-301.

1.3.1 Congregational studies: handbooks and associated materials

Nancy Ammerman et al. produced a useful guide to the academic study of congregations.[37] Her book enabled the reader to engage in practical theology, getting in touch with the congregation's context. This may involve exercises such as tours of the area where the congregation is found as it may be the case that those attending did not live in the area, which may have implications in terms of social class. Another exercise is a 'timeline' of the history of the church which can identify significant events in the formation of the congregation, such as the introduction of gas lighting allowing for the development of an evening service. I have found the part of her handbook on church story particularly useful when analysing a congregation. Robert Schreiter considers that members 'may provide a healthy counterbalance to the leaders' view of the congregation's past and present'.[38] This is certainly the case in many churches and is also evident in the interviews with Quakers. Here is a case of

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Nancy Ammerman, Jackson Carroll, Carl Dudley and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations: a new handbook* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1998).
Lyon Brynolf, "What is the Relevance of Congregational Studies for Pastoral Theology?" in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, edited by James Woodward and Stephen Pattinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000): 257-271.
James Nieman, "Attending Locally. Theologies in Congregations," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 6.2 (2002): 198-225 and later "Congregational Studies," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology,* edited by Bonnie Miller-McLemone (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), chapter 12.
Edwin Aponte, "Issues in Congregational Studies," *The Quarterly Review: A Journal of Theological Resources for Ministry* (the United Methodist Publishing) 24.1 (2004): 97-103.
Matthew Guest, "The Local Church: developments in congregational studies," *Contact. Practical Theology and Pastoral Care*, 147 (2005): 18-24.
Matthew Guest, Karin Tusting and Linda Woodhead, *Congregational Studies in the UK: Christianity in a post-Christian context* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). See in particular Peter Collins, "Congregational Narratives and Identities. A Quaker Case Study", pp. 99-112 in this publication.
Helen Cameron, Philip Richter and Douglas Davies, *Studying Local Churches* (London: SCM, 2005).
Paul Chambers, *Religion, Secularisation and Social Change in Wales: congregational studies in a post Christian society* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006).
[37]Ammerman et al, Studying Congregations.
[38]Robert Schreiter, "Theology in the Congregation: Discovering and Doing," in Ammerman, *Studying Congregations, 29.*

listening to find out whether the official position has an under story. Making a similar guideline Schreiter suggests that 'it is important to distinguish between the explicit official theologies and the implicit theologies a congregation might have'.[39] Congregational studies explores the way ordinary members of a church approach and understand their involvement with such a faith community. I made the celebration of ordinary experience as part of the research design. Schreiter reminds readers that 'We are the proverbial fish that does not notice the water'.[40] The value of visiting congregations in order to understand 'some of the distinctiveness of the congregation to which you are giving your primary attention'[41] can be applied to studies where a variety of congregations are explored. The handbooks such as the one selected here provide material that is used to undertake thick description, thus conveying meaning in a situation, which initially may be hard to interpret. Brynolf Lyon concludes that 'What congregational studies is presenting to us, in other words, is increasingly "thick," hermeneutically sensitive understandings of congregational life'.[42]

Carriers of Faith edited by Carl Dudley et al. is subtitled *lessons from congregational studies*. It provides useful insights that have been carried forward into the current study. James Wind and James Lewis consider that 'Common memories are becoming less common – a sign perhaps of encroaching amnesia'.[43] For them 'Each congregation needs a common memory if

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39Ibid., 31.
40Ibid., 82.
41Ibid., 83.
42 Brynolf Lyon, "What is the Relevance of Congregational Studies for Pastoral Theology?" in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral Theology*, edited by James Woodward and Stephen Pattinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000),260.
43James Wind and James Lewis, "Memory, Amnesia, and History," in Dudley et al, *Carriers of Faith*, 16-17.

it is to endure'.[44] This can be compared to the concept of a chain of memory which is central to the work of Danièle Hervieu-Léger.[45] The significance of memory in congregations is emphasised when it is said that 'If congregations are communities of memory, then congregational history ceases to be a quaint topic to be farmed out to anniversary committees and retirees with time on their hands'.[46] Wind and Lewis consider that 'repressed memories, hiding under the facade of amnesia, can powerfully shape a community's life'. [47]

Linda Clark referring to churches noted: 'The favourite hymns of a person or a community are not "about" the faith of the people; they *are* the faith'.[48] I used this as a guideline when talking to people since I needed to distinguish between what was necessary for understanding a spiritual journey and what was an accompanying characteristic. James Wind gives a list of questions that can be asked in congregational studies and I have found it useful to return to these.[49] Here are a selection:

Who were the people who created this congregation?

What questions or problems have caused conflict in the congregation?

When has it experienced dramatic changes in membership?

Where did this congregation's members come from?

Why did this congregation come into being?

How has power been distributed in this congregation?

44Ibid., 17.
[45]Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press/Polity Press, 2000).
46Ibid., 25.
47Ibid., 26.
48Linda Clark, "Hymn-Singing: the congregation making faith," in *Carriers of Faith,* edited by Dudley et al., 56.
49James Wind, *Places of Worship: exploring their history* (Walnut Creek: Altimara, 1997), 40-43.

Some books in congregational studies have a more philosophical approach to the central issues. Langdon Gilkey refers to Paul Tillich and summarises his arguments as follows:

> the Protestant churches, bearing only the religious principle of prophetic criticism, are vulnerable to an inner emptiness and hence to a capitulation to the surrounding culture, that is, to receiving from bourgeois culture their sacred substance, namely nationalism, capitalism, patriarchalism, rationalism, and a middle-class ethos.[50]

The congregation needs to build its own position rather than have it dictated to by what it opposes, which would apply to Quakers.

1.3.2 The value and application of congregational studies

Congregational studies allowed individuals to express their views and provided a snapshot picture of a group of faith believers. The approach explored what motivated believers to attend and gave a picture at ground level with more thick description than might have been the case if interviews and observation focused mainly on the clergy. This is a matter of listening at the margins rather than the centre, and as Ruard Ganzevoort comments 'Still others see narrative research as a way to allow marginalized stories and voices to be heard, firmly placing their practical theological endeavour in the tradition of liberation theology'. [51]

Congregational studies often referred to different groups of people in one church. The church leaders propose a set of beliefs whereas the different groups may hold contradictory views. Martin Stringer provided a study of four Christian congregations in Manchester, making the

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[50]Langdon Gilkey, "The Christian Congregation as a Religious Community," in Wind and Lewis, *American Congregations*, 101.

[51] Ruard Ganzevoort, "Narrative Approaches," In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie Miller-McLemore (Chichester: Wiley- Blackwell, 2011), 256.

important point that there is often an official and an unofficial discourse.[52] Individuals may present what he/she expects the interviewer to want to hear and it takes time to hear the sub text.

The question as to how and why people became associated with Friends, whether as Members or Attenders, became of interest as a research focus. I was encouraged by Abby Day's comment that 'To understand more about 'why' people self identify with Christianity we should start with the social context: 'when', 'where', and 'how' they do that'.[53] There is a link between the questions asked by Day and the approach that was adopted in the interviews. The research was concerned with how and why, but the subheadings outlined by Day were implicitly present as were those mentioned by Wind above. It was felt that the research question could be answered at a deeper level by involving people from a variety of Meetings in Britain. Without this involvement the voice of many Quakers will disappear, this being a significant ontology to explore.

It is useful at this point before moving from congregational studies towards Quaker studies to be reminded as to the use that the latter can make of the former At times the study of faith groups can be assisted when the coded messages that people give out are examined.[54] There are avenues where the methodology associated with congregational studies can be applied to the study of Quakers. Congregations have been catalogued into five congregational self-

[52]Martin Stringer, *On the Perception of Worship: the ethnography of worship in four Christian congregations in Manchester* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 1999).
[53]Abby Day, *Believing in Belonging: belief and social identity in the modern world* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 19. Similar questions such as 'how' and 'why' are raised in James Wind, *Places of Worship*, chp. 3.
[54]Martyn Percy, *Shaping the Church: the promise of implicit theology*. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 28.

images. These are the 'survivor church' which tells of the difficulties it has experienced, the 'crusader church' which likes to pursue causes, the 'pillar church' which is rooted in the local community and works for it, the 'pilgrim church' reflects movement in the community and can be contrasted with the 'pillar church, and the 'servant church' which is there for people in need.[55] It may also be possible to discover a variety of self-images amongst Meetings.

The congregational studies movement was motivated to benefit churches and tended to be prescriptive, with references to 'social capital'. The developing studies were also of academic interest *per se.* This is an important distinction to make, as a lot of the published accounts are aimed to be didactic. This is appropriate but it does need to be born in mind especially when such material sits alongside the academic studies. The former may involve 'social capital' whereas the latter remain removed from such a consideration.

In summary congregational studies 'looks to the field of theology to attend not only to its customary focus on doctrines and texts but also to the less familiar but equally complicated matter of the ordinary, concrete ways people do theology through their actions, resources, gatherings, and so forth'.[56] This is an appropriate comment to draw from congregational studies and it leads into performative belief. It is just these aspects that appeal to people coming into contact with Quakers.

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[55] Carl Dudley and Sally Johnson, "Congregational Self-Images for Social Ministry," in *Carriers of Faith,* edited by Dudley et al, 105-6.

[56]James Nieman and Roger Haight, "On the Dynamic Relation between Ecclesiology and Congregational Studies," in *Explorations in Ecclesiology and Ethnography,* edited by Christian Scharen (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 2012), 25.

1.4 Performative belief (believing and belonging)

The next major area of literature concerned the nature of religious belief. Abby Day wrote about 'performative belief' understanding it to arise from and be shaped by social relations. She has written about the way belief is expressed by older women in the Church of England.[57] This revolves around what has been defined as Generation A. This is the group who were born in the 1920s and 1930s. The work involves participant observation with interviews. There is an interesting parallel with my research when someone approached Day to give her story; the fact that she came forward resonates with the snowball selection that can take place. Her book on Anglican women has been chosen as part of the literature review, as while the group comprised women it had similarities with the essence of my cohort. By considering the analysis of another group one may return with fresh eyes to the cohort in focus.

Her book *Believing in Belonging* provided the spearhead for some of my questions and discussions.[58] This book encapsulated arguments about believing and belonging found in the literature relating to belief and church attendance, and is a response to Grace Davie who considers that some people believe but do not always belong, while others belong but do not always believe.[59] This latter group would subordinate belief to experience. Elizabeth Collinge-Hill in a study of four denominations noted that 'Worship is serving the same

[57]Abby Day, *The Religious Lives of Older Lay Women: the last active anglican generation* (Oxford: OUP, 2017).
[58]Day, *Believing in Belonging.*
[59]Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: believing without belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). Within the context of Quakerism see Rhiannon Grant, "Wittgensteinian Investigations of Contemporary Quaker Religious Language" (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2014). [accessed 10/2/2019], 226.

purpose for people in spite of what they are supposed to believe'.[60] Day explored how people 'believe in belonging'.[61] In summary she said: 'The argument that forms the core of my work is that, in conditions of late modernity, belief to many people is an expression of how they belong to each other'.[62] This is a case of 'performative belief' which aligns with much of Quaker thought in that it enables a movement from traditional theological stances to a wider engagement with the way people express their spiritual journey. Day writes that 'Performative belief, as I am using it, has its own genealogy to which I am indebted …Austin, Butler, and Bourdieu. The contribution I make is to situate that performance more clearly in the social action of relatedness'.[63] Day wrote that performative belief is 'brought into being through action and where the object of worship is not an entity such as a god or society, but the experience of belonging'.[64] Performative belief has been of importance in the shaping of analysis in this thesis, moving away from doctrinal or propositional cataloguing. It explores situations where the elements of belief are present in new forms. By understanding the data as performative belief it was possible to see the significance of actions and events described by the cohort which might have been missed. Such newness characterised the Quakers in the early days and is experienced in the ministries of contemporary Meetings. It is writers like Davie and Day who have provided the background for exploring with people the way they link belief and action within a Meeting. A similar suggestion was made by Elaine Graham when she commented that 'Theology now becomes not an abstract series of philosophical

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60Collinge-Hill, Elizabeth, "The Experience of Worship: a study of worship in England at the millennium" (MPhil diss., University of Birmingham, 2001), 59.
61Abby Day, *Believing in Belonging; belief and social identity in the modern world* (Oxford: OUP, 2011).
62Ibid., 27.
63Ibid., 194.
64Ibid., 194.

proposals, but a performative discipline, where knowledge and truth are only realizable in the pursuit of practical strategies and social relations'.[65] It is the contextualising of literature such as this that has influenced the approach that is made to the collection of data. The performative element forms the focus rather than any doctrinal emphasis. It is often said that Quakers carry out their belief in terms of action which is why some Meetings were reticent to talk about their stories at first. Belief in belonging is a nuanced position and similar ones are explored in the analysis of the data. Such exploration is contextualised in the work of Day in particular. For her 'Within a social context are social relationships: performance belief plays out through the relationships in which people have faith and to which they feel they belong; to which I suggest, they adhere'.[66]

This study was carried out in terms of a narrative approach whether as interviews or accounts. It is appropriate to note that Ganzevoort considers 'A narrative approach then sees practices and stories more as performative than as representative'.[67] The framework in which the research was conducted benefited from having research practice and story/data brought together.

I placed the Quaker way of life alongside performative belief and the two matched. It needs to be noted that matching does not imply equivalence, with Quakerism having distinctive values. A somewhat similar area for matching alongside Quakers is that of everyday or lived

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65Elaine Graham, *Transforming Practice: pastoral theology in an age of uncertainty* (London: Mowbray, 1996), 90.
66Day, *Believing in Belonging*, 194.
67Ganzevoort, "Narrative Approaches," 253.

religion. The writings of Ammerman and Meredith McGuire outline this concept which examines how people practice their faith on a daily basis.[68] There may be ritual activities carried out in the home that express sentiments that would not be found in mainstream religious services or public contexts. This is a rewarding approach in many Christian groups but does not find a match with Quakers. See Chapter Nine for conclusions about performative belief and everyday or lived religion.

1.5 Quaker studies

1.5.1 Quaker studies by example

I will start with an example from Quaker studies in order to understand the use of a concept that influenced the conduct of the interviews. Importantly there is the work of Peter Collins and his use of the concept of 'habitus' which is adapted from Pierre Bourdieu.[69] Habitus involves the way people experience and learn from communities in which they find themselves, being reminiscent of socialization. Habitus is innovating and not only a case of repeating. Quakers gain from habitus [Compare French *habiter*: to live] in that they feel at home in the Meeting. New attenders learn to experience the silence and to understand the nature of ministry. In this context for me the library and the posters in a Meeting House are of importance.[70] There is the style of worship, the peace, the atmosphere, the bodily movements.

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[68]Nancy Ammerman (ed.), *Everyday Religion: observing modern religious lives* (Oxford: OUP, 2007). Meredith McGuire, *Lived Religion: faith and practice in everyday life* (Oxford: OUP, 2008).

[69]Peter Collins, "Habitus and the Storied Self: religious faith and practice as a dynamic means of consolidating identification," *Culture and Religion* 3.2 (2002): 152

[70] One respondent recounted how difficult she found it to change the frames and posters for the 'public-face 'of a Meeting House.

For Collins 'meaning is communicated through practice'[71] which can be compared to performative rather than propositional belief. It is however not a one-way process, as the individual brings his/herself to the Meeting and thus influences the habitus. As Collins states the habitus creates the individual and the individual in turn creates the habitus. This impacts on the way many people outline how they felt coming to Quakers in mid-life. They brought a depth of understanding that influenced the Meeting. Collins prepared the way for much of this study considering that 'We negotiate our identities as we negotiate a journey'.[72] Collins concluded 'However, we also experience a negotiation of identity that is co-terminus with social interaction – the sometimes pleasurable, often painful experience of seeing ourselves as others see us…We do not form our identities, religious or any other, alone'.[73] This aligns with Day when she comments that 'Belief like emotion, does not exist pre-formed in the individual but is relationally produced, suggesting resonance with an earlier meaning of belief - "be loved"'.[74] I was prompted by such emphases in the literature to look for the importance of relationship in the data, this being a case where literature sets the scene for examining the data. In the main it was the literature that assisted in the process. There were occasions where the data provided new insights. The balance between literature and data as the driving force can be seen in terms of a 'chicken and egg' situation.

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[71]Collins, "Habitus and the Storied Self," 151.
[72]Ibid.,147.
[73]Ibid., 147-148.
[74]Day, *Believing in Belonging*, 193.

1.5.2 Quaker studies and sociology

It needs to be remembered that '"congregational studies" is not, strictly speaking, a discipline'.[75] Neither is Quaker studies as both draw upon a variety of disciplines. I was aware that before looking for material relating to contemporary Quaker lives/spiritual journeys the material relating to Quakers in sociological and anthropological studies was of significance. [76] An important collection of essays is to be found in *The Quaker Condition.* [77] The book is divided into four sections which deal with identity, belief and values, meeting culture and diverse forms. All four aspects are significant for Quakers. While meeting culture is as important as identity, it is the latter that is in focus here, having been seen in relation to habitus. It was not a matter of receiving a given when it comes to identity, as people were involved in constructing their identity. This concept of a personal construct psychology[78] resonates with anthropologists like Collins whose understanding of Quaker identity is based on a social constructionist understanding of the self. Collins has contributed a section to *The Quaker Condition* concerned with identity.[79] This study is concerned with the stories that people tell about their lives and this can be linked to identity. As Ganzevoort writes 'Identity thus is not some essential quality that needs to be uncovered, but the story one tells about

[75]Wind and Lewis, (eds.), *American Congregations,* 3.
[76]Christopher Wess Daniels, "The Rise of Quaker Sociology," *Brill Research Perspectives in Quaker Studies* 1.1 (2018): 84-111.
[77]Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins, (eds.), *The Quaker Condition: the sociology of a liberal religion* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).
[78]George Kelly, *A Theory of Personality: the psychology of personal constructs* (New York: W W Norton, 1963), 12-13 and 174-183.
[79]Peter Collins, "The Problem of Quaker Identity," *Quaker Studies* 13.2 (2009)*:* 4-10.

oneself for a particular audience'.[80] The telling of story is partly how belief is formed and nourished.[81]

1.6 Implications of the literature review

Stroup points out that a person's identity is related to an interpretation of his/her past or life history.[82] Identity is central to this work and is explored by people as they tell their life story or spiritual journey. Frederick Heuser says that 'It can provide a sense of who we were, who we are now, and perhaps who we are becoming'.[83] Studies about telling one's story and recognising the story in other people include George Stroup[84] ; Collins[85] ; Gillie Bolton[86]; Alison Leonard[87]; Dandelion and Homan[88] Gil Skidmore[89] Eleanor Nesbitt[90]; Steph Lawler.[91]

Heather Walton considers that 'In this perspective human beings are seen as story-formed creatures whose lives take shape as they begin to employ the resources of narrative tradition

[80]Ganzevoort, "Narrative Approaches," 252.
[81] See Peter Collins, "The Problem of Quaker Identity," in *The Quaker Condition: the sociology of a liberal religion*, edited by Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publications, 2008):39, where he refers to the Quaker Meeting being 'alive…with stories'.
[82]George Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (London: SCM, 1981), 105.
[83]Frederick Heuser, "Getting in Touch with Our Roots: understanding Christianity, culture and community through local history," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 75.3 (1997): 2000.
[84]Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology.*
[85]Peter Collins, "Storying Self and Others: the construction of narrative identity," *Journal of Language and Politics* 2.2 (2003): 243-264.
[86]Gillie Bolton. *Writing the Spirit: material for spiritual exploration* (London: Quaker Home Service,1994).
[87]Alison Leonard, *Telling Our Stories: wrestling with a fresh language for the spiritual journey* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1995). *Living in Godless times: tales of spiritual travellers* (London: Floris Books, 2001).
[88]Pink Dandelion and Roger Homan, "Questioning Quakers," *Social Compass* 42.4 (1995): 487-495.
[89]Gil Skidmore, *Turning Inside Out: an exploration of spiritual autobiography* (Reading: Sowle Press, 1996).
[90]Eleanor Nesbitt, "Friend in the Field: a reflexive approach to being a Quaker ethnographer," *Quaker Studies* 4.2 (1982): 82-112. "Interrogating the Experience of Quaker Scholars in Hindu and Sikh Studies: spiritual journeying and academic engagement," *Quaker Studies* 14.2 (2010):134-158.
[91]Steph Lawler, *Identity: sociological perspectives.* 2nd edition (Cambridge: Polity, 2014).

to give shape to their own lives'.[92] The use of narrative moves away from propositional truth claims. [93] It is such contextualisation that informed the research. The significance of telling one's story came across in the comment that 'When meeting, members and attenders tell the story of how they became Quakers, they model for others a life guided by Quaker testimonies, responding to Fox's instruction to "let your lives preach"'.[94] Life stories are often placed within the concept of a 'journey' ; in this context Douglas Kline suggests that the journey acts as a trope in retrospect. He considers that 'The journey trope works to frame the diverse interpretations found among participants, and social cohesion is encouraged as Friends acknowledge the personal belief models of its participants with this frame'.[95] The data was analysed with concepts such as continuity and journey in mind. At this point it is appropriate to be reminded that metaphors underline much of the way stories are expressed.[96]

I have found congregational studies liberating as it allows ordinary people to present their views. *Studying Congregations*[97] provides examples and approaches. It is helpful in the way that it causes situations to be seen in a different light. A study from a local church where many travelled to London to work in high technology found that many wanted their hour of worship on Sunday to be as an oasis of calm in the midst of change. It prepared me to consider varying ways to talk to people and made me aware of the nuances in a situation. *Places of Worship* is

[92]Heather Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* (London: SCM, 2014), 165.
[93]Ibid., 164.
[94]Elizabeth Molina-Markham, "Lives that Preach: the cultural dimension of telling one's "spiritual journey" among Quakers," *Narrative Inquiry* 22.1 (2012): 20.
[95]Kline, "The Quaker Journey," 277-296.
[96]See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
[97]Ammerman et al., *Studying Congregations.*

also a useful handbook.[98] To refer to a handbook is something that might be associated with car mechanics. Academic study can be conceptual and abstract. While I value philosophical approaches there is a pragmatism to congregational studies. I am pleased to have discovered performative belief and the work of Abby Day. This has been valuable when approaching Quakers where doctrine may not appear to be at the forefront but where implicit religion has a place. The works mentioned in this section have given space to approach congregations in situ. The research question had been asked before as seen in some of the literature. I consider that I was able to provide a more complete picture and to encourage a depth of original comment. The study provided a contemporary picture for our time of a self-selecting group of Quakers that would be valuable historically. The research question can be contextualised in terms of how it was carried through, rather than the original nature of the question.

1.7 Thesis outline

The thesis asks again the question as to how and why people became associated with Quakers. Their quest can be contextualised against the background of The Religious Society of Friends being open to change with people coming new to the movement in later life. The roots of the research are to be found in the secondary resources consisting of previously published Quaker life stories/spiritual journeys. The context for the research is derived from the literature review. This forms a precursor to the oral and written accounts that have been obtained directly from approaching Meetings and are primary data. These responses are analysed to

[98]Wind, *Places of Worship.*

answer the research question. It is concluded that while some people have arrived, others are still searching. The implications of this for contemporary Quakers are examined.

The rest is structured as follows:

Chapter Two [Methodology, Research Context and Design] presents the methodology for the study, involving in depth interviews and written accounts. This is formed from the outcome of the literature review.

Chapters Three to Seven outline the data that was collected in relation to five categories and analyses the significance of this data to the research question. The analysis organised the data in categories and reconstructing the data interrogates that material.

Chapter Three [Selection of Background Influences] records and analyses the background influences present with those who became associated with Quakerism in my cohort. This includes the importance of patterning and continuity in experiences.

Chapter Four [The influence of the Meeting] outlines the impact that the Meeting has had upon respondents and analyses the significance of this impact. Topics include values, membership and belonging.

Chapter Five [Theological Responses] refers to the theological thinking that was present with respondents and comments upon it. A continuum of believing is outlined, with varying theological positions.

Chapter Six [The Place of Social Action] provides examples of the place of social action and considers how these impact on the respondents. Belonging is an important topic.

Chapter Seven [Reflections on the concept of 'life story/journey'] analyses the reflective thinking of respondents in relation to Quaker life stories and journeys. This is seen as a contested concept within the study. The concept of story and journey are considered as metaphors, and further ones explored.

Chapter Eight [Conclusion] is a concluding analysis of the data. It examines the meaning of homecoming. It also considers to what extent people are continuing to travel and the implications of this for Quakers. As a concluding chapter it indicates the extent to which the thesis has answered the research question and what might remain for future study.

Chapter Nine [Research Reflexivity] The postscript is a reflective chapter looking at the overall implications of asking the research question and addresses some of the comments that have been raised by colleagues.

Quantitative data is included in Appendix E.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the background to the research question as to how believing and belonging is part of the accounts that Members and Attenders have provided of their life stories/faith journeys. The introduction is placed within a literature review which points to the contextual nature of the research. The review examined surveys of Quakers, published accounts of people's lives and material obtained from Meetings. Congregational studies was the generic focus of this chapter, while Quaker studies is more specific in relation to the subject of the thesis. It is shown that congregational studies provide a useful approach to the exploration of faith communities such as the Quakers. Performative belief is seen as a significant dimension in the study as it reduces the domination of propositional belief. The chapter thus moves from the general to the specific. Credit is given to the value of analysing concepts such as 'habitus' which form a background to the data collection. The chapter concluded that there is room for a study that focuses on the life/faith journeys of individuals.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH CONTEXT AND DESIGN

This chapter outlines the methodology. The literature contextualised the area of research, moving to the collection of data, with both complementing each other. The literature introduces concepts that are explored in the collected data. Quaker Meetings were asked to provide life stories/spiritual journeys that they had in archives. The material reflected the nature of the initial request, that is it was selected in line with the research question. In the main the patterns were developed as a result of reflection in practice, while at times I saw new patterns. Even in those cases initial framing provided a stimulus, as facts do not speak for themselves, without prior value judgements. There were concepts at play as a backdrop to the methodology, research context and design. The material was analysed and coded to address the research question. Meetings were also asked for volunteers to provide interviews or written accounts. The difficulties of collecting material from Meetings is outlined. The volunteers were self-selecting, and this had a snowball effect as members suggested others. Those participating were asked to complete a consent form. Some of the possible weaknesses of the study are addressed in the account of the methodology.

2.1 Positionality of the researcher and theological stances that lie within the study. Theological positions can affect the way one looks at material and data. As with Thomas Kuhn[1] it is a matter of a mindset or knowledge paradigm. It involves reflecting on the habitus that has been absorbed and responding to it. One that is explicitly or implicitly present in my approach is that of Raimon Pannikar. Pannikar draws a distinction between Christendom, Christianity and 'Christianness'. The first shows the church as powerful, the second shows it as inward looking towards its own doctrines, whilst the third looks for the presence of 'Christianness' in practice.[2] The third position is a subtle one and implies that power and identification are given away. Quakers never aspired to the first position. The second position may have been the case during the first two centuries of the movement. The third position seems to be aligned more to contemporary Quakerism with the search for that of God in everyone. This has been commented upon, as with Simone Weil who said that 'The real aim is not to see God in all things, it is that God, through us, should see the things we see'.[3] While Pannikar is writing within a Christian framework the approach can be applied more widely. When it comes to looking for implicit religious aspects within a secular context the approach of Pannikar has much to offer. His argument can be linked to the concept of implicit religion as outlined by Edward Bailey.[4] Like performative belief implicit religion considers that some communal activities such as the pub or the football match can contain similar elements to those found in religious gatherings. Bailey compares the church and the pub in terms of the

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[1]Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
[2] Raimon Pannikar, "The Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges," in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: towards a pluralistic theology of religion*, edited by John Hick and Paul Knitter (London: SCM, 1987), 89-116.
[3] Quoted by Janet Morley, *The Heart's Time: a poem a day for Lent and Easter* (London: SPCK,2011),107.
[4] Edward Bailey, *Implicit Religion in Contemporary Society* (Kampen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1992).

solidarity of its initiates, the ritual of "having a drink" and the act of "being a man".[5] Of course this may be a case of people of faith aping the secular world, with secular culture being seen as more authentic.[6] I would prefer to agree with Martyn Percy when he notes that 'in implicit religion, the secular expresses the sacred in ways it has yet to come to terms with'.[7]

I was aware of making selections when interviewing and recording. Ruard Ganzevoort notes that 'When we tell our life story…we are actively negotiating what to include and how to frame it in such a way that it will communicate with our audience'.[8] At another level he notes that 'Inasmuch as the researcher engages with the field, he or she becomes a player changing it and supporting some participants' narratives over against others'.[9] One may not always be aware that an ideal is being presented rather than an empirical observation.

2.2 Initial approaches and sampling

The study is restricted to the Britain Yearly Meeting which has over 450 Local Meetings. In the first instance Local Meetings were contacted and asked if they had any written accounts of contemporary Quaker lives in previous newsletters or similar publications. I made use of the *Book of Meetings* (2015), and every Local Meeting in England, Scotland, and Wales was approached. The overall response rate, whether positive or negative, was 65%. Some Area Meetings had made collections of contemporary Quaker lives/spiritual journeys, with notable

[5] Ibid., 192.
[6] Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: secularisation in the West* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002),178.
[7] Martyn Percy. *Shaping the Church: the promise of implicit theology*. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 78.
[8] R. Ruard Ganzevoort, "Narrative Approaches," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, edited by Bonnie Miller-McLemore (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 252.
[9] Ibid., 256.

collections including Oxford, Milton Keynes, and Northamptonshire. Some Area Meetings had websites that contained examples of people talking about their journey. It was possible to visit some Meeting Houses and examine previous newsletters.[10] The result was 414 accounts dating from 1997-2015. These written accounts were very helpful in shaping the study. Drawing together this large collection, including material that would otherwise not be available, is itself significant before any analysis took place.

Where Local Meetings were able to suggest names to be interviewed or provide accounts these people were sent an invitation with an outline of the project [See Appendix A] followed by a consent form if they responded [See Appendix B].[11] There was thus a natural move from considering and examining previously collected accounts to searching for contemporary original ones. It was decided to focus the study on the interviews and accounts that took place from 2016-2020, with the use of earlier material only where it was thought to be particularly insightful.[12] The references to literature [3.7] are drawn from 1997-2020. The material since 2016 amounted to 48 interviews and 85 new accounts, with some use being made of a selection of accounts from *Quaker Voices* and *The Friend*. This made a total of 133 oral or

[10]See a list in Appendix I.

[11]For a comment on this process see Anna Bremborg, "Interviewing," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, edited by Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, 319-320. (London: Routledge, 2014), 319-320.

[12]Pre 2016 material has been drawn from the following *The Friend* (1979);*Friends Journal* (2009); *Warwick Meeting Annual Report*, (2009 and 2013); Anna Bretts and Lee Taylor (eds.) *My Faith in Practice: a series of talks by members of Milton Keynes meeting given between 1997 and 2003* (Milton Keynes: Milton Keynes Meeting, reprinted 2011): Ricci,(ed.) *My Life My Faith* Volumes 1-4; Don Rowe (ed.) *My Faith in Practice; more spiritual autobiographies by members of Milton Keynes Meeting*, Vol 2 (Milton Keynes: Milton Keynes Meeting, 2013); Meeting of Friends in Wales, *Towards the Source* ; *Quaker Voices* (2014); Tanya Garland (ed), *Introducing 31 Members and Attenders of Oxford Quaker Meeting* (Oxford: Oxford Quaker Meeting, 2008); Tanya Garland (ed.), *Introducing 21 Members and Attenders of Oxford Quaker Meeting* (Oxford: Oxford Quaker Meeting, 2010);

written accounts since 2016. The decision to make the material I had collected directly from Members and Attenders the central focus enabled the study to provide an original and contemporary picture of what attracted people to Quakerism. There was in fact no demonstrable difference between the earlier and more recent material.

In a few cases I was not able to obtain access due to a fifty-year embargo, this being the case with such publications of the *Hedyn*, that contained the minutes of the Friends in Wales. I have been able to engage with large numbers of Local Meetings which has resulted in a variety of viewpoints not possible in a small study. As data emerged across the spectrum of the Britain Yearly Meeting this confirmed a breadth to the research which is its strength.

At the outset not all were prepared to participate and an element of gate keeping took place.[13] I used the 'Message to Meeting Directly' from the Quaker Meetings website but some of these were blocked. Some did not want to see life as a journey as it has assumptions of progress or direction. A number quoted 'Let your *lives* speak' considering that this precluded too much talk about the issues. There is a hesitancy amongst some Quakers to give an account of their experience and position.[14] The reticence may be accounted for by the suggestion that Quakers do not exist for themselves alone and giving accounts could be seen as an

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13Pink Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers: the silent revolution* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 52 points out that 'Democratic gatekeeping can be complicated'. For problems associated with research see Roger Homan and Pink Dandelion, "The Religious Basis of Resistance and Non-response: a methodological note," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 12.2 (1997): 205-214.

14Harvey Gillman and Alastair Heron (eds.), *Searching the Depths: essays on being a Quaker today,* 2nd edition (London: British Yearly Meeting, Quaker Home Service, 1998).Compare Leslie Francis, Rosamund Burke and Mandy Robbin who suggest that Quakers are introverts, in "Quakerism: A Faith for introverts?" *Pastoral Psychology* 51.5 (2003).

unnecessary focus on the self [5.2.3 for *kenosis*]. What appeared a set back developed into an understanding of the Quaker approach to the research question from different angles. It was those who were most negative who provided insights for consideration. Sometimes the more sceptical Clerks and Members were in the end the most helpful because they and the researcher struggled with the core elements of the research. In one case the Clerk asked a nearby Local Meeting whether I was 'kosher'. Having provided evidence from the University made it easier for the neighbouring Local Meeting to join in. This reminds me of the comment that Dandelion made remembering that 'When one Quaker Meeting had concerns over my motives and character, it was able to contact another Meeting who knew me better, for more information.' [15] Just as there was an element of mistrust between me and the Meeting so too comments were made on an inter-Meeting basis, with people finding some Meetings more welcoming than others. The research experience shaped the way data impacted upon the study. Such experience shaped questions and thus affected the areas to be explored. It can be noted at this point that visits to mid-week meetings and other events provided alternative routes. In my case where every individual counts these occasions often provided a new contact. It was very moving talking to Quakers in their old Meeting Houses.

It took time for some people to respond but this was beneficial for them and many considered that the exercise was a valuable one and wanted to read the research when it was finished, which took place. I put an advertisement in *The Friend*, but this only achieved one result with the nature of the study needing a more personal approach which was the case elsewhere. I

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15 Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers*, 41.

benefited from presenting a paper at the Quaker Studies Research Centre Student day and producing a poster for the virtual conference at the Birmingham College of Arts and Law [see poster in Appendix J].

It is worth considering the way the selection of contributors took place, this being a combination of purposive and snowball sampling,[16] rather than being randomised. It could also be described as convenience or homogeneous sampling. Gary Thomas[17] argues that self-selection is not sampling but Alan Bryman[18] counters this and discusses self-selection and snowball sampling where one participant suggests another. The data collected is not intended to represent a wider group and thus can be considered as non-probability rather than probability sampling. It is appropriate to observe at this point that those people participating in the research are typical of Quakers in general in terms of gender, higher education, occupation, and religious background, with an older average age of five years [see Appendix E].

Overload of data was present, and this can be explained by the intrinsic interest of the contributions. While people were willing volunteers it seemed ungrateful to refuse. The snowball effect was self- perpetuating. It is important to ask about the nature of the sample as this influenced the conclusions that are drawn at the end. The researcher may be talking to like minded people and thus find what is anticipated.

16Compare Giselle Vincett et al., "Young People and Performance Christianity in Scotland," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 27.2 (2012): 9.

17 Gary Thomas, *How to Do Your Research Project: a guide for students*, 3rd edition (London; Sage, 2017), 142-3.

18 Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 2nd edition (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 100-2.

2. 3 Interviews

Some interviews were at the home of the interviewee and sometimes the interviewer. In a few cases I met with the person in a café or museum, with notes taken during the interviews. A schedule of questions was constructed but were rarely needed as people were willing to talk about their lives and often included the material that was hoped for. I would agree with the suggestion of Homan and Dandelion 'That as much use be made as possible of open-ended questions.'[19] I would agree with Thomas when he observes about interviews that 'An unstructured nature of the interviews made them like a conversation. There is no predetermined format to the interview beyond your general interest in the topic'.[20] The conversational nature of the interviews allowed for a rapport to be established. [21] Narration makes neat what is messy and disjointed without being distorted. Telling stories and giving theological interpretation is of course central to religions. It is impossible to cut back to bare facts and the way people interpret and comment on life is part of the story itself. The interviews lasted from half an hour to an hour and a half. People were thanked in writing after the interviews and complimented for their contribution. The interviews were on a one to one basis, with some cases where people presented their spiritual journey in a small group at the Meeting. Such presentations have been analysed from one Meeting.[22] It is not just a case of

[19]Homan and Dandelion, "The Religious Basis of Resistance and Non-response," 213.
[20] Thomas, *How To Do Your Research Project*, 205.
[21] See Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 477.
[22]Molina-Markham, "Lives that Preach: the cultural dimension of telling one's 'spiritual journey' among Quakers", *Narrative Inquiry* 22.1 (2012):20.

describing what arises in the interview but being aware of the feelings that may influence the content of the contribution.

2.4 Written accounts since 2016

The collection of written accounts was different in that there was no control over the material being offered. In the main it followed the oral accounts and benefited from being an uninterrupted piece of work. In the case of written material some carried opinions about issues important to them and one included a series of stories. Others provided copies of talks and letters of application to be Members. The difference between the written accounts and the interviews is in fact a strength. Early interviews may influence later ones in that new questions can be included in the later interviews. It is possible to draw contrasts between interviews and written accounts, with the former involving some dialogue and the latter being more conclusive. The general themes cut across both, as did the unusual comments. The two complement each other rather than clashing.

Lawler makes a powerful observation saying that people read back their current experiences into earlier accounts of their lives. She writes that:

> So, identity is not something foundational and essential, but something *produced* through the narratives people use to explain and understand their lives. We tend to see the self as continuing as the same thing through time, and to see this as deriving from some characteristic (s) of the self itself. But, for Ricoeur, the reason we see the self in this way is because we constantly tell and retell stories which *produce* it as something continuing through time.[23]

[23]Steph Lawler, *Identity*, Sociological Perspectives, 2nd edition, (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 30.

We reflect on memories and open them to interpretation. For Lawler ‘memories are themselves social products. What we remember depends on the social context’.[24] The accounts can be placed in the context of journaling where experiences are recorded. Life writing is when experiences shape identity. Such accounts contain epiphanic moments of transformation [25] which provide the context for further exploration of such experiences in the research. The 2018 research study states that ‘There was a tendency amongst respondents to ignore all the options listed in the survey and opt for ‘other’ so that they could provide control and give specific information’.[26] My current research allowed this to happen from the outset, with the earlier studies providing a back drop to the current one. The 2018 report states that ‘Respondents took the opportunity to talk about their own lives, often at length, which provides a large and more nuanced picture of their spiritual and religious identity and experience’.[27] This clearly happened in my work.

2.5 Style

It is possible to learn from accounts of people’s lives that come in the form of *Testimonies to the Grace of God in the Life of* [deceased Friends]. The intention of a testimony is outlined in the 2018 Yearly Meeting as follows: ‘A testimony should radiate the Grace of God as shown in the life of the Friend who has passed from this world. There is a temptation to link these talents to a career path, and hence border on an obituary. Rather it is spiritually inspired

[24]Ibid., 30
[25]Heather Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* (London: SCM, 2014), 6.
[26]Ibid.,2.
[27]Ibid.,5

application of the talent for good that matters'.[28] One respondent added that: '*As with the journey trope, what's inside "directs" next move rather than external god'*.[29] This sentiment has influenced the accounts in that people attempt to rise above attention to the person and seek for grace. This leads to ethereal comments that are characteristic of Quakers. Ethereal incorporates a mystical approach where people attempt to place their lives in such a framework. The style often gives the impression that people are writing in the third person about themselves, that is that they saw their lives as part of a pattern [3.5]. Parallels can be drawn with autoethnography where personal experiences are set in a wider context. Walton notes that 'how we represent "the other", is highlighted within autoethnography, and this is particularly important as we bring our stories into public worlds'.[30]

2.6 Recording the data

In relation to data I am attracted to the comment of Eileen Campbell-Read and Christian Scheren when they write:

> However, van der Ven argues empirical theology includes a prior step of "theological induction" in which the researcher "dives into the water of the data" and emerges with a "theological problem" or research question to guide the next steps and therefore the whole research trajectory is framed from within a theological horizon.[31]

I have returned on a number of occasions to the data, and the description of being immersed in it resonates.

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[28]*Epistles and Testimonies*, compiled for the Yearly Meeting (London: Friends House, 2018). Compare Gerald Hewitson, *Journeys into life: Inheriting the stories of our early friends*. Swarthmore Lecture 2013 (London, Quaker Books, 2013),1.

[29] Field Work record 131: Interview.

[30]Walton, *Writing Methods*, 9.

[31]Eileen Campbell-Reed and Christian Scharen, "Ethnography on Holy Ground: how qualitative interviewing is practical theological work," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 17. 2 (2013):238.

The data recorded was both qualitative and quantitative. This would suggest that mixed methods were selected, this being done in order to legitimate and elaborate the material. An example of a similar use of mixed methods can be seen in Jean Russell's study of two United Reformed Churches.[32] The quantitative material in this study was recorded under the headings of age, gender, occupation, religious affiliation, and current location and tertiary education. It was not possible to record every person under these headings, although it has been possible to derive an overall picture. The qualitative material was coded in relation to the content. The study did not commence with a *tabula rasa*, with the codes drawn up in the light of the responses to the interviews and accounts. About fifty headings were brought into groups of five [see appendix D], these being superordinate groupings, or selective coding. Thomas calls this theme mapping and notes that 'Once you have established your themes you go through your working data files and look for good quotations that illustrate those themes'.[33] Once the material had been coded it was possible to explore the range of data and consider the significance and weighting of it. Many of the categories were what one might expect from a group of Quakers, with the unusual comments tending to stand out. Several research writers refer to reflective observation influencing further experimentation,[34] this being the case with this study. Reflection influenced the data collection and coding, and further collection and coding allowed for more reflection with a continuous cycle.

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32 Jean Russell, "Negotiating the Flow: an ethnographic study of the way two URC congregations shape and are shaped by members" (PhDdiss., University of Birmingham, 2015). http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/6244/ [accessed 7/11/2018].

33 Thomas, *How To Do Your Research Project*, 246.

34 David Kolb, *Experiential Learning* (Englewood Cliff: Prentice Hall, 1984).

2.7 Experiences that impacted on the report of the study

2.7.1 Group interviews

Some Meetings invited me to conduct group interviews, which could be described as focus groups. The approach here as with all the interviews was curious and facilitative, rather than challenging and interrogative. These were most moving, and participants shared ideas while I took notes. I would agree with Eleanor Nesbitt that at this point 'both researcher and researched inhabit a shared cultural space'.[35] *Quakers Sharing Experience* involves half day sessions. I asked several Meetings if I could attend and I understand why most thought it inappropriate as it is a 'home' experience, with one Meeting agreeing that I could attend.

2.8 Ongoing reflection

It is sometimes the case that during the writing of a project an incident occurs that focuses thinking. One such was the article by Simon Jenkins in which he reported that at the annual gathering of Friends 'they are reportedly thinking of dropping God from their "guidance to meetings"'.[36] This raised several responses from Quakers, and at a personal level I received copies from people who knew I was writing about contemporary Quakers and thought the article was of interest. Just like the publication of *Honest to God* by John Robinson in 1963 [37] it brought theological issues into the mainstream for discussion. It is incidents such as this that

[35]Eleanor Nesbitt, "Friend in the Field: A Reflexive Approach to Being a Quaker Ethnographer," *Quaker Studies* 4.2 (1999), 83.
[36]Simon Jenkins, "The Quakers are right: we don't need god" *The Guardian* 4th May 2018. 5.
[37]John Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM, 1963).

provide prompts for discussion and shaped the approach to the data. It is appropriate to include such at this point as it has become part of the story.

Another disclosure caused me to reflect on the nature of belief. During a visit to a Quaker couple I have known for years discussion arose about a person in their road who often told them of their illness and asked for prayers. The couple assumed that the neighbour thought they were religious and were somewhat amused by this. Close to this encounter I read the following in Abby Day:

> once we stop analysing whether people are more or less religious, we can turn to the proper questions: what do people in a certain place and time believe in and how are those beliefs sourced, valued, practised, and integrated in other parts of a social life? In so doing we can reclaim belief as both a religious and a non-religious term.[38]

The couple in question did not see themselves as religious. When one considers their daily lifestyle, one is aware of a special way of seeing and acting in the world. One can draw parallels with Michel de Certeau who argues that 'everyday practices, "ways of operating" or doing things, [should] no longer appear as merely the obscure background of social activity…'[39] He also commented that 'Analysis shows that a relation (always social) determines its terms, and not the reverse, and that each individual is a locus in which an incoherent (and often contradictory) plurality of such relational determinants interact'.[40] This would apply to the daily activities of the couple in question. An interviewee wondered how the couple would have responded if asked to hold the person in the Light, considering that we

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38Abby Day, *Believing in Belonging: belief and social identity in the modern world* (Oxford: Blackwells, 2011), 202.
39Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Living*, trans. By Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xi.
40Ibid., xi.

may select which labels to appropriate to our actions. This is important when researching religion as what we think we would interpret as religious is not always the same as what others would.

The above discussion drew me back to John Hull and his argument that it is in the no-man's [sic] land between people that one can discover the significance and meaning of actions.[41] Hull compared this to a money culture where it is the way that money is used that gives it significance. The coins themselves do not have significance until used in the play that takes place between people. This leads to an emphasis on relationships, a concept that has become central to theology.[42] When interviewing there are comments that attempted to re-create the importance of relationships. People attracted to Quakers may be finding such relationships and quality of living.

Sometimes when least expected one comes across an idea that impacts on one's own writing. This happened to me when I attended a lecture on disability by Tom Shakespeare.[43] He referred to his research in this area as 'emancipatory research'. It can be emancipatory for people to tell their story. I would like to see this study fulfilling both academic and emancipatory/liberating roles. Nobody has approached Quakers in quite the same way and for that alone the methodology is commendable. Rowan Williams encouraged historians 'to look

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41 John Hull, "Editorial. Spiritual Education and the Money Culture," *British Journal of Religious Education* 17.3 (1995): 129-132 and "Editorial. God, Money and the Spirituality of Education," *British Journal of Religious Education* 18.2 (1996): 66-68.

42 See for example Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: a pastoral doctrine of the trinity* (London; Dartion Longman and Todd, 2000).

43 Adderbury Lecture, June 17th, 2018.

for a "plot" in the record, this being a focus for the study'.[44] Freire is quoted as considering that groups do not always know their plot and need to find meaning in their changing story.[45] The analysis leads to an awareness of where Quakers find themselves and provides insights into understanding a plot.

2.9 Reflection on the Methodology, Research Context and Design

The thesis is not just a collection of life stories, interesting as that would be, but it allows a theological reflection upon the stories as narrative theology. In the main this was conducted by the researcher, although there were times when respondents made theological comments upon their own experience and that of others. In the early part of the 2014 Swarthmore lecture Dandelion notes that 'As British Friends today, we are not practised at sharing our stories, we may find our own experiences less clear-cut, and our accounts of spiritual experience may use a different theological language'.[46] There seem to be two strands here. One is concerned with the telling of stories and these are evidenced in the study. The other is how the stories are told and the interpretation put upon them. Dandelion goes on to say that 'We interpret our experience in different ways and construct different doctrinal distillations, which we place over the core insights of our shared and underlying theological narrative'.[47] My experience was that the respondents in the study did consider their core thoughts and tried to interpret them. It is open to criticism to say that only those people wanting to do this volunteered. Whether the insights are placed within a theological narrative is another matter. Grand

[44] Rowan Williams, *Why Study the Past? the quest for the historical church* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 2005),23.
[45] James Hopewell and Barbara Wheeler, *Congregations: stories and structure* (London: SCM, 1988), 198.
[46] Pink Dandelion, *Open for Transformation.* Swarthmore Lecture (London: Friends House, 2014), 11.
[47] Ibid., 11.

narratives may not find the place they once did. The respondents do not belong to the category labelled Traditional Quakers, holding traditionally Christian attitudes, identified as 32% of the 2013 British Quaker Survey in Jennifer Hampton's analysis of the survey. [48]

2.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology. At the outset, the positionality of the researcher was presented. The chapter then indicated the various stages that were taken to follow through the research, with the focus on exploring why people became associated with Quakers. These included sampling, interviews and written accounts, coding, and analysing data. The use of varying methods, both written and oral is considered a strength which formed the unique basis of the study. The use of stories was an innovative approach. While survey answers cannot be accurately inferred from stories, they provide an insightful snapshot that rewards their use. It became clear that it was not a matter of exploring doctrinal concepts but rather focussing on the way people lived out their understanding of faith in belonging through experience. The researcher was able to engage and share in this experience Insights that came from the data caused further reflection. There was thus a recurring combination of data collection and reflection.

[48]Jennifer Hampton, "British Quaker Survey: examining religious beliefs and practices in the twenty-first century," *Quaker Studies* 19.1 (2014): 28-9.

CHAPTER THREE

SELECTION OF BACKGROUND INFLUENCES

This chapter drew attention to the background influences that have assisted in making the people who they are. 91% of interviewees referred to their background and 55% of those writing an account did so. Many of those writing started with where they were at that moment.

This chapter is divided into ten subheadings as follows:

1 Early background **2** Education **3** Later background **4** Experiences

5 Patterning through experiences **6** Lapses **7** Influence of literature

8 Quotations used **9** Influences – family influences; iconic figures; positive/negative influences **10** The effect of the 1960s

3.1 Early Background

In the case of those able to remember the Second World War, the interviews often started with this.[1] For many it was war time rationing which continued until midnight on July 4, 1954 that they remembered. It was moving to hear one person in a group discussion tell of how her mother worked hard to meet the material needs of the family whilst not always finding time to

[1]Field Work record 103: Interview. The Field Work record number refers to the number under which it was filed. 1-85 are written accounts and 86-133 are interview notes.

express emotion.[2] It was however deeper than this, there being an atmosphere that related to the war, with some interviewees having themselves been conscientious objectors.[3] Others knew of family members who had had to carefully negotiate the sort of activities that they participated in. This concern with issues of war often emerged at a later stage in their lives indicating a continuity of concern. The Second World War had an influence on unemployment and poverty, with one person remembering having to live on £10 a month and her mother providing food for her and her husband.[4] This has coloured the way many people think about needs, there being discussions about the rebuild of a Meeting House as to whether this was necessary. The testimony of simplicity that lies behind this is something that attracted people to Quakerism.

The sample was asked about their early background and in the case of those providing an account of their life most saw this as significant. While this may have been an obvious starting point the way that recipients mentioned early background makes it more than just a convention. In many cases there was a church background consisting of regular attendance, with three times a day not unusual. A phenomenon that was common to those in their 80s was that of moving from one church to another, with one person commenting that she was involved with the Church of England in Wales but also went to the Methodists as it was more fun. The ability to move may be a precursor to movement into Quakers. The majority of interviews and accounts referred to a background in churches, with only a few highlighting non-religious backgrounds. This reflects the 83% that are recorded as coming from elsewhere

[2]Quakers Sharing Experience session in Leicester, February 2nd2019.
[3]Field Work record 88: Interview.
[4]Field Work record 89: Interview.

and converting into Quakerism according to the British Quaker Survey.[5] While many comments about early connections with church were positive, this was not always the case. Comments tended to be specific as with the person who drew attention to the lack of explanation of why an '*Ancient of Days*' was '*pavilioned in splendour*'.[6]

Some of the above comments are descriptive in nature, there are however Quakers who can reflect on the significance of an early childhood background. One wrote '*As I approach my 89th birthday, I will attempt to look back and to discern significant aspects of those years that have contributed to who I am, and where I am currently on life's journey*'.[7] She went on to refer to her experiences in a foster home, her lack of '*connecting'* or '*belonging'* and her eventual lifelong friendships at the national Presbyterian Church of England Youth Conference. She compared the latter with the inspiration gained by '*young Quakers on their return from JYM!*'[8] Looking back she was grateful for the care and commitment shown to her and her friends by adults during those formative years '*and most of all for the open and honest discussion within a liberal framework*'.[9]

It was possible to observe the roots of Quaker ideas in the way that people commented on the past. Thus while describing her mother and the way a copy of *Desiderata* was evident in her house the observation was made that '*With hindsight I can see that I was formed far more by*

5Jennifer Hampton, "British Quaker Survey: examining religious beliefs and practices in the twenty-first century." *Quaker Studies* 19.1 (2014): religious upbringing chart. [4% non-Christian and 10% non-religious].
6Field Work record 63: Account. Material collected from 2016 is in *italics.*
7Liz Wilson, "Reflection on a Life Lived (Thus far)," *North East Thames Quaker Newsletter,* October – January 2016. n.p.
8Ibid.,
9Ibid.,

how my parents lived than by what was, or was not said'.[10] Quakers talk about living out their faith and the above observation fitted well with this. There were many examples where commentators could find implicit examples of Quakerism in their childhood, this being a tangential connection. A detailed one occurred in the person who recounted how a teacher would always carry out important events in a special room. The commentator remembered this for many years until he learnt that the head-teacher was a Quaker and could on reflection see that the teacher was adding significance to the moment.[11] As with many people Quakers remember holidays as significant, with one interviewee referring to the influence of the sea which was still significant as she lived a long way from it at the time of the interview.[12] This impression of early memories provides a framework that has lasting powers, such frameworks equating with Quaker ways of seeing the world.

The way that one was supposed to act in relation to others was significant. One referred to her grandmother indicating that it was felt appropriate to be humble and even servile.[13] This has carried with her throughout life and in a society made of university people she still felt out of place, not sharing the 'cultural capital' of the group, which had an influence upon her as a Quaker. A birthright Quaker felt he had gained an inferiority complex from his early upbringing. [14] It is not easy to know where a value such as humility came from and whether it can be attributed to a background that led to Quakerism. Here is a frequent issue of which came first, the Quaker influence or one that easily fitted into a Quaker dimension. As with

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[10]Field Work record 66: Account.
[11]Field Work record 120: Interview.
[12]Field Work record 89: Interview. She died towards the end of the study having provided much help.
[13]Field Work record 87: Interview.
[14] Field Work record 92: Interview.

habitus, people learnt to curb their aspirations and live within their limits. Parental influence was significant especially when linked to Quaker Meeting. One interviewee in her eighties distinctly remembered walking to the Quaker Meeting pointing out that this was a '*serious thing*'.[15] The methodology of the unstructured interview allowed for comments such as that about being humble/servile which would not have been gained by a questionnaire or from the more popular literature about Quakers. It is a 'strap line' such as this that contributed to the original nature of the data. The *Quaker Sharing Experience* afternoons[16] allowed for a depth approach, with people sharing the significance of events in their early background.

3.2 Education

Education was significant for many people, including Quaker schools such as Sibford. Quaker Education in England and Ireland lists 12 schools. It is however interesting to see the various reactions to Quaker education. One interviewee suggested that she did not learn at a Quaker school[17], and bullying in such a school was commented upon. It is observations like these that build up the under story. Many loved Quaker schools and considered themselves privileged to be birthright Quakers.[18] Indeed in general birthright Members were sure of their position, a central plank in how and why people became associated with Quakers. In the 2013 British Quaker Survey 17% were born into a Quaker family.[19] In my study 28% were brought up in Quaker families. I was asked at the poster conference [Appendix J] whether the

[15]Field Work record 99: Interview. She died towards the end of the study – a wicked sense of humour.
[16]Quaker visitors introduce a series of activities that are intended to assist the members and attenders of a Meeting to reflect on their past and current experiences of what it is to be a Quaker, which is close to the aim of this study.
[17]Field Work record 91: Interview.
[18]Field Work record 104: Interview.
[19] British Quaker Survey http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/national-quaker-survey-html[accessed] 5/11/2018] BQS Question 7 where the answer referred to Family discussion/upbringing.

upbringing made a lot of difference. This is an important question but one not explicitly covered in the study, although there are some pointers. In this context the comment was made *'You probably know the proverb that "it takes a village to raise a child". Growing up Quaker was rather like growing up in a very lovely village*'.[20] While the people appear to be concerned about the memory of strict and particular experience, they have a curiosity to them which could emerge as a reason for people being attracted to Quakers. In relation to education a significant comment was made by someone who considered that for him there was much self-help education in Meetings.

3.3 Later background

While it is arbitrary to distinguish between early experience and later life experiences there may be a difference in quality and content and impact. Augustine pointed out that we may write into the past interpretations that suit.[21] This said there were occasions mentioned that are worth recording and commenting upon. One spoke of working in Nigeria and then being sacked but considered it a blessing.[22] Howard Grace wrote of 'Initiatives of Change' and commented that we are speaking from maps.[23] The construction of a map may be necessary to make sense of our experience. Grace went on to comment '*So the experience is the same, but the maps are different*'.[24] He considered that we are trapped in our own narratives, suggesting that it would be creative to try and live into the narratives of others. I would

[20]Tim Gee, "The Inner Light: Tim Gee reflects on his faith and living as a friend." *The Friend,* September 28, 2017, 11.
[21]Augustine, *Confession*s, translated by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: OUP, 1911), especially Book 10.
[22]Field Work record 86: Interview.
[23]Howard Grace, *Questioning Answers,* 2nd edition 2016 [photocopy from author], 9.
[24]Ibid.,

suggest that this can happen when listening to ministry in a Meeting. Quakers relay what they hear from others and make the content become part of their own experience, this being what it means to live into the narratives of others.

Some experiences remained significant, with one respondent commenting that he began to read the New Testament and was amazed by Jesus, his Jewish brother.[25] He used to read in the Manchester University Library and remembered looking at the poster on the outside wall of the Friends Meeting House opposite. It is interesting to note how many Quakers first experienced other communities such as Findhorn and Taizé, and the place of community was a recurring theme in the data [see chapters eight and nine]. A lot of thought was put into the way individuals wrote about their experiences. Commenting on different stages of his life one wrote 'So there's another minor paradox here. Rejecting religion as a teenager was a hugely and genuinely liberating experience; but so was finding a version of it again nearly forty years later'.[26]

3.4 Experiences

It was often the case that those providing accounts included experiences that affected their thinking and their approach to Quakers. That is why they are included, rather than being unique to Quakers. It is that they are considered significant on the journey to Quakerism. This may have been experiences in Africa or that of a landlady who was a healer. There was an

[25]Field Work record 3: Account.
[26]Fred Holroyd, "Don't Shy away from Infinity: but don't assume we understand it," in *My Faith in Practice: more spiritual autobiographies by members of Milton Keynes Meeting.* Volume 2, edited by Don Rowe (Milton Keynes: Milton Keynes Meeting, 2013), 31.

attempt on the part of some to resonate a particularly memorable experience with others in their life. Some experiences had a profound effect. Pink Dandelion wrote about his experience of being loved:

> *I felt lifted up and cradled by what I have called God…Since that time, I have lived an accompanied life. God is with me, and I know this in George Fox's terms, experientially. Thus I became a lapsed atheist kind of Quaker*.[27]

Another similar experience was outlined by someone who wrote, '*Then I had an experience which made me aware of the connectedness of everything, which enabled me to spring that trap [traumatic bereavement] too*'.[28] One spoke of having several mystical experiences and considered that she alone of her siblings had the religious gene.[29] Some people drew attention to the experience of others although they very much identified with them. Thus one wrote, '*The testimonies call for imagination in social practice, like the nurseryman who gave away tomatoes rather than castigating his awkward neighbour reluctant to make good a damaged fence*'.[30] People couched their experiences in traditional Quaker language, with one person who wrote about Woodbrooke[31] said: '*Suddenly I saw an intense light and love streaming from high up on the left, overwhelming, beautiful, joyful*'.[32] A second experience was in the snowclad foothills of the Himalayas in Nepal. These experiences can be compared to those held by the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre based at Lampeter, University of Wales. One about a childhood experience in a quiet lane can also find parallels

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27Pink Dandelion, "Quaking with Confidence", *Friends Journal* (December, 2009), 2 https://www.friendsjournal.or/2009133/ [accessed 7/5/2017].
[28]Field Work record 6: Account
29Field Work record 126: Interview.
30Field Work record 63: Account.
[31] Woodbrooke is the Quaker Study Centre, which occupies the former home of George Cadbury in Birmingham
[32]Field Work record 70: Account.

in the Centre's archives. [33] A peak experience was recorded after bereavement. Another spoke of an overwhelming feeling of love which was even painful. Such an experience was considered enough to be placed in the context of comments about the after-life. In contrast to some religious people who are said to have had a sudden experience, in this study a number pointed out that they had not had such a Damascus Road one.[34]

Specific events were considered significant when they spoke outside the rest of experience. Quakerism can of course work the other way and people have commented on the way it helps people interpret everyday experience. [35] One of the attractions of Quakerism for people is the way that there is an authentication through experience. Two such people who became Quakers have however considered that does have elements of existentialism. Peter Brown considers that:

> *One of the main problems of a theology based on experience is whether one can have pure experience without a conceptual framework. And even if one could, any communication of the nature or implications of such a religious experience would depend on a shared language.*[36]

3.5 Patterning seen through experiences

While it may be that the nature of this exercise led to people looking for patterns in their lives, it is appropriate to outline some of these patterns. One person reminded herself that her father wanted '*a northern experience*'[37] as this was felt to be beneficial in terms of relations with others and adopting values, a quality that shone through in this person. On several occasions

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[33]Records of Alister Hardy Centre, now at Lampeter.
[34]Comments at Quaker Sharing Experience half day at Leicester Meeting on February 2nd 2019.
[35]Ibid.,
[36]Peter Brown, "The Image of Jesus," *The Friends Quarterly* 33.7 (2003): 343.
[37]Field Work record 99: Interview.

people saw a link between the values of their early experiences and those held by them as part of Quakerism. One saw a continuity between her mother being at Greenham Common and the peace testimony. Some patterning continues with another in a theological context. This person said he was '*inspired in this by the ancient Jewish saying that when you take off the masque of God it is only to find another one*'.[38] One of the most familiar elements of patterning was the comment that people had come home, expressing the belief that one was always a Quaker but did not realize it. As one person put it '*I did not so much become a Quaker as discover that I am a Quaker*'.[39] As another noted '*Quakers were always there somewhere in the background of my life*'.[40] One can compare this with the comment of Montemaggi's when she noted: 'This contrasts with the narrative of intentionality that can be found amongst evangelicals. The overarching narrative of finding home thus stresses continuity rather than change'.[41] Sign posts are sometimes referred to specifically as with the person who suggested '*I later found that there had been signposts along the way that I hadn't been ready to see*'.[42] Another spoke of seeds being sown early in his life when he looked back.[43] Patterning can include absence as one person suggested that '*We discover God in different ways at different stages of our lives, and sometimes God does not seem to be there at all*'.[44] Looking back many people referred to encounters, often chance ones, such as in a particular Summer Gathering.[45]

38Field Work record 3: Account.
39Kingston Quakers website http://kingstonquakers.org/voices-of-kingston-quakers [accessed 10/5/2017]
40Field Work record 73: Account.
41Francesca Montemaggi, *The Changing Face of Faith in Britain: how should Quakers respond?* Part 2 *The spirituality of new Quakers* (London: British Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke, 201), 13.
42Jennifer Kavanagh, in Westminster website http://www.jenniferkavanagh.co.uk/quaker [accessed 10/5/2017]
43Part of group sharing.
44Cheltenham Quaker Meeting website http:www.cheltenhamquaker.org.who.php [accessed 11/5/2017]
45Field Work record 63: Account.

People placed their thinking in a wide context. One interviewee in his nineties shared with me an account he had prepared for his family. He had written that:

> *Trade cycles are repetitive; empires rise and fall; political careers peak and decline, battles are won and lost; hubris is followed by nemesis. Knowing why these things happen is useful in decision-making but does not necessarily provide guidance to the future because the circumstances are always different. The Greek thinker Heraclitus wrote "No man ever steps into the same river twice. It's not the same river and he's not the same man". Change is constant…*[46]

Here the possibility of seeing patterns in an individual's life is lessened in the larger mosaic. As with many aspects of this study there were those who probed or added a new dimension to the question. One linked with patterning the idea that there are many possible autobiographies, while for some the patterning could have led in a variety of directions. For those looking for a mystic dimension to Quakers this can be found in the patterning. The word mystical is used in the following: 'There are times in your life when the path you find yourself on seems to unfold effortlessly, almost mystically before you, when timing or a sequence of events falls into place with little effort or consideration'.[47] In this context seeing the Quaker Meeting House from the bus was considered a gentle nudge, as was the inter-church Christmas letter which resulted in someone becoming involved in the local Meeting. Throughout this section we hear of self defining memories similar to those on *Desert Island Discs.*[48]

46Field Work record 124: Interview.
47Rebecca Stapelford, in *North East London Quaker News* (October 2014), 5.
[48] See research study by Catherine Loveday, a neuropsychologist, using *Desert Island Discs,* BBC Radio 4 12/7/2020. I felt the mood of her study to reflect mine.

3.6 Lapses

Many people came to Quakers after lapses in attending faith communities,[49] with Montemaggi recording: 'Therefore, although most respondents came from a Christian background, many of them were "lapsed" Christians'.[50] The lapse itself is important. It may be too dramatic to draw parallels with the dark night of the soul, but it is worth reflecting on lapses whether prior to becoming associated with Quakers or after. As well as the common comment that the person did not want to attend there were others. One such wrote *'I decided to try "not being religious" for a while. In some ways this was liberating. But I felt a sense of loss*'.[51] These two aspects sum up a profound experience. Bonhoeffer thought that people are called to be human and not religious, and he also found liberation in talking to non-religious people. This sums up the Quaker Meeting to which post lapsed people can attend. Numbers of people indicated that they had not always attended due to illness or the pressure of a career. Non-attenders can still feel held by the Meeting as Judy Dench pointed out in a BBC interview.[52] This could be compared to those who are happy that others attend on their behalf , what has been described as vicarious religion, a concept that is much disputed.[53] An interesting comment was made by an interviewee who said she had not always wanted to go as she did not wish to take.[54] Here we can see the responsibility that coming to Meeting can inspire,

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[49] For literature on church leaving see Lesley Francis and Philip Richter, *Gone for Good? church-leaving and returning in the 2lst century* (Peterborough: Epworth, 2007); Alan Jamiesen, "Post Churchgoers: and their place as emergent forms of church." *International Journal for the study of the Christian church*. 6.1 (2006): 65-78.
[50]Montemaggi, *The Changing Face of Faith*, 6.
[51]Field Work record 66: Account.
[52]Judi Dench, *Why I am a Quaker*. Youtube 'Judy Dench Why I am a Quaker' [accessed 15/7/2019]
[53]See Steve Bruce and David Voas. "Vicarious Religion: an examination and critique." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 25.2 (2010): 243-259.
[54]Field Work record 103: Interview.

while not coming to Meeting can lead to some unusual experiences. One said that 'I've tended to have periods when I've not come to Meeting very often and had a "blank blue sky period"'.[55] The metaphor of a jigsaw puzzle [the border and the main part] has been used to encompass busy periods and gaps. Gaps are creative which means that Quakers can return and bring back with them an embodied meaning gained from experiences elsewhere.

Some people were in the process of leaving because they felt that Quakers had lost their essence. One who felt this commented: '*The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing*'.[56] This person hoped that he would remain friends with the Meeting he was moving away from as a matter of principle. A Jewish couple had become Quakers but had also re-discovered their Jewish roots. [57] Here is a case where 'success' does not always translate into people remaining. They certainly experienced 'transformation' which emerged as a central concept from the data.

3.7 Influence of literature

Quakers are an educated group,[58] it is thus interesting to note the number of references to books in the accounts. In this section references have been used from 1997-2020. There are various categories:

[55]Ivor Glenton, in *My Life My Faith,* Vol 3 edited by Marilyn Ricci (Leicester: Leicester Quaker Press, 2012), 50.
[56]News and Views. Bournemouth Coastal Area. Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Summer 2019.
[57]Field Work record 132: Interview. Compare Lionel Blue who found his Jewish roots at the Oxford Meeting.
[58] British Quaker Survey 2013. 71% had a first degree and 33% had a post graduate level qualification. In view of the age group of my study it may be the case that postgraduate study took place in retirement.

3.7.1 Quaker books.

In the 2013 British Quaker Survey 11% listed Quaker writings as one of the reasons for coming to the Quakers. Well known Quakers were mentioned such as Harold Loukes with his seminal book on *Teenage Religion*.[59] People often mentioned the inquirers packs that were sent from Friends House. These currently contained such books as *Being a Quaker*. [60] The writings of well know historical figures in the Quaker movement such as John Woolman [1720-1772][61] and Elizabeth Fry [1780-1845][62] were mentioned as having a deep influence. Other books that were given a particular place in people's recollection included *The Presence in the Midst, A Faith to Call our Own, A Quaker by Convincement* and *A light that is shining.*[63] *The Light that pushes* influenced readers. These have given an overview of what it is to be a Quaker, providing an invitation into Quakerism. People often read about Quakers before attending or during the early stages. The background reading does mean that people who are attracted to Quakers often do so with a prior understanding.[64] One can speculate how other people without such a background feel coming to a Meeting.

3.7.2. Theology Books

It was noticeable that a vast array of theologians was mentioned, including classical writers such as Meister Eckhart, Mother Julian, Thomas à Kempis, Richard Rolle, the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, the writer of *Tao Te Ching.* Here and elsewhere it was possible to see a shared experience of a classical background amongst many of those coming

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[59]Harold Loukes, *Teenage Religion* (London: SCM, 1961).
[60]Geoffrey Durham, *Being a Quaker: a guide for newcomers,* 2nd edition (London: Quaker Quest, 2016)
[61] Itinerant Quaker preacher and advocate of the abolition of slavery.
[62] Quaker prison reformer.
[63]Harvey Gillman, *A Light That is Shining* (London: Quaker Home Service,2003
[64] In the 2013 British Quaker Survey Question 7, 38% listed leaflets and 50% Books as to how they first began to learn about Quakerism.

to Quakers. The empirical study of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*[65] formed a backdrop to some of the references to experiences in the lives of respondents. A lot if not all of the theologians mentioned came from the radical writers of the twentieth century such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Marcus Borg, Rudolf Bultmann, Harvey Cox, Teilhard de Chardin, Don Cupitt, Matthew Fox, Hans Küng, Thomas Merton, John Robinson, John Shelby Spong, and Paul Tillich. Daphne Hampson was mentioned among writers on a post Christian age. Titles indicated the sort of approach that is being found in this study, these including *The Cost of Certainty*[66] and *In Defence of Doubt.*[67] It is possible to draw parallels with the emphasis on doubt that is found in respondents' comments. Spiritual writers were mentioned such as Thich Nhat Hanh, Thomas Merton, Don Nicholl, Richard Rohr, Evelyn Underhill. The extent of the reading embraces a wide spectrum. I checked the breadth of the writing against theological and religious resource lists and found unusual sources used such as Leunig, the Australian cartoonist who writes prayers that appeal to people with little or no religious background.[68]

3.7.3 Fiction

Writers evident in accounts included A.J. Cronin, Dostoevsky, Aldous Huxley, D.H. Lawrence, John Milton, George Orwell, J.B. Priestly, Tolstoy, and Wordsworth. These writers encouraged readers to explore and reflect on some of life's experiences. The content of their works explored the lives of people on the margins, which is a central concern of Quakers. One

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[65]William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience (*London: Longmans, 1902).
[66]Jeremy Young, *The Cost of Certainty* (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 2004).
[67]Val Webb, *In Defence of Doubt* (London: Continuum, 2007).
[68] Leunig, *The Prayer Tree* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1990) and *A common prayer* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1990).

person appropriated to herself the ending of the poem *On His blindness* by John Milton which reads ‘They also serve who only stand and wait’.

3.7.4 Reading allied to theological debate

These included Sydney Carter and the recurring theme of doubt that has been noted elsewhere. Richard Dawkins and Einstein accounted for the dialogue with religion. Anthropology found a place in *The Golden Bough*.[69] Paulo Freire and his radical ideas of education and other institutions were in line with Quaker thought. A lot of people remembered Dag Hammarskjöld. The revival of virtue ethics in Alasdair MacIntyre often found a place. The influence of Bertram Russell in the pre-war years was considered significant. On a lighter note but none the less significant there was *Zen and the Art of Motor Bike Maintenance.*[70]

3.7.5 Comment Literature was an important element in finding out about Quakers. Not all found this easy and commented that it was difficult to find out what Quakerism was about. Perhaps such people were looking for the real essence of Quakerism, it being easier to find a definition by denotation, that is a list of things that are associated with Quakers, rather than a definition by connotation, which implies there are criteria that form the basis of Quakerism.

3.8 Quotations

Quakers as an educated group had an interest in literature seen in terms of the books that they have read. Something that struck me was the use of quotations in the accounts of their lives. In the case of the Oxford Meeting there were encouragements to include a quotation at the

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[69] James Fraser, *The Golden Bough* (Oxford: OUP, 1890/2011).
[70] Rob Pirsig, *Zen, and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (London: Vintage, 1999).

end of the contributions to the booklet about the lives of the people at the Meeting.[71] More significant were those who volunteered a quotation, standing out as a significant contribution to their overall account. One quoted Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part 2* and the words '*O Lord that dost lend me life. Lend me a heart replete with thankfulness'*.[72] Another cited *Anthony and Cleopatra* with the lines given to Mark Anthony '*The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones'*. One wrote '*You are always in the right place, at the right time, and meeting your teacher*'.[73] This is an optimistic comment, that provides a hint at a grand narrative which is not something present in general with Quakers. Spiritual writers were often quoted by respondents, such as Julian of Norwich. Such writers come from the mystical dimension of Christianity, which Rufus Jones considered to be central to Quakerism,[74] and which in contemporary terms it could be described as soft mysticism.

Some of the quotations highlighted in the study reflect the ambiguity present in Quaker stances for living. One person quoted Gregory Pomerants when he said, 'We do not ask of what belief you are, but of what Spirit'.[75] This is a significant way of summing up a position. Quotations are important signals as when found on desks and in notebooks. The Spirit of Quakerism is more important than beliefs. It would be interesting to detect other significant quotations or to use them in questionnaires.

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[71]Oxford Meeting produced such a book.
[72]Field Work record 86: Interview.
[73]Field Work record 2: Account.
[74]William Braithwaite, *The Beginning of Quakerism* (London: Macmillan, 1912), xxxiv.
[75]In poster of meeting organised by Howard Grace

Other sources that are used include the *Rig Veda* and Zen Masters. In the case of the *Rig Veda* reference is made to the parable of the two birds sitting on the same branch. One is active and eating and the other is just looking. Both action and reflection find a place in Quakers where the two complement each other.[76] Dandelion[77]quoted Brother Roger of Taizé when he referred to the place of prayer not allowing one to be indifferent to the needs of the world. In my own experience I have found a deep affinity between the Quaker Meetings and the community of Taizé. It was appropriate that when Brother Alois, the current head of the community, and other brothers came to Birmingham in the summer of 2018, that they should meet in the Bull Street Meeting House. Drawing upon quotations is a tangible way of tapping into different traditions and bringing them together.

Historically some Quaker comments are often repeated. The fact that *Faith and Practice* includes quotations and that *Advices* & *queries* are memorable is significant. It leaves one living the questions and this is perhaps one of the key elements that attracts people towards Quakers. There are those who wish to find answers. For some the questions are the answers while for others the search needs to have a final point. I would thus consider many are content to follow a formative line, whilst others seek for a summative position.

3.9 Influences

Respondents dwelt upon the way they had been influenced not only by significant events but by simple examples such as the influence of a grandmother and the way she dealt with

[76] See reactions to Simon Best's George Gorman Memorial Lecture 2011 where some preferred their own spiritual journey to radical sustainability. Symon Hill, "Radical Quakerism," *The Friend*, August 4, 2001. n.p.
[77]Dandelion, *Open for Transformation, Swarthmore Lecture* (London: Quaker Books, 2014), 93.

poverty.[78] Sometimes the influence came from a questioning of ideas in another context. One person wrote that '*I think maybe David Jenkins, Archbishop of York in the 80s had sown a seed, when he shocked the church by saying he didn't believe in a bodily resurrection'*.[79] In a case of church background the '*tangible love*' in the attitude of nuns is mentioned.[80] Individual teachers who have been influential include such people as Gerald Priestland, Paul Sedir, Gurdjeff, Oscar Romero, Dom Helder Camera, Harold Loukes, Eric Mascall, Paul Tillich, Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Hugh Barber, Morris Creasey, Benedict de Spinoza. It is difficult to find a pattern running through all of these, but they do represent radical thinkers that have formed part of the past that has led people to find a home in Quakers. Influences that stood out include Spinoza, who wrote about a quiet acceptance of the way things are rather than an imposition. This is what Quakers experience when being held in the light, and it is personally and collectively attractive.

3.10 The 1950s and 1960s

These were significant decades for understanding those that followed. Radical theological comment does not in general occur in references to the 1950s. This was an optimistic decade with inspiring occasions such as the 1951 Festival of Britain seeming to give the next generation something more challenging to work for. The 1960s was a turbulent decade with student unrest and radical theological debate. The theology of the 1960s has almost disappeared from churches. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich no longer occupy the place they once did. Referring to what he calls English Bonhoefferism Mark

[78]Field Work record 87: Interview.
[79]Field Work record 45: Account.
[80]Doris Travers, Caerleon/Newport Meeting notes.

Chapman considers that 'A theology seeking to abolish the very religion required to sustain it might well be one of the most absurd developments of all'.[81] It is however interesting to find a 1960s presence in Quakerism, which continues to attract people, with its liberal theology. This may not appeal to those in churches, although there are exceptions, but it does provide a window into faith for those who hark back to the 1960s with hope and nostalgia. Many of the people involved in this research were at university in the 1960s and were engaged with the theological and philosophical challenges of the time. The content selected above represents a distinctive aspect of those now associated with Quakers, whether as Members or Attenders.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter looked at some background influences that have impinged on birthright Quakers and those who became associated with Quakers in later life. It was often suggested that people had experienced the values and ethos of Quakerism before being associated with the movement in a more tangible form, with much of the influence being literary. There were also incidental events that have been significant. Members and attenders often claimed a sense of patterning which could find a parallel in the concept of continuity. In many cases it was gradual rather than a Damascus Road experience, in contrast to conversion experiences of Christian groups. Such experiences were considered in the light of a commitment to Quakers over the years, belonging to the Meeting being important.

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[81] Mark Chapman, "Theology in the Public Arena: the case of South Bank Religion," in *Redefining Christian Britain: post 1945 perspectives*, edited by Janet Garnett et al (London: SCM, 2007), 78 and 101. Compare Edward Norman, *Secularization: new century theology* (London: Continuum, 2002),163.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEETING

This chapter focuses on the role of the Meeting and the people who attend, as well as the values that are expressed and acted upon. 64% of interviewees and 59% of those writing accounts mentioned the Meeting so it had a consistent influence across the respondents. This chapter has the following headings: **1** The Meeting **2** Quakers and their Values **3** Membership

4.1 The Meeting

4.1.1 New arrivals

The Meeting itself clearly attracted those who responded and was the first port of call, was there that they were welcomed, had curiosity satisfied, and needs met. Some comments contrasted the Meeting with previous experience of worship with one who found it difficult to deal with the pulpit and church trappings.[1] It is possible to compare this with Francesca Montemaggi's report when she notes that 'For Susan, being a Quaker means that she is no longer the outsider voice arguing for change but the "insider voice". She and her husband have found home'. [2] In general people were anxious to be positive, rather than dwell on negative aspects. The positive points included, coming through doubt,[3] needing worship,

[1]Field Work record 86: Interview
[2]Francesca Montemaggi (ed.) *The Changing Face of Faith in Britain: how should Quakers respond?* Part 2*: The spirituality of new Quakers* (London: Britain Yearly Meeting, 2018),10.
[3]From a collection of comments, Kingston Meeting. http:/kingstonquakers.org/voices-of_kingston-quakers [accessed 10.05.2017].

calm,[4] directed silence, solid silence,[5] allowed to be anonymous, feeling comfortable,[6] a sense of optimism.[7] One commented that 'The ministry in Meeting for worship can touch me in unexpected ways and often gives me new light to see the world in'.[8] One reflected on her childhood experience of Meeting when she said:

> *As a child sitting in a Quaker Meeting for Worship, I wondered why the adults all seemed to look so worried! I decided that they had many troubles on their minds which they brought into the silence, and through prayer would find help in solving them.*[9]

There have been some fascinating descriptions of people attending Meeting. One came for the first time but felt embarrassed and did not return until a year later. One sneaked into a Meeting but did not engage with the people there. One of the funniest was the writer who said at her first Meeting she left when some of the adults and children did and ended up crayoning for the rest of the Meeting.[10] The Meeting itself therefore holds a significant place in how and why people became associated with Quakers.

As the first encounter is central to this study it seems appropriate to include some written examples here:

A

> *I don't think I would have found my way into the Society of Friends on my own. From the outside they appeared to me a group of serious people, rather pious and precious, given over to good works – in fact rather dull and fun-denying. My husband was on a deep spiritual journey and when he found the Society of Friends, he felt he had come*

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[4]'A Bull Street Friend', from folder in foyer of Bull Street Meeting House, Birmingham.
[5]Part of group interview/focus group.
[6]Ibid.
[7]Video on Quaker Journeys linked to Spring 2019 edition of *Quake!*
[8]Warwick Meeting Annual report for 2013, The editor asked Ali Jeffery what it means to be a Quaker.
[9]Elizabeth Brown, "Living in the Light," *Quaker Voices* 7.1 (2016), 9.
[10]Bridgit Collins, "Talking to Joseph Jones," *The Friend,* February 1, 2019, 7-9.

home. It took me seven years to understand what it was all about and apply for membership. At last I began to see that the Quaker Way was almost tailor-made for a rebel like me and I'm still thrilled and excited by the continuous development of my spiritual life that I experience through Quakerism.[11]

B

My first contact with the Quaker Way was a chance visit to Preston Patrick Meeting House while on holiday nearby. I remember being moved by the simple, light-filled building with its windows opening into fields. This image stayed with me for years, however I didn't meet any Quakers until I moved to Malton in the late 70's. The small group of local Quakers were very welcoming to the residential community for adults with learning difficulties which I worked for. My admiration for Quakers grew when I was invited to give an evening talk about the work we were doing; the silence before and after our conversation was impressive and I felt that the Quakers listened with all of themselves.[12]

C

My first contact with Quakers was when I was about 10 years old. My Dad took us to a meeting and my enduring memory of it was that the children called their parents by their Christian names…..There was then a long gap….When I retired I joined a Church bereavement group that was run by a Quaker. This encouraged me to make contact again this time with my local meeting……The turning point was after reading a book on Quakers where the author made the statement "when you feel withdrawal symptoms when you don't attend meeting it is probably time to join the Quakers".[13]

D. [Comment from blog immediately after attending first Meeting]:

Also – and this will probably sound odd if you haven't actually experienced it – there's a real sense of communion that comes with sitting silently with others…… By sharing the silence together there's a sense of unity, in which all the usual stuff that comes between people is swept away.[14]

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[11]Field Work record 53: Account.
[12]Field Work record 75: Account.
[13]Field Work record 85: Account.
[14]Field Work record 49: Account.

People tended to move amongst Meetings, commenting and comparing them This could be divisive and indeed at times negative comments were made. Some Meetings put people off. One Meeting was considered to emphasise calm whereas another was considered to demonstrate a vocal energy. One said rather poignantly that a Meeting was a place where a minority spoke. This could amount to a disparaging picture, but it does however allow for variety which can be creative. While a pick and mix approach can be criticised variety allowed for difference which those coming to Quakerism found helpful.

4.1.2 Silent Worship

Silence was often mentioned as creative rather than boring, with an ex nun commenting that it was not the lonely silence of the convent. Another saw the Meeting as a time to go into yourself but within the group it had a special quality of gatheredness. The Meeting House was more than a place of worship, there being an atmosphere of kindness. For one she was always refreshed by Meeting and needed to go when faced with profound despair as it was a safe support place. A good deal of emotion was expressed in connection with Meeting. Some people were attracted to Meeting having first been to a Quaker wedding[15] or funeral. The person referring to a wedding considered that a 'seed was sown...and began to grow when I attended Jesus Lane in my forties'.[16] A somewhat unusual reason was the person who came 'looking for faithfulness'. This was a younger person and it may reflect a need that was not satisfied elsewhere. Another unusual visitor for the first time was the person who had seen a

[15]Comment in collection *Why I am a Quaker* (Cambridge Hartington Grove Meeting, 2010), 29.
[16]Ibid.

Quaker Meeting on the television programme 'Fleabag' and looked up the local Meeting on the internet.[17]

Comments were not however universally positive which shows that people felt free to express their views. Their attendance and attraction to Quakers is not starry eyed. One noted that it was possible to recognize when the Meeting has lost a sense of worship, this being a clue to attendance. In relation to the downside of Quaker Meetings the following have been observed – an hour is a long time[18] – some contributions needed to be translated[19] – more structure needed [20]– not all felt welcome and left before coffee.[21] A lot commented that they did not know what was happening.[22] A couple felt that the Meeting had involved them too quickly with discussion groups.[23] People attracted to Quakers may well find that the focus of Meeting is a strong one. At times, the Meeting House dominates as was the case of Watford's new building, but there is always a voice that asks about the aim of the Meeting and does not confuse it with subsidiary objectives.

In this section there have been some shorthand comments that might need explaining. It is metonymy where an item becomes representative of a concept. No 10 has become representative of government in Britain, and table or the door keeper may also represent

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17See article entitled 'Sexing up the Quakers' *iSaturday*, July 16, 2019, 19.
18Field Work record 86: Interview.
19Field Work record 109: Interview.
20Field Work record 32: Account.
21Field Work record 109: Interview.
22Field Work record 116: Interview
23Field Work record 132: Interview.

something wider that those coming to Meeting need to understand. Understanding what is going on in the Meeting is important. Some of the criticisms mentioned above are related to the nature of the Meeting and can be overcome with experience. As one interviewee said: '*It's mysterious and takes time to get the hang of it and that is part of the hang of it*'.[24]

4.1.3 The Meeting House

The building itself is an influence. Some are owned but a lot hire a room. One I know meets in a convent chapel[25], with varying thoughts about the statues. Very old and simple Meeting Houses such as Come-to-Good in Cornwall are ideals. The sentimental pictures of the old Meeting Houses can be contrasted with the reality of difficulties in the local building, with issues pertaining to things such as roofs and damp. The old Meeting Houses often inspire a recollection of the early period of Quakers.[26] This can provide a solid basis amidst the changing emphases of Quakerism in the subsequent centuries. Change is also considered by some old Meeting Houses. One Meeting moved from its old building in the countryside to the local town, where it felt more relevant to the community. [27]

4.1.4 Form/structure

Many people referred to the Meeting in relation to its form/method. People referred to current issues that were of personal concern but would not have been so when they first became associated with Quakers. One is reminded that the study is about those who have recently

[24] Field Work record 102: Interview.
[25] Headington Local Meeting
[26] Hertford, the oldest purpose-built Quaker Meeting House in the world is still in use, built in 1670, and Alton, the second oldest, was built in 1672.
[27] Sawley moved to Clitheroe.

joined and those with experience who have greeted the joiners. When it comes to the form of worship people were able to reflect positively as with the person who wrote 'I loved the quiet, and the fact that I could just sit, and nobody was expecting anything from me'.[28] In a similar vein we read that '*Silence offered less chance of avoiding the Something which challenged us all*'.[29] There were others who were critical of the form and by form this did not always narrowly refer to worship. One poignantly felt that the structure was a turn off, saying that someone with little knowledge of politics would feel excluded. One person was critical of the fact that her Meeting did not have Elders,[30] while others at the same Meeting were attracted by this fact. This reflects the clash that is seen elsewhere of those who value the status quo and those who have come seeking a release from such. While worship was the element that attracted some people there were those who felt what was being presented was little more than Oxfam at prayer or silence.[31] Here is a case of a later disillusionment affecting the judgement about initial motivation to attend. It was sometimes difficult to find how people felt at the point of engagement. The initial enthusiasm needs to be sought out amidst a variety of later judgements. This can be lamented but it may also be fruitful in that it is in contrast with some evangelicals who relive the moment of conversion.

28Gabi Leeson, "Be Still and Know that I am God," in *My Faith in Practice* Vol 2, edited by Don Rowe (Milton Keynes: Milton Keynes Quakers, 2013),56.
29Meeting of Friends in Wales, *Towards the Source* (Wales: Meeting of Friends in Wales, 2014),33. This can be compared to the 69% who felt Being with others in the Spirit was central to their being a Quaker (Question 21). British Quaker Survey http://woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/national-quaker-survey.html [accessed 5/11/2018]
30Field Work record 96: Interview.
31Field Work record 100: Interview.

4.2 Quakers and their Values

It is appropriate to ask generically why Quakers attract people and perhaps at the same time why they are put off although may persevere to attend and consider Quakerism. A birthright Quaker did not think of Quaker values as different to any other. He said he almost stood outside what Quakers do.[32] For some Quakers indicate what one does not have to do or believe to be part of them but do not always say what Quakers have to offer. A group that appears at times to define itself in contrast to others needs analysis. As a participant observer or even an observer participant I feel that one is faced with a group which deserves a phenomenological approach, that seeks to describe what it feels like to be a Quaker. It is a matter of coming to terms with what is presented by Quakers to those outside. Quakers standing out as a phenomenon could be seen in one comment that saw Quakers as awkward.[33] The context on this comment was an experience at St Martin's in the Field where some Quakers were involved with the social activity that is focused on the church, but were not always happy with the style of worship. The person making this comment felt that Quakers added an observation to a situation which placed them somewhat aloof. Returning to the start of this paragraph the result of this may both attract and detract.

The attraction to Quakerism could be because of the lack of sin and guilt and the absence of hierarchy.[34] Being good at problem solving was mentioned, this being allied to comments about the common good. In a section attempting to make generic comment one thought the

[32]Field Work record 92: Interview.
[33]Field Work record 96: Interview.
[34]Field Work record 126: Interview.

Quakers to be like a mosaic that fitted different elements together.[35] This was a strong and useful metaphor. Like the Jews, Quakers 'have a sense of themselves as a "peculiar people"'.[36] It occurs to me whether this is one of the reasons that people are attracted to Quakers. Gay Pilgrim claims that 'the impulse to be different has taken over from the impulse towards a particular theological stance'.[37] If some may be put off by the peculiar nature, for others there is a fascination that may satisfy those who are themselves searching for a distinctive non-directive place. In this context Dandelion writes that: 'There is plenty of anecdotal evidence of Quaker self-perception as a group full of idiosyncratic eccentrics.'[38] One when reading of this equated it with homecoming and being accepted.[39] For one eccentric to find himself/herself in a group raises some fascinating questions about identity in terms of values.

One concluded that Quakers have a holistic approach to spirituality and a theology of transformation, which takes us back to the early period. For many, Quakerism is a way of life with a family sense of belonging, being a feeling rather than a cognition. As Dandelion said in his Swarthmore lecture 'We act our Quaker faith. We are not called to be a Quaker, but to be Quaker'. [40] One person concluded her account by saying:

> *In fact I realised that I was interested in spirituality as behaviour, that Quaker idea of faith in action. I was not interested in sitting around debating theology. The moment I*

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[35]Geoffrey Durham, *What it means to be a Quaker today*, text given at Britain Yearly Meeting http://www.nayler.org/what-it-means-to-be-a-quaker-today [accessed 18/08/2017].
[36]Sue Beardon, "On Being a Jew and a Quaker," Quaker Voices 7.2 (2016), 2.
[37]Gay Pilgrim, "Taming Anarchy; Quaker alternative ordering and 'otherness'," in *The Creation of Quaker Theory: inner perspectives*, edited by Pink Dandelion (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 234.
[38]Pink Dandelion, *The Cultivation of Conformity: towards a general theory of internal secularisation* (London: Routledge, 2019),134.
[39] Field Work record 131: Interview.
[40]Pink Dandelion, *Open for transformation.* Swarthmore Lecture 2014 (London: Quaker Books, 2014), 22.

> *stopped rendering my lack of "faith" as a problem a whole new world opened up; it had been my stumbling block.*[41]

Complimentary comments have been made about Quakers in terms of values. One respondent considered that Quakers seek goodness beyond themselves. Some Meetings were reticent to put things into words. Values such as the peace testimony relating to a way of living was quoted, with the suggestion that one should build on what is good rather than make great plans. In contrast to a general hopeful pragmatism I heard one Quaker suggest that many people just do not have values today quoting the *Guardian*. [42]

When thinking of values, there was a tendency to quote others. Richard Rohr was quoted, when he wrote that God comes to us disguised as our lives.[43] Quakers can be seen in the light of Aristotelian ethics, exemplified in works such as *After Virtue* by Alistair MacInytre.[44] This is a matter of affirming values rather than arguing in a deontological or consequentialist framework. It is the case that many values are exemplified in terms of the work that a person is involved in. Quakers occupy the professions, so it was good to discover accounts of bus drivers in the Library of Friends House in London.[45] I said above that Quakers did not always want to talk about values, and when they did it was in a simple way. One wrote 'I am so grateful for the little joys and my expectations are smaller'.[46] She went on to comment as

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41Field Work record 83: Account.
42 Compare the response to Question 31 in the British Quaker Survey where human nature was considered essentially bad by only 0.6%. http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/national-quaker-survey.html [accessed 11/5/2018]
43Field Work record 16: Account.
44Alastair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Chicago: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).
45 In the 2013 British Quaker Survey 6% listed their first job as semi-skilled or unskilled manual with 57% listing it as professional and technical in answer to Question 42a.
46Dru Bayliss-Ellis, "Grateful for Little Joys," in *My Faith in Practice. Vol* 2, 9.

follows: ‘I feel that a Christian sees a cup half-full rather than half empty. Because of this we take advantage of what we have got and appreciate the joys of life and loving’.[47] On the one hand these are high values to be copied but on the other they are grounded in the way Quakers see living and there is clearly an attraction for people. Quakers have a pragmatic approach to values that celebrates the moment. It is possible to imagine what a seeker with similar experiences would make of this. Montemaggi observes that Susan ‘told me that issues surrounding excessive consumerism and environmental protection and immigration would be an issue for conversation in the churches she experienced, whereas they are “self-evident” to Quakers’.[48] One of the values that can be seen in Quakers and which link with a significant strain of Christian theology is that of *kenosis* or self-giving love. On several occasions people talked about giving back and living quietly.[49] For one this was seen as nourishing oneself and others in a single action.

4.3 Membership

It is inevitable in a study that asked people about how and why they became associated with Quakers that the issue of membership would be mentioned. Some respondents had birthright membership, some can remember when they became Members, whilst others have decided to continue to be Attenders. One respondent did not feel able to identify with membership because he advocated force in South Africa, remaining an aspirant Quaker. Another thought that becoming a Member was too much like paying and she thus remained an Attender all her

[47]Ibid., 10.
[48]Montemaggi, *The Changing Face of Faith*, 23.
[49]Field Work record 126: Interview.

life.[50] For some the issue was crucial and goes to the heart of what for them is Quakerism. Requirements are placed upon participants for membership. One resigned membership and remained an Attender over the issue of same sex marriages in a Quaker Meeting House.[51]

Tradition about membership can become part of the Quaker story. One story that resonated across an Area Meeting was that concerning a person who had for a long time been the backbone of the Meeting but was not a Member. It was pointed out that a visit from two Elders was the accepted norm in order to discuss membership, but this was not liked. His feelings were expressed at a Meeting at which about fifty people rose to their feet and acclaimed 'You are a Member'.[52] This story helps with those new Attenders who may feel the need to respond to requests to become Members, which is considered important by many people. A person in a Cotswold Meeting House was in conversation with an Attender. When the Attender said he was busy on a Sunday she pointed out that being a Member was not a matter of Sunday.[53] Here is a case where the status of membership can be re-interpreted. There are confusions about membership, such as the person who thought 'atheism' would bar membership. The same person noted that it seemed to her that she had become a Member, this being a case of someone feeling the concept of membership. Another first resisted becoming a Member, feeling that it would be saying in effect '*If I'm one of these I'm not one*

[50] Field Work record 99: Interview. This lady died in May 2020.
[51]Conversation during visit to a mid week meeting. The issue is currently in focus with the way a same sex married Quaker woman has been barred from taking up her presidency in The Churches Together in England. See *Quake! Britain Yearly Meeting and Quakers in Britain*, July 16, 2020.
[52] Field Work records 87 and 88: Interviews come from the person and his wife. Other interviewees recollected the story including records 86 and 97.
[53]Heard during conversation at mid-week Meeting.

of *those*'.[54] Famously Simone Weil [1909-43] did not become a Catholic as she did not wish to define herself.[55] Definition is an issue for some when Quaker membership is discussed. One considered that '*There isn't a line in the sand you have to cross that takes you from being a non-Quaker to being a Quaker*'.[56] This clearly has implications for the question of association with Quakers. The difference between birthright membership and later conviction started this section and is expressed in the following comment from a contributor to the *Dales Quaker Reader* who wrote that:

> *when challenged as an adult as to whether my absence from meeting for many years meant I no longer wished to be treated as a member, I suddenly felt as if I was being threatened with removal of an integral part of my identity…..I think it means I practice an instinctive or intuitive form of Quakerism, absorbed from lifelong exposure as opposed to the conscious adoption of Quaker ideas that seemed to be part of the transition made by those who come to Quakerism in adult life.*[57]

One person said that '*I wanted to be part of this. I wanted to be a Quaker, and so I started to call myself one*'.[58] There is a deep analysis when it comes to membership. One noted:

> *Firstly, I should say that I don't particularly like to say that I am a Quaker. It is a fine point maybe, but what is "A Quaker" and what does it mean to be "Be" one. What I am is a member of the Religious Society of Friends, or colloquially, the Quakers. Perhaps I have pretensions of being a Quaker…* [59]

This takes us back to the research question as to how and why people become associated with Quakers, raising further questions.

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[54] Field Work record 14: Account.
[55]Simone Weil, philosopher (1909-1943)
[56]Field Work record 16: Account.
[57]Tim Holman, Interview and memories, *The Dales Quaker Reader*, October 2017.
[58]Field Work record 74: Account.
[59]John Pamely, "Why I am a Quaker", http://northamptonshirequakers.org [accessed 06/05/17]

For some the issue is not about membership as it is the people who hold them there. The structure takes people so far, but there is an underlying return to the essence that lies beneath the structure. For many relationships are central, with partners being a significant influence. Abigail Rowse wrote that '*I'm a Quaker because many of my close friends are Friends. I can meet a Quaker for the first time and have a conversation that goes far beyond small talk. We know each other in "the things that are eternal"'*.[60] Another commented that:

> *I found myself thinking of my love for others and theirs for me - my family, my friends, my Quaker Meeting, all of the strangers who had helped and housed me along the way, and opening that out to the love that exists in humanity as a whole.*[61]

These references to relationships are significant and widen the understanding of religion. In small group interviews it was evident that friendship was a key factor in what attracted many people to come to Meeting and more importantly to stay.[62] Montemaggi notes that 'It is true that Quaker "discernment" places the search for "truth" within the individual, but as Edmund implied when asked about how he gets his "map" to navigate his religious and spiritual life, the individual is always within a web of relationships'.[63] This seems to be the case in this study where many of the respondents lodged their discourse within relationships. Returning to the concerns of performative belief and narrative theology, it is possible to see these in the language and culture of a living tradition of communal life.

In many ways it is understandable that people become associated with Quakers because they meet other Quakers. Dandelion refers to Gillman in claiming that 'people convert to

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60Abigail Rowse, "Reflection of the Words: I'm a Quaker, ask me why," *The Friend*, September 2017, 4.
61Tim Gee "Reflects on His Faith and Living as a Friend," *The Friend*, September 28, 2017, 11.
62Field Work record 125: Interview.
63Montemaggi, *The spirituality of new Quakers*, 21.

Quakerism because they've met a Quaker, that is they've been shown in some way what a Quaker life might look like, not because they know what Quakerism is about'.[64] So while this chapter is concerned with the significance of the Meeting it is usually through relationships that an impact is made.. The importance of a relationship is often laid alongside that of the Meeting.[65]

A subset of membership is dual membership, which makes it easy to become engaged in Quakerism because it is not necessary to reject a prior commitment. A more positive way is to say that one is bringing things of value to the situation and finding them embraced. Of someone with two commitments it has been said that '*After so many years of parish duties she found the Quaker engagement with issues and the real world rather than buildings and stereotypes a stimulating and satisfying alternative to church going'.*[66] A Buddhist Quaker found Buddhist meditation congruent with Quakerism.[67] I had a conversation with a Roman Catholic Quaker,[68] where the main issue was fitting both acts of worship in, and where the Saturday evening Mass was the answer. Terry Waite and Owen Cole valued dual membership. In the case of Cole, a renowned expert on Sikhism and accepted by the Sikh community for his wisdom one can see here how multi-cultural teaching helped him to be inclusive. He saw Paul Oestreicher in the pulpit of Chichester Cathedral and thought if he can have dual

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64Pink Dandelion, *The Liturgies of Quakerism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 93.
65Field Work record 124: Interview.
66From a Service of Thanksgiving, July 2016.
67Field Work record 6: Account. In the 2013 British Quaker Survey 12% (Question 5a) answered that they were also Buddhist, of the 16% who were actively involved with other religious groups .
68Field Work record 132: Interview.

membership so could he.[69] He was able as many Religious Education teachers are to see the essence that links religions together. The opportunity and acceptability of dual membership remains an important aspect when considering why people became associated with Quakers. Like a number of aspects that appeal it does have its downsides in that it may be difficult to retain a distinctive Quaker identity.

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the way that the Meeting attracts people to it. Sometimes this was for simple reasons such as the notice board or curiosity. Sometimes the reasons were deep seated such as the need to explore stances for living. Being attached to Quakerism was itself important for people and thus the role of membership and identity were explored. The Meeting is made up of people with relationships at the forefront. Such relationships were seen in the context of belonging to the Meeting. Central to this chapter was the impression that people inside give to those on the outside. Members and Attenders expressed themselves in living out Quaker values and the chapter included the role that values play.

[69] Testimony to the Grace of God in the life of Owen Cole. November 2013.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEOLOGICAL RESPONSES

This chapter focuses on the place of theology in the minds of those involved in the study. 62% of interviewees and 33% of those writing accounts mentioned theology. In the case of the latter they found it hard to place theological concepts into words. The chapter is divided into three main headings. The first is theology itself and outlines some of the main theological stances that those enquiring about Quakers may find. The second is theological approaches, those selected being hermeneutics, implicit religion, kenosis, and transformation. The third is some of the issues/questions that are raised by the theology. Those selected are religion and the spiritual in a multi-faith context, sacramental living, the biblical account and the place of Jesus, and the concept of an after-life. This allows further theological debate to continue with an awareness of its place in Quakerism.

5.1 Theology

The following quotation sets the tone of this chapter:

> *It seemed to me that going to church was something that was done on a Sunday to ensure your child's attendance at the town's best secondary school. You were on your knees to save the fees of the private school! Through all this I watched the vicar and her husband and thought about how they had been called by God and how they answered that call every day of their lives. This was something which I wanted in my own life and that of my family. I felt like a waif in the window, watching the wealthy dine on fine food they ate every day. They were not aware that I would have eaten scraps from the floor beneath their feet. So, I told God how I felt and asked Him to*

> *show me where I could try to find some sort of resting place. I think, the most important thing is to keep attempting to have a relationship with God. Slowly, over a period of months the notion of Quakers came to mind'*.[1]

This starts with a comment about church attendance. The reference to 'scraps' has echoes in the New Testament with the Canaanite woman,[2] while 'Resting place' implies a spiritual aspect. At the end of the searching Quakers appear on the scene.

Many religious groups think in terms of a grand plan, a classic example of such a plan involves the fall of man and his subsequent redemption through the death of Jesus, with Tom Wright as a popular exponent of such a plan.[3] Among the questions that I often asked towards the end of interviews was whether the interviewee thought in terms of such a grand plan. One wrote '*I came to the conclusion that the way forwards was not to try to work out a grand coherent framework or master plan, but rather to try to see what was good in my life and then seek to strengthen and build on that*'. [4] One person replied: '*be kind and let your life speak'*.[5] This is not unusual as a Quaker response but it does allow the reply to be seen alongside the absence of a grand narrative, with a more pragmatic approach which many find attractive. A recent example is the person who saw Quakerism as paying '*attention to what worked, rather than to the words used to describe it'*.[6]

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[1]Field Work record 16: Account.
[2]*Gospel of Mark* Chapter 7 verse 28.
[3]N. Tom Wright, *Justification: God's plan and Paul's vision* (London: SPCK, 2008). I have heard him lecture on this theme at Universities of St Andrews and Oxford.
[4]Field Work record 66: Account.
[5]Field Work record 127: Interview.
[6] Bob Johnson, "Freudian slip? a consideration of faith and science," *The Friend*, February 14, 2020, 10.

When asked about their initial attraction to British Quakerism 67% ticked the lack of religious dogma and 40% ticked the Quaker way of life, being allowed to make more than one response.[7] These statistics and the last response reflect an emphasis on the daily working out of Quakerism rather than a re-telling of any grand plan. Halbwachs considered that there was no caste system amongst Quakers as well as there being no overarching religious narrative.[8]

Comments were critical of previously held theological views or such views as expressed from pulpits. These include evil and theology, theodicy[9], the filioque clause[10], talk about God as if we know what we are talking about[11], comforting images[12], and creeds. As one wrote '*If one believed it then why the need to continue reminding oneself of the fact. If one did not believe it absolutely then it was dishonest to state it'*.[13] The creed posed problems for some Quakers, with one feeling only able to say, '*I believe in God'*,[14] and another '*I believe in the Holy Spirit*'.[15]

One can move beyond the above to the more creative aspects of theology that attracted Quakers or more pertinently ideas that they brought with them. People came with a

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[7]Jennifer Hampton, "British Quaker Survey: examining religious beliefs and practices in the twenty-first century," *Quaker Studies* 19.1 (2014), Appendix indicating the response to the questionnaire, also more recently quoted in Pink Dandelion, *The Cultivation of Conformity: towards a general theory of internal secularisation* (London: Routledge, 2019), 133.
[8]Maurice Halbwachs, *On collective Memory*, translated by Lewis Coser and edited by Lewis Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago,1992,) 100.
[9]Field Work record 86: Interview.
[10]Field Work record 93: Interview.
[11]Field Work record 103: Interview.
[12]Field Work record 32: Account.
[13]Ibid.,
[14]Dori Miller, Heswell archives.
[15]Anon, Heswell archives.

background of theological ideas that needed challenging. Their original reading was in some ways second hand and had been enlivened by the experience that has been and continues to be a focus for them in Quakerism.

Some expressions can be considered as linking with theological positions. These include '*Not bothered about doctrine as I am a pantheist*'.[16] It is good to see this expressed as many churches are opposed to this or question it in terms of panentheism. For one, God is everywhere such as in trees.[17] For another, '*By God I understand absolute infinity*'.[18] The concept of God was considered in the light of worship such as the respondent who wrote: '*It seems to me that God does not want to be worshipped, nor is it for us to try and please*'.[19] A different conclusion to a similar argument was made by the person who wrote '*To my mind, the great creative power that I think of as God, could not care one jot if we worship Him at all. The person that misses out by not communing with this power is us*'.[20] Believing in transcendence and immanence, one said '*Part of me believes in a God far beyond our comprehension and unknowable, but part of me needs a God who is close at hand, guiding my everyday life'.*[21]

I found some surprises in the data. I had assumed that atonement theology was not part of Quaker belief and not emphasised in Meeting. A Quaker chaplain pointed out that atonement

[16]Field Work record 86: Interview.
[17]Field Work record 94: Interview.
[18]Field Work record 124: Interview.
[19]Alex Thomson, "Becoming Quaker," *The Friend*, February 3, 2017, 12.
[20]Field Work record 41: Account.
[21]Field Work record 89: Interview.

was an important concept for those in prison.[22] The chaplain referred to Joel Robbins (Cambridge) and the suggestion that the theology of gift could be experienced in a very positive rather than passive way.[23] I realised the dangers in assuming that people coming to Quakers are a homogeneous group.

One interviewee frequently asked the question '*If everything were to be wiped out, where is God? For non-theists the answer would be nowhere*'.[24] This was a convinced theology that was not often expressed elsewhere. For him worship is not waiting for a message, it is turning towards 'the Other'.

Theological and non-theological experiences are often brought together. One considered that:

> *I have traditional Christian friends who use the term Salvation and when I'm asked I say I think that anyone who has found a sound enough way of living constructively in the face of human limits of understanding and control is about as saved as one can be expected*.[25]

This thought can be placed in the liberal/radical tradition and it is this that excites many people who approach Quakerism.

Traditional theological comments are given a new lease of life. Jesus as the way, the truth and the life is a case in point. It is argued that this is not a notion but a way just as Quakerism is a

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[22]Field Work record 97: Interview.
[23] I could not trace a reference. Robbins writes about lived religion in Papua and New Guinea.
[24]Field Work record 104: Interview.
[25]Field Work record 7: Account.

way. As one person wrote '*I simply wanted a more direct relationship with God*'. [26] One looked beyond doctrinal comments to the search for an experience. It is theology in experience which is a central point in Quakerism and an attraction for many people. In a similar vein another observed '*Perhaps there's no need to ask where God is any more than we ask where we are. We are always here*'.[27] The concept of a grand narrative also finds reinterpretation, one such that struck me was the person who showed me a picture of a maypole which she considered summed up the way faiths interact and for her this was an answer to the question about grand narrative.[28] The Christian emphasis that is often placed on grand narrative had been widened and it is this widening that many people notice when they engage with Quakers. Conversations were often brought back to experience. In answer to the questions 'why is there something rather than nothing? and 'how ought I to live?' Quakers typically have little to say about the first question, but a great deal about the second.

There is an elaborate discussion amongst Quakers concerning the light within and the light in others.[29] There are significant implications for the way others are viewed and treated if it is considered that they have something of the light within them, as would be the case of those with mental illness. The debate can be focused within the context of theological comment. One person noted that '*Those who say that all promptings come from within the self don't seem to be saying anything different from Humanists*'.[30] The comment that 'there is that of

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26Cliodhna Mulhern, interview with Hames McCarthy. *Quaker Voices* 7.6 (November 2016), 18.
27Field Work record 44: Account.
28Field Work record 125: Interview.
29See Charles Cherry, "Quakers and Asylum Reform," in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, edited by Stephen Angell and Pink Dandelion (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 397.
30Field Work record 43: Account.

God which is in all of us' is often reiterated. Judith Jenner writes that '*In meeting that of God in other people, my spirit responds to them'*.[31] For some it is the emphasis on the value of the individual that is being stressed whilst for others it is the expression of God that is paramount. One added to the argument when he/she commented: '*I believe that there is a light of life within each one of us and when we come together this light can develop and grow and change and spread*'.[32] The gathered community is one of the main things that attracted people to the Quakers. What is interesting is the way some people related back and linked ideas of the light with different theological points. One contrasted the inward light with the inner light, considering the latter to be something people have 'got' while the former is seen as closer to the Catholic idea of grace, that is something you are given.[33] It has been argued that while the Inward Light was considered primary with early Quakers, 'it might now be asked, whether the very thing that made Quakerism unique within Christianity, is now making it uniquely vulnerable'.[34] This is because the emphasis on the individual experience does not take account of a communal narrative. While this is a distinctive danger it is not one that occurs in this research, although some respondents referred to the danger that they had observed in other Meetings. The above has included a good deal of theological reflection which contrasts the view that Quakers do not like theology. Francesca Montemaggi wrote that 'The values of equality and justice, peace, truth and integrity, and simplicity and sustainability emphasize ethical behaviour without necessarily being grounded in theology'.[35] Some observed there is a

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[31]Judith Jenner, in *God, Words and Us* (London: Quaker Books, 2017), 13.
[32]Field Work record 11: Account.
[33]Transcript of Interview between Henry Thompson and Gordi Stack, Edinburgh, 1997.
[34] Cap Kaylor, "Christ, Mystery and Faith," *The Friend*, March 23, 2028, 11.
[35]Francesca Montemaggi, *The Changing Face of Faith in Britain: how should Quakers respond.* Part 2*: the spirituality of new Quakers* (London: British Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke, 2019), 22.

danger in the silence becoming empty without a grounding.[36] The following was written in *Quaker Voices:* 'There seems to me to be a reluctance on the part of Quakers to use the word "God" at all because it carries so many outworn connotations'.[37] This is not the case with this sample of people many of whom are in their seventies and eighties. It is interesting to consider whether emphases on God will change in any studies of future cohorts.

I did not expect the concept of 'grace' to have a significant place in this study. There comes a point when it is hard to know what is being referred to but there is the feeling of a plus moment which is often found in thanks for the life of a member. Grace is something like that. It is something given but not necessarily by an external power. It is perhaps one of the unifying facts that people who come from various routes to Quakerism can share. The word may not be used but the description of finding something surprising and welcoming is an account of grace.

The *Progressive Christianity Network* and the *Sea of Faith* movements have members amongst Quakers. These movements are focused on re-making theological ideas for contemporary society. For some it not a matter of joining such groups but being aware of the changing and often declining place that Christianity once held within Quakers. It is unlikely that this would be a specific reason for people joining the Quakers. It does however link with some of the more general positions held by Quakers. An example is the one who considered:

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[36]Tom Shakespeare reminds readers in the Swarthmore lecture 2020 that silence is a way and not a destination *Openings to the Infinite Ocean: a friendly offering of hope* youtube.com/watch?v=nOloqDjNAk [accessed 8/8/2020]

[37]Edward Jones, "On Knowing God," *Quaker Voices,* May 2014, 29.

'*As mankind progressed so virtues emerged*'.[38] There is the notion that the concept of God is one that is useful but not necessary. Some Meetings which people had attended were felt to have no debate and thus ideas such as non-theism would be absent. For some it was a matter of playing with words. This was welcomed by one respondent who considered that '*I am a Quaker who has welcomed the careful, tactical invention of the word 'nontheist', carefully distinguished from 'atheist', enlarging how we understand ourselves as Quakers*'.[39] For this person it was a matter of acting as if it were the case. This equates with performative belief where acting as if you are religious can merge with really being so. This is an extreme position and in the main, apart from those engaged in the non-theist movement, most had not heard of it or ignored it. A constructive part of the argument revolved around those who were wary of theist language. Thus: 'God is not a noun describing something that may or may not exist, but as a verb in the imperative: Awake'.[40] These comments can be placed alongside traditional theistic ones. Another thought 'The way sets its followers free from all these things (such as labels). But a meeting of Wayfarers is not a Meeting for Worship: it is simply a meeting on the Way – like a cross roads where many paths meet at a single point'.[41] Something of the above statements can be found in an initially strange but fascinating comment found in *Quake!* from a person who said: '*I have a relationship with the God I do not believe in*'.[42]

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[38]Field Work record 94: Interview.
[39]Philip Goss, talking about his work to Jonathan Doering, *The Friend,* October 13, 2017, 13.
[40]Fred Holroyd, "Don't Shy Away from Infinity: but don't assume we understand it," in *My Faith in Practice, Volume* 2, edited by Don Rowe (Milton Keynes Meeting, 2013), 39.
[41]Ines Russell, "The Way Transcends Labels," in ibid., 91. repeating thoughts from *The Friend.*
[42]In Spring 2019 edition of *Quake*!

It is possible to draw the theist/non-theist divide together by observing as one did that 'Just as in Christ there is no male and no female, I am convinced that there is neither theist nor nontheist, but a kaleidoscope of experiences and expressions, of presence, absence, connection, separation, within, without, beyond, past, present, future'.[43] This can be placed alongside the observation by John Lampen that 'Whenever I ask Quakers what they believe, I find their views lie at every point along a spectrum which does not easily divide into clear groupings. It is a pity that some Friends write as if there were polarised positions (universalist/Christian/nontheist/theist)'.[44]

It is possible to summarise much of the above thought with the comment made by one man when he considered '*I think I am non theist, but we like the idea that Quakers are "seeking" rather than "knowing"'*.[45] The seeking portrays a movement in flux and does not easily allow for the transition movement from sect to church in sociological terms. The picture surrounding sects and their transition to churches is complicated,[46] with Bryan Wilson arguing that in general the second generation is more established.[47] This happened historically in the case of Quakers. However more recently the entry of many people in their middle years has left the Quakers in a state of change equivalent to a continuing sect.

[43]Holroyd, "Don't Shy Away from Infinity," 39.
[44]John Lampen, *Quaker Roots and Branches* (Alresford: Christian Alternative Books, 2018), 56.
[45]Field Work record 51: Account.
[46]Pink Dandelion, *The Cultivation of Conformity*, 20.
[47]Bryan Wilson, *Religious Sects* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970).

5.2 Theological approaches

5.2.1 Hermeneutics/Ways of Interpretation

How Quakers express their thinking is open to focus, with subtle nuances of thought and interpretations playing an important role. Interpretation is needed to assist in the understanding of ministries. Asked whether he/she was a Christian there is amongst some a tendency to say, '*Think of a different context*'.[48] Here is a crucial matter where some awareness of Quaker background would help in understanding why and how Quakers approach matters as they do. There is a subtlety of approach that attracts some people in that categories are questioned, which may not have been explored in that way before. While in some faith communities an interpretation is handed down from positions of authority, with Quakers they discern with the assistance of mature support. Some Meetings mentioned the significance of weighty Quakers in this context.[49] There have been many occasions when people have referred to the dynamism that was associated with what for them was new theological interpretation.

5.2.2 Implicit Religion

There is a breadth of believing amongst Quakers that is not always possible to be catalogued in a narrow religious sense. Kate Mellor drew a distinction between explicit Christians, implicit Christians, and non-Christians.[50] The theory of implicit religion is helpful when

[48]Field Work record 98: Interview.
[49]This was particularly the case with the Watford Meeting where Wolf Mendl was often mentioned.
[50]Kate Mellor, "The Question of Christianity," in *The Quaker Condition, the sociology of a liberal religion*, edited by Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publications, 2008), 81 and 84.

approaching the apparent variety of levels of belief. [51] Here there is a continuous line between the religious and the non-religious. Thus one wrote '*One area of division in the world in recent times has been that between those who have, in some way, a belief in God and those who don't but this is a false dividing line*'.[52] Implicit religion can lead to a continuous line with some people at one end of the continuum being sure in their beliefs and some people at the other end with a variety of self-questioning. People move up and down the continuum and have interpersonal changes as well as intergenerational ones. I have noticed this elastic change when engaged in the field work. People coming to Quakers are moving into different positions on the continuum and being welcomed.

5.2.3 Kenosis

Kenosis or letting go is a central concept in theology that goes back to *Philippians* Chapter 2 and is a powerful contrast to a transcendent omnipotent theology. There are hints of this in a few of the respondents. David Johns has pointed out that Quakers do not exist for themselves alone and would not talk in terms of a Quaker theology.[53] Self-denial is mentioned by one person and this is a practical adjunct to kenosis. Quakers often refer to examples when making a point, which occurs with kenosis. One commentator drew upon the following lives whom he considered to be self-giving: Tolpuddle Martyrs, Chartists, Robert Owen, and Edmund Burke. Quakers do not always draw upon Biblical concepts which may explain why kenosis is not central. It may however be there implicitly and may appeal to those who want

[51]Edward Bailey, *Implicit Religion in Contemporary Society*, (Kempen, Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1992). For a similar style of argument see David John, *Quakering Theology: essays on worship, tradition and Christian faith* (London: Routledge, 2016).
[52]Field Work record 43: Account.
[53]Johns, *Quakering Theology*, vi.

to be released from a possible arrogant individualism. Such individualism may of course be hard to overcome. In connection with kenosis I observed that some organizations such as Oxfam saw themselves as working so that they are no longer needed. Ecumenical ideas encourage churches to seek unity in removing their distinctions. While this is true of some churches engaged in ecumenism it is not the case with Quakers who consider a distinctive continued presence important, indicating kenosis has its limits. In a booklet for Quakers rather than about them Dandelion writes that 'We may be invisible as Quakers in a landscape of increasing consumer and environmental awareness but are highly self-aware and self-questioning'.[54] Such questioning may well embrace a self-giving approach to life where 'in our daily lives we may live in smaller houses than our peers, drive smaller cars or none at all, and own fewer things'.[55] This can be placed in the context of an individualism that is characteristic of economically developed societies.

5.2.4 Transformation

One can see some of the large theological divisions between the East [Russia, Greece, Eastern Christianity] and West in terms of theories of the atonement. These revolve around the significance of the death of Jesus. This involves concepts of redemption, victory, sacrifice, and justification. As well as the Bible significant theologians in this area include Anselm (1033-1109); Martin Luther (1486-1546); John Calvin (1509-1564) and Karl Barth (1886-1968). While the West emphasised atonement, the East dwelt upon transformation. The cross

[54]Pink Dandelion, *Celebrating the Quaker Way* (London: Quaker Books, 2009),15.
[55]Ibid. It is useful to note in this context that 9% placed themselves as high income; 58% as middle income;29% as low income in answer to Question 41 British Quaker Survey, 2013.
http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/national-quaker-survey.html[accessed 5/11/2018]

is common in Western churches with a focus on salvation. Pictures of Jesus' transfiguration are more common in Eastern churches[56] with an emphasis on the transformation of individuals. Jenny Amery considers that 'transformational change can take many years to achieve'.[57] While the Western Church sees salvation as central, the East sees theosis. Theosis says that God became man in order that we may become as God.[58] Quakers see their lives as 'being one of "becoming"'.[59]

The concept of transformation is described in the following:

> *Back in Wales having retired, I have come to understand that personal salvation does not come from repentance and forgiveness but, as George Fox said, from a positive and mature turning from darkness to light… through the internal discipline of silent waiting for the presence of the Spirit; they understand that unconditional love follows inevitably from the knowledge that there is that of God within each of us, whatever our nature'.*[60]

The theology of transformation includes *metanoia* but original blessing rather than sin.[61] It involves a movement from fear to something positive. A number of people commented on how they were attracted to what they considered a liberation from the concept of original sin.[62] One wrote '*I was fortunate not to encounter the obsession with sin, judgement and punishment which a number of my friends have had to contend with at church or chapel'.* [63] For Montemaggi 'the idea of "transformation" was absent from the narratives of Quakers I interviewed. Instead what was stressed was continuity with an ethical way of life. When

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[56]For reference to transfiguration see *Faith and Practice* 26.50 quoting S. Jocelyn Burnett.
[57]Jenny Amery, "Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust" *The Friend,* January 17, 2020, 13.
[58]See Vladimir Kharlamov, *Theosis: deification in Christian theology* (London: James Clark and Co, 2006).
[59]Dandelion, Celebrating the Quaker Way, 25.
[60]Meeting of Friends in Wales, *Towards the Source* (Wales: Meeting of Friends in Wales, 2014),109.
[61]Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing* (Santa Fe: Bear and Co, 1983).
[62]Quaker writers refer to Teilhard de Chardin and his notion of a world forming gradually with an inbuilt imperfection. See Raymond Matley and Rebecca Smith, *In Search of Life's Meaning* (Pulborough: Praxis, 1993), 92-93.
[63]Field Work record 79: Account.

change was mentioned, it was seen as subconscious and unintentional'.[64] It is a matter of emphasis, but it is significant that Quakers do not appear to focus on an atonement that dwells on contrast. For Quakers concepts such as atonement have 'no meaning as verbal doctrines…..their only value is as description of real states of awareness and relationship'.[65] If the spiritual life is a journey towards becoming whole and there is evidence of this in the comments that have been recorded, then an ongoing transformation is present. Rather than being sudden as some conversion experiences can suggest there is a gradual transformation which is compatible with continuity, which we have seen present in the life stories of Quakers.

5.3 Issues that are open to theological application from a Quaker perspective.

The theological approaches outlined above have been applied to the following issues.

5.3.1 Religion and the spiritual in multi-faith contexts

Sociology and phenomenology have made significant analyses of religion. While functionalist analysis attempts to be neutral there are tendencies for criticism. Some of these were found among the respondents. Ninian Smart provided a useful way to analyse the form of religion by considering it to consist of six dimensions, namely doctrine, ritual, mythology, ethics, social and experiential.[66] While the content of religions would differ the form would remain constant. We have seen in this chapter that doctrine can be a barrier to some people. Ritual is also a difficulty for people, and this can manifest itself in an aversion to church buildings and

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[64]Montemaggi, *The Changing Face of Faith in Britain*,

[65] Craig Barnett, *Quaker Renewal* (London: A Friend Publication, 2017), 46.

[66]Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind* (London: Fontana, 1971), especially 13-30. A seventh dimension, the material, is sometimes included, this being derivative from the social one.

what goes on in them. A familiar experience is outlined as follows 'I hated Religion. There came a point when I wouldn't even go inside a church. I can remember being in France and my parents were wanting to go and visit churches and see the architecture. I wouldn't go inside. Nothing would make me go inside a church'.[67] This is a powerful relaying of an experience. One does not want to exaggerate but clearly there are those who find churches a bit like the 'steeple houses' of George Fox's day. Some would of course wish to stand apart from the issue at the outset concluding that Quakerism is not a religion and does not need to be seen in that context.[68]

Many Quakers are happy to have an appreciation of other faiths. One person linked a common phrase of Quakers with that of Buddhism when he said '*Walk joyfully over the world, answering to that of infinity in everyone. As the Buddha put it more pithily. Walk On!'* [69] I had a conversation in Cirencester with someone who was a pagan and reflected on the tiles of the Quaker Meeting House which she considered to be a safe place similar to that of a pagan circle with mother earth associations.[70] This multiplicity may cause Quakers to reflect on their own diversity as Harvey Gillman pointed out: 'Not all Christians have the same religion, or speak the same religious language. Not all Quakers even speak the same dialect of Quakerism'.[71] Such a relativism was appealing especially to those who found insistence on one orthodox position stifling.

67Anthony Gimpel, in *My Life, My Faith*, edited by Marilyn Ricci (Leicester: Leicester Quaker Press, 2010).
68Field Work record 127: Interview.
69Holroyd, "Don't Shy Away from Infinity," 40.
70Conversation following mid week Meeting.
71Harvey Gillman, *My Journey into Faith*, talk given to Rye Churches Together Jan 18, 2016.

Since the 1980s there has been a tendency to distinguish between religion and spirituality. While the former can accumulate pejorative comment the later seems wider and more acceptable. One person located his/her position on a spiritual journey with the comment '*I prefer to start where I am now in my spiritual journey, as this is what I am living at this moment in time*'.[72] There is much discussion about spirituality with some seeing the value of new movements in spirituality while others see such development as over emphasizing the individual and personal choices as to what will be satisfying. If one considers these positions to be on a continuum one would see a variety, and in terms of this study it is the variety of positions that attracted people exploring Quakerism. Some argue that such variety may eventually contain the seeds of its own destruction. Writing in the wider context of secularisation Steve Bruce considers that 'When the common culture of a society consists of operating principles that allow the individual to choose, no amount of vague spiritual yearning will generate a shared belief system'.[73]

5.3.2 Sacramental living

Some people were attracted to Quakerism because of the lack of specific sacraments such as communion and baptism, which focus on events. What is important for Quakers is an inward communion, and there is thought to be no need to practice what in any case had not been instituted. The concept of sacramental living whereby everything in life is seen as reflecting a significant presence has attraction. Churches seem to have followed with similar thinking.

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[72]Madge Stables, in *Journeys* 2nd edition (Reading Quaker Meeting, 2016)
[73] Steve Bruce, *Secularisation: in defense of an unfashionable theory,* (Oxford; OUP, 2011), 55.

There has been a tendency to reduce comment on attendance on a Sunday and to consider the link that people have with the church during the week, such as coffee mornings, play groups and music groups. Duin comments that 'Coffeehouses are postmodern wells and we are following in the footsteps of Jesus and meeting at wells.' [74] Here Quakers are *avant-garde* in their thinking and coming from churches people find that their ideas have been anticipated by Quakers. While many Quakers do not participate in the sacraments of the Church, others are happy to continue to do so. For some there is a place for specific sacraments while for others '*tea and lemon*' is communion.[75] Both can live together but the issue raises problems in an ecumenical setting. In some ways the sacraments as understood in church are offered with a concept that does not appear to be central to Quakers, namely the concept of sin. Some avoid situations where communion takes place while others participate and keep a low profile. There are occasions when communion is refused with the offer of a blessing. Here one can observe a variety of responses and in general a celebration that a sacramental way of life is what is being offered with Quakers. The concept of a sacramental life can be assumed without careful analysis, with a danger that it becomes watered down. One considered that not all life was sacramental, failing to deal with the problem of evil in the world, and this was a person who had worked with injustice in one of the poorest parts of the world.[76] Very few interviewees raised the issue of communion independently and when I asked about it few saw it as a problem.

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[74] Julia Duin, *Quitting Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2008), 74 quoting Batterson (no reference).
[75] Field Work record 96: Interview.
[76] Field Work record 105: Interview.

5.3.3 The Biblical account and the place of Jesus

Few referred to the Bible, with one person saying that he/she thought the Biblical interpretation had been smoothed out, meaning by this that the miracles had been explained and a concept like evil played down. She felt that people had become poorer for this. This is something that is difficult to evaluate in terms of attraction. One could argue from silence and say that people are relieved that the use of the Bible is reduced. Arguments from silence are dangerous but may need to be applied at times. Jesus finds some mention in the accounts but is not as central as would be the case amongst earlier Friends. There are a number of people who quoted George Fox saying that 'Christ has come to teach his people'.[77] For one becoming Quaker sits alongside becoming Christ, and becoming fully human.[78] The middle term needs to be handled with care in the light of James Naylor's actions, enacting in 1656 a sign of Christ's Second Coming. Becoming 'as Christ' would be more acceptable, and reflect Paul's use of 'in Christ'. Theological comment on the nature and status of Jesus is limited, with one asserting that if he was divine then his actions would not be commendable.[79] The divinity of Christ is an issue for a number.[80] In affirming that she was not religious or a Christian one made the point that Jesus was not divine. This person went on to affirm that being a Quaker is a way of life, indicating that she saw this in contrast to the earlier positions that she rejected. For many, such an issue does not come up or if it does it is rejected.[81] In this

[77]George Fox, in several places.
[78]Alex Thomson, "Becoming Quaker", *The Friend*, Feb 3, 2017, 12.
[79]Field Work record 115. Interview with additional written material.
[80] In the 2013 British Quaker Survey Question 1a 14% considered Jesus to be The Son of God http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/national-quaker-survey.html [accessed 5/11/2018]
[81]Field Work record 127. Interview.

context one person saw herself as a Quaker Christian. One felt liberation when the influence of Jesus was reduced, while for another it was a matter of seeing Jesus as a unique but purely human teacher and prophet, without accepting such doctrines as the atonement.[82] The absence of reference to Jesus shows that Quakers have moved from that which would be central to an evangelical church. Quakers have moved from such a specific focus, being concerned with the tensions of peculiarity. The absence of a focus that is present elsewhere may indicate a liberation for those considering Quakerism. I would like to conclude this section with the observation by someone that '*Even if the story were proved a fiction, I would remain a follower of Jesus, of his way*'.[83] This may seem somewhat strange but is no stranger than the person who found themselves having a relationship with the God in whom they no longer believed.

5.3.4 The concept of an after-life

There are those who emphasized near death experiences while reincarnation is mentioned. I have found those to be a minority in the research, and indeed life after death was not raised by many of the respondents although here is a case where interpretation of the data was needed.[84] Most hold an ambivalent view but are prepared to explain the implications. In a lengthy statement one wrote:

> This enquiry into the nature of our knowing bears directly on thoughts about an after life, thoughts which, for me at least, take on more importance in the seven years since the death of my life-long love and wife Beryl. I find various attempts to portray this after life, particularly in literature, interesting and frequently uplifting. That the veil

82Field Work record 79: Account.
83Sue Hampton, comment in *The Friend*, May 5, 2018, 3.
84 Compare 2013 British Quaker Survey Question 15 when asked Do you believe in Life after death 30% said yes. http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/national-quaker-survey.html [accessed 5/11/2018].

> between living and dead is no more than a diaphanous curtain, easily disturbed, seems reasonable. In the indefiniteness of that abstract it is possible to feel optimistic that my death will mean a kind of merging with her in an indescribable state which has no boundaries or specific qualities. I use the word "merging" in that last , and it is a word with great and growing importance for me.[85]

There is an emphasis on the here and now, or realised eschatology [heaven is now] with a central importance placed on friendship. There is said to be an awareness of energy and time and this intrudes into life. The experience of the death of others often causes one to reflect in a way that did not happen before. Often comments about an after-life were couched in the concept of time. There is also an experiential dimension as with the person who wrote '*My concept of eternity, which I think many Friends would share, is that a moment of exaltation or despair can be limitless in elapsed time*'.[86] The belief or otherwise in relation to an after-life was often placed against a back drop of other theological beliefs. One wrote '*I do not believe in god. I do not believe that we have immortal souls. For me, this life is not an obstacle race to heaven; this is it'.*[87] For many people images are used such as this extended one:

> *It seems to me that we are born with a paint brush in our hands. Every minute, we apply the brush strokes of our life. Some strokes are bold and gaudy, some subtle, some broad, some fine. The painting cannot be celebrated until it is complete, and each is unique. The longer we contemplate these finished paintings, the more we learn from them. Is there life after death? I don't know. Does it matter? I don't think so. However, I am a cussed bloke and am inclined to live as if reincarnation does exist. If we are to achieve enlightenment I suspect it will not be in a single lifetime. Whilst I live my brother will have his eternity: his everlasting evening is in my thoughts'.*[88]

The above comments present an open approach that allows traditional and more unusual views about an after-life to be held. Quaker funerals have a great impact and those that I have

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[85]Edward Jones, "On Knowing God," *Quaker Voices,* May 2014, 32.
[86]Richard Seebohm, "Speaking Out," *The Friend,* May 25, 2018, 7.
[87]Field Work record 62: Account.
[88]Quaker Quest, *12 Quakers and Death* (London: Quaker Quest, 2017), 11.

attended do not specify the concerns of an after-life [which may be an oxymoron] but as elsewhere celebrate the moment. Those on the search find this encouraging.[89]

5.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the variety of theological thinking that can take place in Quakerism. In terms of a continuum there are those who adopt a Christ centred theology while others at a different point on the continuum can adopt non-theistic language or radical theology which has its roots in the 1960s. This theology may not be expressed in the churches but finds a home amongst Quakers, many of whom may be nostalgic for the theology of the 1960s. It is possible to sum up much of the theology as exploring questions rather than relying on answers at the outset. Those involved in such questioning share a sense of belonging to a community where believing can be explored. Belonging and believing have come together.[90] Respondents may have come home but that home coming may be considered in terms of joining with others on a continuing journey. It is in the belonging that people find their aim. One could comment that this is how the early followers of Jesus, and indeed George Fox, operated. When it comes to believing in a traditional sense many people hold provisional positions and are happy to find meaning in the search and a place to reflect. Those who wish for answers and certainty find liberal Quakerism less attractive.

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[89]Compare Pink Dandelion, *The Liturgies of Quakerism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 6 – only the present is real.
[90] For a statement of this see Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain: a persistent paradox.* 2nd edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 2015), 78-81.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PLACE OF SOCIAL ACTION

This chapter is concerned with the social action that is undertaken by Quakers. The link between work and Quaker values is considered with some examples from the interviews. Quaker action is encapsulated in the testimonies of peace, equality, simplicity, integrity, community, and stewardship. It is argued that while theology has an appeal so does social action. The link between the two is significant. Social action lent itself to becoming part of the sense of belonging that the individual experienced in relation to the whole. 35% of interviewees and 5% of those providing accounts mentioned social action. The low figure of the latter group may reflect humility and a rejection of placing such matters on record.

6.1 Practice

It has become appropriate to analyse the overarching themes in Quakerism in terms of the prophetic, the mystical, the historical. One theme that emerged within the prophetic stream is that of practice. An Islamic Quaker noted: '*For me Quakers fulfil the activist side of me but Islam occupies the intellectual and contemplative part though both are very, very similar having no creed and both emphasize the importance of what you do rather than what you say you believe*'.[1] While the practical dimension has attracted many people there are those who see this as oppressive. One individual who has worked tirelessly for a charity concerned with

[1]Karima Brooke, in *Introducing 31 Members and Attenders of Oxford Quaker Meeting,* edited by Tanya Garland (Oxford Quaker Meeting, 2008),38 and updated in conversation.

poverty in Madagascar considered that some Quakers live around the Meeting and that this can be too precious. For her the performative aspect of religion was central, it was however possible for her to be a back-seat Quaker. [2] One commented that '*In our nice new Meeting House, I have done little more than washing up after Meeting*'.[3] Here it is possible to see the different stances that can be taken to the place of social action within Quakerism, so there is not one strand that attracts people to Quakerism but social action would be one of a number of strands that do. [4]

From my findings and the other surveys referred to it is apparent that people are attracted to Quakers in the light of the social action that is exemplified by Friends. The significance has occurred in surveys which have presented a list of features with new members asked to indicate which they found attractive. It is to be noted that while social action plays a part it is not always a central one in terms of the statistics. Kenneth Ives found that only 12% mentioned activism and 6% special interests, with nearly a half mentioning open worship and inner light.[5] Peggy Heeks in her study of twelve Quaker Meetings found that 6% mentioned social witness and 5% the opportunity for service while nearly 50% referred to a spiritual basis.[6] Alastair Heron recorded that 78% listed 'Social Concern' as an attractive feature, and in this case respondents were able to tick more than one category which was not so in the case

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[2]Field Work record 104: Interview.
[3]Field Work record 85: Account.
[4] For an overview of Quaker social action see Judith Frith, "The temporal collage: how British Quakers make choices about time at the beginning of the twenty first century" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2009).
[5]Kenneth Ives *New Friends Speak: how and why they join Friends (Quakers) in the mid 1970s* (Chicago: Progressive Publisher, c1980.).
[6]Peggy Heeks, *Reaching to Community: a story of twelve Quaker meetings* (Tyne and Wear: Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, 1994), 7.

of the Ives and Heeks studies. To provide the context four features scored higher in the Heron study, namely, Methods of Worship 95%, No structured doctrine 83%, Fellowship of the Meeting 82% and Equality of Men and Women 80%.[7] The *British Quaker Survey* (2013) also included a section asking 'What initially attracted you to Quakerism?' Among these was the Quaker way of life which 40% indicated as attractive. Three features scored higher, namely, Lack of religious dogma 67%, Form of Worship 62%, Peace and social testimonies/political 41%.[8] A small unpublished survey for Quaker Week 2019 noted that when asked about their priorities as Quakers 34% put social action at the top while 66% put the Meeting and silence. From the above viewpoint we can see the attraction of social action amongst Quakers, or the 'Elizabeth Fry factor' as some put it. One Meeting felt it necessary to hold a threshing meeting to agree some social action and thus balance the proposed rebuilding of part of the Meeting complex. It is good that some are aware that there can be stress in the emphasis on social action. There is wisdom expressed by the person who felt that Quakers should heal themselves before they heal the world.

At times respondents have emphasized practice at the expense of belief, the latter being a matter of focus rather than a dogma. Some reflected on the link between the two, considering that an over-emphasis on practice could equal humanism, while Quakerism cannot be reduced

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[7]Alastair Heron, *Now We are Quakers: the experience and view of new members* (York: Quaker Outreach in Yorkshire, 1994), 21. On learning of this one respondent was amazed that equality of men and women was not a given.

[8]Jennifer Hampton, "British Quaker Survey," *Quaker Sudies*19.1 (2014): 100.

to theology.[9] Others drew some subtle reflection starting with belief but also encompassing action. One wrote:

> *Recently, as I reflected on whether I believed in God or not, I felt that was not the right question. Questions of belief are secondary. What was important was to ask more basic questions. What do I find in the world? Do I see the world around me with the possibilities of grace*? [10]

Here belief and practice are not juxtaposed but are contingent. A similar comment came in the following: 'I like the combination of the Quaker principles (known as testimonies) and the keenness to contribute to the world around us through work. This is often referred to as "*Being Quaker, Doing Quaker*".'[11] Some drew the lines between belief and practice. For many the attraction would not be to the belief but rather to the ethos. Ethos assumes an element of sharing and this may come in the search and at times in the finding. The emphasis on doing can also be placed alongside being and living. It is thus appropriate that belief and practice have been considered as concepts that can be drawn together and also considered individually. This is not quite the same as Dandelion's comment that 'Liberal Quakerism is thus held together not by what it believes but by how it believes'.[12] There are various nuances in the way belief and practice are held together.

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[9]James Spickard, "Charting the Inward Journey: applying Blackmore's model to meditative religious experience," *Archiv für Religionpsycholge* 26 (2003): 177.
[10]Harvey Gillman, in *The Friend*, September 27, 2017, 29.
[11]Elizabeth Redfern, "Why I am a Quaker," http://www.Northamptonshirequakers [accessed 6/5/2017].
[12]Pink Dandelion "The Creation of Coherence," in *The Quaker Condition*, edited by Pink Dandelion and Peter Collins (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publication, 2008), 34.

6.2 Quaker values in profession/work

Quakers try to choose a profession because it aligns with the values they hold, it being a contradiction in terms to be a Quaker arms dealer.[13] While this is the case there are few people who made direct links or attempted to reflect at depth about work. This study did not incorporate work, although people were able to raise it. The reason it was not raised a lot is probably because most people were retired. In comparison to this study Mark Read made one of Quakers and work.[14] Tom Shakespeare made a link between work that brought equality and the Quakers who held this value as an important one. Montemaggi comments that 'Walter works in mental health and he told me that too often there is little effort to see the "human" in the person. He [Walter] refers to compassion and the "ability to see the human beyond their behaviours"'. [15] Quakers did not come from a corporate background. Read recorded that most Quakers were involved in public non-marketised services.[16] I mentioned this to one who did come from such a corporate background. She provided me with the following comment after the interview. It went as follows:

> *Having worked in corporate life something that up to now struck me as surprising is colleagues commenting on the fact that I treat all people with whom I work as equal whether they be the CEO or someone working on a forklift in the warehouse….this is most definitely rooted in my Quaker upbringing and outlook……Possibly this has impeded my potential to progress up the corporate ladder, however it means that I remain true to myself and my values….*[17]

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[13] One interviewee drew attention to Samuel Galton, the eighteenth-century Quaker arms manufacturer. Field Work record 37: Account.

[14] Mark Read, "How is the Quaker Tradition Lived out in the Contemporary British Work Context?" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2017).

[15] Francesca Montemaggi (ed), *The Changing Face of Faith in Britain: how should Quakers respond? Part 2: The spirituality of new Quakers* (London: Britain Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke, 2018), 24.

[16] Read, "How is the Quaker Tradition Lived Out in the Contemporary British Work Context?". 161 and 191.

[17] Field Work record 127: Interview and additional account.

Professional work is one thing but there is also the work associated with the Religious Society of Friends itself. Some found this a little overwhelming. There were cases of people considering the work to be too much in certain situations. Reflection enabled the work to be seen in a balanced context. As a lay organization it is as if the balance is found by the Members, which again was an attraction for those meeting Quakers for the first time.

6.3 Examples of Social Action

6.3.1 Principles/Testimonies

Quaker identity has been linked to the testimonies. Scully considers that 'The testimonies provide not merely the theological rationale for a way of life, but some indicators of what that way of life should look like'.[18] There is the formal level of the testimonies and the informal level of the way the concepts associated with the testimonies are conveyed. George Gorman commented that 'One of the unexpected things I have learnt in my life as a Quaker is that religion is basically about relationships between people'.[19] If it remains at the level of relationships it would be little different to the majority of life. Respondents frequently referred to a depth of experience in the group. One person referred to a common experience, '*the experience of A Reality which underlies, but is more Real, than our day-to- day, run-of-the- mill world; a Reality which is knit into our very essence, which is available to us, available because that Reality invites us into relationship with itself.* [20] For this respondent '*Quakerism, at its heart, is a community of people whose voices echo down the*

[18]Jackie Scully, "Virtuous Friends: Morality and Quaker Identity," in *The Quaker Condition*, edited by Dandelion and Collins, 120.
[19]George Gorman, "Religion and Life," *Quaker Monthly* 61(1982): 64.
[20]Field Work record 65: Account.

generations'.[21] The self is thus brought into relationship with others. This can be compared to Abby Day when she writes about her informants understanding themselves '"in relation to" something or somebody'.[22] Reasons for attending and even joining are multi-layered as we have seen throughout this study. One responded that he was not attracted to the testimonies but Quakerism as a way of life. Here it is not the explicit content of the testimonies but the implicit actions and way of life of Quakers that attracted. It is significant that Montemaggi considers 'Simplicity is one of the testimonies that is mentioned most often'.[23] Simplicity is a way of life and may not need a reference point in a testimony as some of the others do. It is not always clear how to interpret the testimonies in everyday life. One felt that a difficult aspect of Quakerism is the expression of anger. This person went on to say that '*Another difficult aspect is that you grow up with a burning need to make a difference to what needs to be done'*.[24]

It is possible to leave the above comments about anger to that of the individual. Congregational studies would place them in a wider context. Ammerman drew attention to ways of cataloguing the approaches that people have.[25] She considered four categories for faith groups [26] comprising:

- Tragic/Canonic expressed by evangelicals – submitting to God's will.
- Comedy/Gnostic expressed by Quakers -go with the flow, things will work out.

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[21]Ibid.,
[22]Abby Day, *Believing in Belonging: belief and social identity in the modern world* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 204.
[23]Montemaggi, (ed.), *The Changing Face of Faith in Britain*, 19.
[24]Field Work record 40: Account.
[25] Nancy Ammerman et al, *Studying Congregations. A new handbook* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1998),96, quoting James Hopewell.
[26] A useful outline is given in Martyn Percy, *The Origins of Species* (London: Continuum, 2006),127.

- Romantic expressed by Charismatics – expect a miracle.
- Ironic/Empiric expressed by Liberals – relevance and fellowship, not the resolution of some grand dilemma but the camaraderie of the all-too-human actors who face it.

Going with the flow may be part of the peace testimony but I would want to place Quakerism within the Ironic/Empiric category as well. It is concerned with relating to the situations in the world but also being able to find a peace when things do not go as wanted. The person mentioning anger was making an important point, but it needed to be placed in a wider context. It is this wider nuanced context that is a central characteristic of Quakerism.

It would be difficult not to mention the First and Second World and other twentieth century wars in the context of Quakers and the peace testimony. Some raised it independently and this was certainly the case for those born in the 1930s and 1940s. A father wounded in the First world War had led to an element of scepticism in the household,[27] in that it was suggested that the pain of war knew no barriers.[28] War had implications on the style of life leading in some cases to poverty,[29] and other implications. Some people were shocked that following the Iraq War there was little mention of it in church.[30] The Falklands War also had a significant impact. One person became an Attender following the Six-Day War in the 1960s.

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[27]Field Work record 87: Interview.
[28] Alan Jones, *The Quaker Way* was provided as Account for Field Work record 5: Account.
[29]Field Work record 103: Interview
[30]Sonja, as part of *Our Stories* 4/3/2016 http://tunbridgewellsquakers.blogspot.co.uk [accessed 14/7/2017] Filed as Field Work record 28: Account.

The Peace Testimony has implications for people becoming Quakers with respondents finding pacifism difficult. Here is a case where the peace testimony may be divisive and raise problems for those wishing to embrace Quakerism. For many the peace testimony is perceived less in terms of pacifism than as living in a peaceful way.[31] While for some peace is a valid concept on its own, for others it also needs to be linked with justice. In performative terms some of those responding wanted to promulgate the use of white poppies and the laying of a white wreath at the local war memorial whilst others preferred not to participate. The mention of *Extinction Rebellion* aroused a variety of emotions, including on the one hand anger and enthusiastic support on the other.

Social action can vary in terms of context. One that stands out although is not always referred to is that of class. Quakers are predominantly white, middle-class, and relatively well off,[32] and while this is a simple statement there are places when such a point is criticism. In the obituary of Owen Cole there is the following comment 'In Cole Sahib readers of *The Friend* will find many resonances with their own journey, as well as new perspectives and insights. The narrative resounds with Owen Cole's hatred of any class-based snobbery'.[33] We can return in our minds to early Friends and the way they respected others. This continuity with the past attracts people. There is a consistency and continuity that reminds me of Hervieu-

[31] For differing approaches to peace see Pink Dandelion et al., "Choose life! Quaker metaphor and modernity," *Quaker Studies* 13.2 (2009):160-183.
[32]Field Work record 37: Account. British Quaker Studies data. William Frost, "Modernist and Liberal Quakers, 1887-2010," in *The Oxford Handbook of Quaker Studies*, edited by Stephen Angell and Pink Dandelion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 90.
[33]Testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of Owen Cole (Chichester).

Léger that I find a useful basis for studying Quaker journeys. For her religion is a mode of believing:

> The crucial points to grasp in this analysis are a) the *chain* which makes the individual believer a member of a community, a community which gathers past, present and future members and b) the tradition (or collective memory) which becomes the basis of that community's existence….she argues that modern societies are less religious not because they are increasingly rational but because they are less and less capable of maintaining the memory which lies at the heart of their religious existence.[34]

When people become associated with Quakerism, they are encouraged to identify with the social action which has its roots in the early Friends. In doing so they become part of the chain of memory and help to perpetuate it. It was also important that people were able to tell their own story to the Meeting lest they ceased to remember.

6.4 Chapter Summary

The theme of the chapter is concerned with Quaker thinking and responses to the society's culture of encouraging and seeing as positive social action. This chapter examined some of the social actions that have attracted people coming to Quakers. This is not a simple situation as such things as the peace testimony can appear to have nuanced interpretations. That these may include pacifism and reactions to war is evident. They may more commonly include a peaceful approach to living, involving a holistic approach to action and values, with the underlying theology being there. The practical aspects of social action can be equated to performative faith. The individual may be involved with such action or may be carried along by others and their commitment to it. This exemplifies the concepts of believing and belonging addressed by Grace Davie and Abby Day.

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[34]Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press/Polity Press, 2000) x.

CHAPTER SEVEN

REFLECTIONS ON THE CONCEPT OF 'LIFE STORY/FAITH JOURNEY'

This chapter focuses on the people who attend Meetings. It allows them to speak about their needs and the way Quakers have helped. Much of this is personal with a focus on states of mind and attitudes, including depression and a question of self. The remedial value of the Meeting is explored, including responses to the research question, exploring concepts of 'journey' and 'story'. The chapter enabled people to celebrate those things that contribute to a sense of self-worth. For a Quaker, such self-worth is found with a sense of belonging to a larger whole. 39% of interviewees and 26% of those writing accounts referred to the above material. This chapter is divided into States of Mind; Attitudes; Depression; Who am I? Reflecting on the concept of a journey; the search.

7.1 States of Mind

The mean age of applicants applying for Membership is 41.8,[1] meaning that many will have experienced a variety of frames of thinking or shifts of mood in their lives. One spoke of having feelings of forebodings in 2017 about the political situation in the world when the interview took place and compared this to her previous feelings in the 1980s which brought her to be a Quaker.[2] Respondents referred to feelings of *angst* in their lives and to issues of

[1]British Quaker survey (2013) Question 9b, http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/national-quaker-survey-html [accessed 5/11/2018], n.p.
[2]Field Work record 98: Interview.

concern in the world. One reflected on whether she could be OK when there was war in Syria, concluding: *'If I am not attached to an outcome I can act with more love and less ego. If I am not attached to my anxiety I have more energy for living'*.[3] Practical or applied theology addresses the issue of how to be content when others are in pain: for example one of the brothers of Taizé referred to simple living and the parable of community, as a way of coming to terms with this issue.[4] It is perhaps via states of mind that people come to Quakerism and in particular the simple life. An account is given by one Quaker:

> *"Half way up the stairs (A.A. Milne) is a stair where I sit, there isn't any other stair quite like it" were written for me. I've been fortunate to be born onto the stair where I sit amongst Quakers in a worshipping community. The stair has generously accommodated me as a wriggly two- year old, rebellious teenager, weary mother, ailing and robust, happy and sad, believer and non-believer. It is sometimes the most uncomfortable place to sit, but paradoxically the most comfortable place I know. I have never managed to satisfy my need to sit on it. It seems the most important thing to do.* [5]

This account indicates how the person has moved through various stages of life with an accompanying change in the way Quakers have accommodated her. Quakers are able to accommodate such change in participants in Meeting. Another account states: '*I stopped chasing the end of rainbows when I was six. I became a Quaker in 2008, because I stopped chasing the end of all rainbows. I've learnt instead to wait for the rainbow, and to let it come and to let it go, when it will and when it must*.' [6] Some contributors provided a commentary on states of mind. One commented: 'Now the practice. I read once that it is only when one's

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3 Newsletter cutting from Meeting.
4Taizé newsletter. "Do we have the right to be happy when others are suffering?" Compare Harvey Gillman who asks, 'How can we be whole if the world is broken?' Gillman, *Words* (London: A Friend Publication, 2016), 24.
5Field Work record 19. Transcript of an interview of one member by another. Mixture of Interview and Account.
6Field Work record 22: Account.

selfishness becomes overwhelmingly painful that one becomes truly unselfish'.[7] It is comments like these that can be found in Quaker ministries. I notice that Quaker literature and posters in Quaker Meeting Houses often contained thoughtful comments which indicate that Quakers find it important to assist with the states of mind when reflecting.

7.2 Attitudes

People come with certain attitudes of mind, and these will influence why it is that they are attracted to Quakers. One pointed out that he did not like authority,[8] and in this context he felt that membership methods were too structured, not allowing for movement of the spirit.[9] One felt inadequate but still came to Quakers assuming them to be socially larger than life. This person assumed Quakers were successful and made a difference.[10] Another came appreciating the attitude of humility and questioning that she found in Quakerism. [11] A comment on attitude is as follows:

> Throughout my life, rather than strike out adventurously into new and unknown seas, I have tried to sound the depths of the one I find myself in, and seek to possess as fully as possible the heritage of the Christian faith into which I was born.[12]

For this person, the theme is not that of a journey but fulfilment. [13]

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[7]This is an earlier comment by Eva Barton that is found in *My Faith in Practice* edited by Anna Bretts and Lee Taylor (Milton Keynes Meeting, reprinted 2011). Again, in view of the general nature of the comment it seemed appropriate to include it here. It may the case that on a recent one- to -one people were reticent about exploring 'moods.' The Milton Keynes collection did not involve outsiders.
[8]Field Work record 88: Interview.
[9]Ibid.
[10]Field Work record 91: Interview
[11]Susan Bennett, in *Quaker Voices* 1.5 (2010): 7-9.
[12]John Punshon, "Love God and Try to be Good," in *My Faith in Practice*, edited by Don Rowe (Milton Keynes Meeting, 2013), 77.
[13]Ibid.

Some drew upon writers like Jung to express the attitude that they brought to Quakerism.[14] One such commented as follows: '"Vocation" according to Jung means "finding your own voice". I frequently despaired of ever finding mine, but I feel nearer to it now than ever before…. It is that we can choose to live "as if", "as if" it's true. Even if there is nothing'.[15] This person wanted to have the following placed on her gravestone: 'Her first avowed intent to be a pilgrim'.[16] Sometimes attitudes developed into actions as with the following: 'My tendency when thwarted or imposed upon is to react vigorously, often with vain threats; but when this reaction has subsided, to respond by inviting rather than imposing, trying to act like the sun rather than the wind'.[17] Some of these attitudes may have been formed as Quakers, but the essence may have been there and found a home for expression in Quakerism. The field work records suggest that Quakers will attract and provide the encouragement of a mindset for people who wish to think for themselves.

7.3 Depression

Respondents saw depression as part of the journey. One wrote: *'May be if I had been more open to it, the journey would have been easier? But I feel there was and is part of the path through an experiential faith, making mistakes, finding out for oneself and not being judged'*.[18] The Quaker Meeting has helped many people with depression as with the following: 'My state of mind was dire, depressed and confused and lost. I was in a dark and

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[14]Compare Jack Wallis, *Jung and The Quaker Way,* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1988)
[15]Margaret Cook, in *My Faith in Practice, V*ol 2 (Milton Keynes, reprinted 2011*)*, 17-18. Although this is an earlier contribution it reflects later ones from Milton Keynes and indeed is in advance of its time.
[16]Ibid., 18.
[17]John Mason, Ibid., 48.
[18]Heather White, in *The Friendly Word* 33.6 (2016), 7.

unhappy place. By the end of the hour I had been gently lifted out of my despair and into a comfortable light. I then needed guidance about a route to follow*'*.[19] There are many cases when such echoes can be heard. This exemplifies the way Quakers inherit the tradition and make it their own. Attempts are made by some to see a positive significance to depression, as when one wrote: 'Should we look more widely at the transient nature of all things and consider, perhaps, that everything flows positively but that on a personal level, it can be difficult and painful and cause us suffering?*'*.[20] One even tried to place it within a theological context with the comment *'We are closest when messed up'.* [21] For one the Meeting was a special place for understanding. He/she commented that: 'I value that space which is heavy but very real. It moves me to tears, but it is a place of energy, which can be powerful and uplifting. I feel compassion for others and am moved by hearing of difficult lives as well as of joyous experiences'.[22]

7.4 Who am I?

One wondered who she was there, that is at the Meeting.[23] Another wrote in a poetic way about the dual experiences that made up her identity. It read as follows: '*two little characters sitting on my shoulders and muttering into my ears: one is a believer, the other is a sceptic'.*[24] In an attempt to find an identity this person enjoined: *'Remember who you are. We are the children of George Fox, Margaret Fell, of Isaac and Mary Pennington, of Frank Howgill and*

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[19]David Poulton, in *Dales Quaker Reader* March 2015.
[20]Quakers in Wales, *Towards the* Source (Meeting of Friends in Wales, 2014),36.
[21]Tape recording of interview provided by Watford Meeting.
[22]Gloria Dobbin, in *My Faith and Practice* (Milton Keynes Meeting, reprinted 2011**),** 21.
[23]Field Work record 83: Account.
[24]Alison Leonard, "Listening with both ears," *The Friend*, June 2, 2017,12.

other early Friends'.[25] This may seem straightforward but for some there is a genuine *angst.* One interviewee recalled a time when she distinguished between 'Who I am' and 'Who I was' implying that there was a conflict.[26] There may be a conflict in approaching religion for some. One respondent considered that:

> I would say by temperament I was "naturally religious" whatever that means. This "religious instinct" has for most of my life, been in some degree of conflict with my intellect. It is a conflict I have never been able to resolve.[27]

Conflicts such as these can be expressed at considerable depth. One reflected:

> I cannot tell an autobiography of the development of my faith, because there are many possible autobiographies.[28] (Continuing) John Macmurray, Quaker philosopher, thought that self only existed in relation to others…recall the tree and the bush…but I cannot wholly believe that. I have a strong sense of self within myself – I sense my own existence as a person.[29]

In this context Rowan Williams is quoted when he said 'my good, my dignity, has no substance, no life, without someone else's good or dignity being involved'.[30] This invokes a balance between what it is to be an individual and part of the group, what has been called the 'interconnectivity of selfhood'.[31.] Craig Barnett quoted the African proverb 'A person is a person through other people'.[32] This is against the idea that individuals can be read as discrete texts. For some there is still an element of conflict as with the person who said: 'I am not sure who I am –yet! "a work in progress". Having said that, there is a theme of slight dislocation

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[25]Alison Leonard, "Beyond Words," *The Friend*, June 9, 2017, 13. This is similar to the shared story that Craig Barnett advocates for Quaker identity. Craig Barnett, *Quaker Renewal* (London: Friend Publications, 2017), 51.
[26]Field Work record 132: Interview.
[27]Margaret Cook, in *My Faith in Practice*, Vol 2, 15.
[28]Anne Watson, ibid.,69.
[29]Ibid., 70.
[30]Ibid., 70.
[31]Bonnie Miller-McLemore. Article in *Christian Century* 7 (1993):366-369. Benjamin Wood, "Preserving Personhood. Quaker Individualism and Liberal Culture in Dialogue", *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 27.4 (2014): 474-489, refers to the social individual.
[32] Barnett, *Quaker Renewal*, 39.

running through my life...*'*.[33] The room for reflection is an attraction. Some attempted to find a way in Gestalt psychology with the suggestion that you become who you are.

Heather Walton in her work on life writing focuses on personhood, identity, purpose, authenticity, and self awareness. She invites people to describe their lives and finds that they often write in terms of a journey with mythological elements and religious undertones. There is reflexivity similar to that in Chapter Nine. Walton's approach assisted with reflection on my study as a whole, and in particular the focus of this section.[34]

7.5 Reflecting on the concept of a journey

The concept of journey entered the debate in this study, as Quakers use metaphor in identifying themselves, and in framing how they think. It is a matter of searching for meaning rather than explanation. By using the metaphor of journeying this framed the way experiences were viewed. [35] Some were content with the concept of journey, and indeed they were pleased to share with others as when one wrote: '*I realised how much of a privilege it was to hear people talk frankly about their spiritual journeys*'.[36] One spoke of a meandering journey

[33]Julian Armistead, in *Introducing 21 Members and Attenders of Oxford Quaker Meeting*, edited by Tanya Garland (Oxford Quaker Meeting, 2010), 44. I attach this one as there are few parallels of this sort of angst in the more recent accounts.
[34]Heather Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* (London: SCM, 2014), 91 and the whole of Chapter Seven of the book.
[35]The significance of metaphor was explored by Michael Rose and James Geary in the BBC 4 programme *Exploring Metaphor* on 7/1/2020.
[36]Sonja, in Tunbridge Wells website http://tunbridgewellsquakers.blogspot.co.uk [accessed 17/07/2017]

to Quakers,[37] while another talked of Quakers finding him/her.[38] People considered that the journey was not complete. One reflected:

My destination is unknown, but I am trying to follow each step given me, in trust. I often feel that I am at the beginning of a long mountain climb, shrouded in mist and silence. It is very much "work in progress" as I try to articulate my role in the wonderful achievement of loving cooperation in the world of money, government and taxation.[39]

One linked the concept of journey with that of pilgrimage when she wrote: '*The idea of our spiritual life as a journey is so central to religious experience. If this is so, then are not most of us pilgrims, most of the time?*'[40]

Another said: 'But I do not think we should fool ourselves in thinking that we have, in any sense, arrived**…'.**[41] There is a feeling that more should have been achieved as one said: 'But now I should have arrived at some conclusion but I am still travelling - hopefully and I hope I will one day meet the people who have died again'.[42] Some questioned whether 'journey' is an appropriate concept to use. The following came in this category:

> *I don't have a concept of my life as a "spiritual journey", which implies a destination as in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. It helps me more, to look at my life as a story. A story has a shape and core themes, as well as characters who move the action forward*

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[37]Catherine Carr, from *Dorking Meeting Newsletter.* The date is unspecified but reflects a number of similar comments, reminding me that 'Not all who wander from the pathway are lost'.

[38]Ann Limb, "Untroubled by Theology: six decades of religious experience," *My Faith and Practice*, edited by Don Rowe (Milton Keynes Meeting, 2013),62.

[39]Leonard, "Listening with both ears". 11. One can place this alongside the comment of Tom Shakespeare who sees current Quakers as pilgrim people without a destination [quoting Mark Russ] *Openings to the Infinite Ocean: a friendly offering of hope*, Swarthmore Lecture 2020 youtube.com/watchv=n_OloqDjNAk [accessed 6/8/2020]. This reminds me of Zen Dog where there is no destination but the glory of the ride.

[40]Carrie Comfort, "Pilgrimage Walk," *The Friends Quarterly* 47.4 (2019): 10.

[41]Edward Jones, "On Knowing God," *Quaker Voices*,5.3, May 2014, 31.

[42]Catherine Walton, in *Introducing 21 Members and Attenders of Oxford Quaker Meeting*, although in an earlier collection the reference to travelling is not unusual.

> *and who can develop a change. Questions to ask are "What sort of story am I in? How would I like the present chapter to end? How can I move towards that outcome?"*[43]
>
> *We each live in a story which is ours alone. We don't write the plots, but we do construct the meaning.*[44]

The above reference to stories resonates with the suggestion that Quakers live and do theology through narratives.[45] In relation to the comment about the difference between journey and story it could be argued a story has a fabricated structure in the way that life does not.[46] Living and story can be brought together as with the observation of Ganzevoort that 'We live our lives from day to day, but we understand our life as if it were a story.'[47]

As with Bonhoeffer's memorable comment in *The Letters and Papers from Prison*[48] as to who he was, so too people in the context of the journey wondered who they were**.** One said ***'****In essence, I suppose, not very far from where I started. ... know that being a Quaker is not something I've "joined" or "belong to" but what am I?'*[49] The difficulties in the concept of the spiritual journey were raised in the following:

> *I am so aware of the contradiction of writing about my spiritual journey. How can I write about a spiritual journey?! Using words when the essence is a, mostly, dimly*

43Peggy Heeks, in *Introducing 31 Members and Attenders of Oxford Quaker Meeting*, edited by Tanya Garland Oxford Quaker Meeting, 2008), 43. I had the opportunity to interview Peggy more recently. She continued to publish until her death with an emphasis on narrative. e.g. "Finding the life narrative," *Quaker Voices* 8.5 (2017), 11-12.

44 Peggy Heeks, "Finding the life narrative," *Quaker Voices* 8.5, (Sep. 2017),12.

45David Johns, *Quakering Theology: essays on worship tradition and Christian faith* (London: Routledge, 2016), xiii.

46I am grateful to the film *Their Finest* (2018) for this observation by one of the wartime script writers who plays a role in the propaganda film.

47Ganzevoort, "Narrative approaches," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology,* edited by Bonnie- Miller- McLeme (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 252.

48Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: Collins, 1953),173.

49Field Work record 14: Account.

> *discerned reality, a still, small voice…. I have followed my screaming ego down some very dark nights of the soul sea.*[50]

As with much Quaker thinking there is an emphasis on the moment, the here and now. In relation to the journey one said *'I prefer to stand where I am now in my spiritual journey, as this is what I'm living at the moment. Not necessarily as a daily practice but as part of your life'.*[51]

The extracts thus lead in different directions, with some applauding the journey and wanting to tell their own, while others were aware of the limitations of the journey, and some even questioned the concept. For some journeys imply a coherent framework. Quakers may consider that it would be nice to welcome newcomers into the journey as some evangelical churches do with a carefully mapped out pathway such as the *Alpha course*, but this is not possible, and is more incoherent. This may mean that people of a certain personality are attracted to Quakers. In this context Dandelion notes that:

> This mode of popular internal secularisation undermines organisational attempts to present themselves as interesting and "serious" to would-be converts, but, paradoxically, creates spaces of "expressive communalism" that might buoy recruitment, as it seems to have done in the Quaker case.[52]

Metaphors have been used by writers about Quakerism and these can be compared with the comments recorded in this section. Harvey Gillman considered that 'Quakerism is about the Ark of the Covenant travelling through the desert, not the Temple'.[53] An embracing metaphor is that of a caravan moving through the desert, with some at the centre and others on the

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[50]Ray Green, "My spiritual journey," Quaker Voices 8.6 (2017), 14.
[51]Madge Stables, in *Reading Quakers* Journeys, 2nd edition (Reading Quaker Meeting, 2016).
[52]Pink Dandelion, *The Cultivation of Conformity: towards a general theory of internal secularisation* (London: Routledge, 2019), 161.
[53]Quoted in Pink Dandelion, *The Liturgies of Quakerism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 92.

periphery. Rachel Muers who uses this metaphor considers that the centre and the periphery need each other,[54] the result being a shared journey. This resonates with the data of this study in that while people value the opportunity to journey in various directions, they are aware that they are not alone. They can wander from the centre because they know it is something they can return to. This is a case of being educated into the metaphor.[55] Michel de Certeau wrote:

> In modern Athens, the vehicles of mass transportation are called *metaphorai.* To go to work or come home, one takes a "metaphor" - a bus or a train. Stories could also take this noble name: every day, they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories. [56]

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Just as the transport system carries one along so too the story can do the same. Here the concepts of journey and story are brought together. There are elements of direction, but disruptions, delays and detours occur on the way. This is a metaphor that can be applied to the field work records, where it is a matter of inhabiting or realizing the journey.

For George Lakoff and Mark Johnson the journey is one of the metaphors we live by.[57] They consider that argument is a journey.[58] In this study we have set out to argue and have thus become part of a journey, which helps in understanding where those becoming attracted to Quakerism are coming from. My journey and those in the study have merged. This is certainly the way people have responded at the end of interviews, with this being expanded upon in

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54Rachel Muers, "A 'Meeting for Leaving': or a caravan travelling though the desert," in *God, Words and Us*, edited by Helen Rowlands (London: Quaker Books, 2017), 75. Compare Barnett who wishes to focus on the centre rather than the boundary of Quaker practice, *Quaker Renewal*, 15.
[55]Rose and Geary, *Exploring Metaphor.*
[56]Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Living*. trans.by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California, 1984), 115.
57Georg Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live by* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980),
58Ibid., 90.

Chapter Nine. As well as journey, narrative is central to this study. Here I have found it important to reflect on Ganzevoort's observation: 'The narrative researcher should be aware that research is not an objective analysing of reality, but another "narrative"...'[59] In many cases the journey and the narrative have been shared, or there has been reflection. We have noted that reflection is a method. Such reflection is helped by the literature which provides a contextual framework that is always there whether explicitly or implicitly, and I would point the reader to the literature review in Chapter One. I have frequently returned to some of the literature. The first group wrote about believing and belonging, with a development into performative belief [Grace Davie and Abby Day]. The second group provided methodological material [Pink Dandelion, Peter Collins, and Eleanor Nesbitt]. The third group comprised the studies provide by Meetings [notably Milton Keynes Meeting and the study by Judith Fullard Smith]. There is an interaction with the text as suggested by Heather Walton: 'Readers do not simply receive a text. They also imaginatively reinscribe it'.[60] The observer affects the observed.

Pink Dandelion drew attention to the work of Thomas Tweed who 'talked of theory in terms of travel or itinerance ...(with) a) a record of where we have been, b) the journey itself, and c) proposed new routes'.[61] Dandelion has applied this breakdown to his own work and I would suggest that the three aspects can be found in many of the field work interviews and accounts in this research. Tweed uses the metaphor of flow and confluence in relation to religions.

[59]Ganzevoort, "Narrative approaches," 256.
[60]Heather Walton, *Writing Methods in Theological Reflection* (London: SCM, 2014).
[61]Pink Dandelion, *The Cultivation of Conformity,* 5.

Tweed notes that 'religions promise, you will be home'.[62] While this is often in terms of an after-life the concept of arriving home is common among those coming to Quakerism. Tweed considers that 'the religious are migrants as much as settlers, and religions make sense of the nomadic as well as the sedentary in human life'.[63] Again Tweed is referring to the macro level, but the same applies at the micro level. Returning to the three stages at the start of this paragraph the study examines where people have come from, allows the journey to be described, and looks at the implications for the next part of the journey. Tweed is well placed to comment on the Quaker journey as he considers that religions deal with 'the joyful transitions of life – for example, in marriage ceremonies …but also confront suffering'.[64] In this context it has been noted that Quaker marriages and funerals have made an impact on people attending such occasions for the first time. For Tweed 'Religions designate where we are *from*, identify whom we are *with*, and prescribe how we move *across'*.[65] This is an accurate assessment of what takes place in this study.

7.6 The search

Journeys can be equated with searches, and it is not surprising that some people talked about search in the context of this research. Referring to his earlier interest in searching one person said: *'Nevertheless, once at college (University College, Leicester), I felt that I should know more about what I wasn't believing in'.*[66] This shows a positive approach while others might

[62]Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: a theory of religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 75.
[63]Ibid.
[64]Ibid.
[65]Ibid.
[66]Field Work record 63: Account.

ignore or give up the search, or not consider participating in one.[67] Not all felt they were participating with one referring to himself as a passenger.[68] One concluded that: '*I am grateful that I am no longer a seeker with so many questions and doubts, but am instead a simple traveller through life, enjoying many blessings, especially the simple peace of Quaker Meetings for Worship.*'[69] Even within the short space of this paragraph it has been possible to see differing approaches with some more involved than others, although I am inclined to see the image of passenger as helpful and one to be valued. Without passengers there would be no transport. Being a passenger appealed to those coming from traditions where they felt under pressure.

We have looked at the concept of identity in relation to Quakers and have applied an understanding of habitus to the way people interact with Quaker Meetings in terms of receiving from and giving to the occasion. We can apply this to the concept of journey and ask whether the journey defines who Quakers are, or whether Quakers define the journey.[70] I want to suggest that here is a merging of the individual into the group. This is summed up by one respondent who wrote '*The teaching of Christ within was unavoidably individual but its expression was corporate*. [71] I once heard a church member say that she had been part of the church but now the church was a part of her, and this could be applied to the journey and becoming a Quaker. At first there is a distinction in the believing and belonging and a

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67In the context of those seeking for a rock to stand on and those who are not even looking for one see Letter from Philip Rack, *The Friend*, 137 (1979): 863.
68Field Work record 76: Account.
69 David Brown and Rosemary Brown, *Living Adventurously: experiencing Quaker testimonies in Spirit and in the world.* (Loughton, Essex: The Kindlers, 2019),35. David Brown also provided an interview.
70 This thought is derived from a comment in *Quaker Voices*, May 2011, 19
71 Field Work record 89: Interview with some notes provided by respondent.

conscious effort to act the part. At a later point the believing and belonging are unconsciously part of the individual. This is reminiscent of George Stroup and his work on narrative where he wrote that 'it is one thing to say that a person knows a community's narrative identity and something entirely to say that a person becomes part of that community's narrative'.[72] The individual Quaker can of course identify aspects that have attracted him/her but in essence the whole person has been attracted which is perhaps why some did not want to respond because it was a bit like answering why you are a person. R.S.Peters used to argue that to ask the question 'Why education?' is to answer it in that one is adopting the value of rationality in the first place.[73] To answer why one became associated with Quakers is to say that it is intrinsically valuable. To suggest other objectives would be to devalue it.

7.7 C**hapter Summary**

The chapter focused on the personalities of the people in the study. Many felt they needed to explore Quakerism. The chapter included ways in which they found help with Quakers, although issues remain for many. The concepts of 'journey' and 'search' were explored. Some questioned whether these concepts were appropriate as both envisaged an end point. For some the travelling goes on, this being a central position for many Quakers. It was in such a larger whole that belief could be expressed. Belief and belonging were brought together.[74]

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[72] George Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (London: SCM, 1981),134.
[73] Richard Peters, *Ethics and Education* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966).
[74]Compare Abby Day, *Believing in Belonging: belief and social identity in the modern world* (Oxford: OUP, 2011).

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This chapter brings together the central findings of the study and allows the extensive amount of data in Chapters Three to Seven to be outlined, so that patterns are made clear and the overall aim of the thesis examined in terms of its success. The five headings from Chapters Three to Seven are brought together in this chapter.

8.1 Summary of findings

The material was coded into five main categories which formed the headings of Chapter Three to Chapter Seven focussing on a qualitative analysis of the data. The initial coding changed over the course of the study and the final five headings give a clear picture of the field work and enable implications to be drawn.

Findings in Chapter Three Selection of Background Influences

- The importance of respondents' background and experience in relation to their becoming associated with Quakers was paramount.
- Some came through small incidents e.g. seeing a Quaker Meeting notice board, reading an inter-denominational leaflet, attending an occasion in the Quaker Meeting House, looking at a television programme that included Quakers, wanting to have his/her ashes spread in the garden of the Meeting House, the 50p lunch at the Quaker

Meeting House on Tuesdays, being aware of the heterotopic activity of Quakers such as the ongoing meeting outside Croughton RAF base. The observation of Gillman fits with this context when he writes:

> We sense a mystery here, the profundity of which we are made more aware by chance encounters and conversations, and by our experiences in meeting for worship. We feel drawn to discover more about what is going on beneath the surface of our life: the journey continues.[1]

- Looking back many can see a continuity with their earlier experiences. Quaker schools, the influence of grandparents, and the availability of Quaker literature occurred in the data. The frequent mention of literature reinforced the picture of Quakers as an educated group. Quakers were also there in the background and some wondered why it took so long to move towards the group. Their involvement as Attenders or Members is seen as part of a pattern. These people received a lot, but they also reciprocated. They came with theological baggage, but it was baggage that was open to be transformed. Some emphasised their rejection of church coming over to Quakers while others were passing through and aligning Quakers with their existing faith. The significance of a first attendance is apparent in the data, as with one person who said: 'When I first came to Milton Keynes Meeting, I walked into the room and found a me-shaped hole in the silence'.[2] While this example of 'coming home' appears to have an immediateness, others refer to a more gradual experience. 'Coming home' has become part of the story like conversion. It is however ongoing transformation, as Quakers are transformed together as they see God in everyone. Homecoming is being accepted for who one is, as well as being welcomed as an equal. The Meeting is a

[1]Harvey Gillman and Alastair Heron, (eds.) *Searching the Depths: essays on being a Quaker today.* 2nd edition (London: British Yearly Meeting, Quaker Home Service, 1998),6
[2]Anne Watson, In My *Faith and Practice* (Milton Keynes; Milton Keynes Meeting, reprinted 2011), 380.

place of arrival and searching and can be considered as a summative and formative experience, to use ideas drawn from the assessment process.

- It is significant that people came after a lapse in their church attendance. For many people there were lapses in their attendance at Meeting. Whatever the reason for lapses the fact that the group in the study returned is significant, there being one exception of a lapsed Quaker who was part of the sample, although even in this case the person felt she retained Quaker values, while not attending Meeting.[3]
- Early Quakers emphasized experience and some interviewees referred to religious experience. These were only 4.5% from new respondents and 2.4% from the earlier material from Meetings. The lack of emphasis on religious experience is significant and can be explained by an intellectualized approach.[4] Dandelion considers 'Mysticism is seen by some participants as a concept rather than a reality, with few British Quakers claiming a personal encounter with God, and even fewer writing about it'.[5] However it does not mean that experience per se is not important. The experience of attending Meeting for the first time is remembered by respondents. Some consider that amongst contemporary Quakers there is a subjective experience rather than a communal faith journey.[6] My data indicates that this is not the case and that respondents are continually being brought back to a communal context in which to express their individuality. I would disagree with Heron when he suggests that

[3] The circumstances in which membership is withdrawn would make for a future study.
[4] John Rogerson, *A Theology of the Old Testament: cultural memory, communication and being human* (London: SPCK,2009), 149.
[5]Pink Dandelion, *The Cultivation of Conformity: towards a general theory of internal secularisation* (London: Routledge, 2019), 145. Compare his thoughts about religious experience and the testimonies. *Quaker Speak* September 10, 2020 [accessed 11/9/2020.]
[6]Ibid., 148

'congregationalism can be seen as the corporate analogue of individualism'.[7] Some consider that there is personal enlightenment rather than transformation amongst contemporary Quakers.[8] My evidence proposes transformation to be there. The characteristics of this paragraph reflect the sample group rather than a random sample [see Chapter Two for sampling].

- When reflecting with people on the findings some felt that there was no particular reason why they came to Quakers, it being just one of those things like taking up a hobby. For one it filled the lunch time when they came to the mid-week Meeting. This caused me to think that perhaps sometimes researchers can look for reasons that are not there or are beyond 'reason'.

Findings in Chapter Four The Influence of the Meeting.

- The influence of the Meeting and the Meeting House was frequently mentioned by respondents.
- For many it was the attraction of a lack of creed and the allowance of progression. Many were refugees from church. The comment about 'being on the edge of knowing and not knowing' [9] sums up where people find themselves with Quakers. While old Meeting Houses have significance, what is happening is the appropriation of space. For some the building is a space that they come into out of the world and gather with each other and the divine. For others, the whole space of life is considered as a

[7]Heron in *Searching the Depths*, ix.
[8]Francesca Montemaggi, *The Changing Face of Faith in Britain: how should Quakers respond? Part 2 The Spirituality of New Quakers* (London: British Yearly Meeting, 218), 23. See also Tom Shakespeare *Openings to the Infinite: a friendly offering on hope.* Swarthmore Lecture2020. Youtube.com/watch?v=n_OleqDjNAk [accessed 6/8/2020] where he considers that the individual is 'lost'.
[9]Group report following a Universalist seminar at Friends House.

'temple'. It is as if the activities of faith communities are embracing what has been restricted to worship in the traditional sense. Having observed this in Meeting Houses it is the case that people become attracted to the Friends. The sacramental barriers are brought down as well as the human ones, with the map not being the territory. It is hard to say what attracts people because it is hard to say who is in and who is not. As one person wrote: 'You don't get converted into Quakers; you gradually come to realise that you *are* one, usually because other Friends start treating you as one'.[10]

- Chapter Four contained a variety of examples of how people felt coming to Meeting for the first time. The Meeting is more than just the place, although that is important, it is the collection of people with distinctive values. Above all relationships were considered important.
- A small group at a mid-week Meeting I attended discussed what they experienced in the Meeting and concluded that there was a feeling of being embraced by it.[11] They felt it hard to define at the individual level, and here is a case where a group ethos was paramount. Collins wrote that 'Perhaps the Quaker "field" is unusual in the extent to which it resembles Turner's "communitas"'.[12] The group were trying to express something that also has parallels with 'gemeinde' as expanded by Bonhoeffer.[13] There is no English parallel to 'gemeinde' which carries with it the connotations of a

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[10]George Gorman, *The Society of Friends* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1978), forward.
[11]Compare Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: elements of sociological theory of religion* (New York: Anchor Press, 1967).
[12]Peter Collins, "Habitus and the Storied Self: religious faith and practice as a dynamic means of consolidating identities," *Culture and Religion* 3.2 (2002): 159, referring to Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: structure and anti-structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969): 94-113
[13] Dietrich Bonhoeffer - see his doctoral thesis Sanctorum *Communio: a theological study of the sociology of the church*, trans.and ed. Clifford Green (Minneapolis: Fortress Press,2009[1930]).

religious community. If Bonhoeffer had wanted to mean just ‘community’ he would have used ‘gemeinschaft’ a word that is twined in sociology with ‘gessellschaft’, where the informal community develops into state associations.[14] Respondents found it difficult to describe what the feeling of the Meeting conveyed, seeing it as a mystery , that can just be pointed at by denotation, but where it is difficult to provide a definition by connotation.

While it is the case that there are varieties of Quakers, from the outside there is one group, and one label. This can be contrasted with Christian denominations of which there are many. People became part of the community that is called Quakers. The simplicity and identity are part of the answer as to why people become associated with Quakers. The issue of membership was more complex with a variety of approaches, including dual membership.

Findings in Chapter Five Theological Responses

There were references to theological concepts at both the explicit and implicit level.

- For some a deepening theological stance was important. There was a deeper sense of God rather than a grand narrative associated with the divine. The 1960s kenotic theology associated with Bonhoeffer and the existential theology of Tillich were important.
- The religious person does not live in a different world to the non-religious. Quakers do not inhabit a different world to others. Like poets they interpret life and the experiences that occur during it. People are attracted to Quakers because of the interpretation that it offers. The motivation is hermeneutic as is the methodology.

[14] Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (New York: Harper Torch, 1957).

People come in order to find an interpretation, and stay because interpretation remains the essence of Quakerism.

- Some traditional theological concepts are reinterpreted or given new emphasis or lease of life. In general theology was practical or applied, with a focus on community. There was an emphasis on the spiritual rather than the religious. The focus was on the here and now rather than a grand theological narrative.

Eleanor Nesbitt writing of religious education considers that 'They (teachers) may be able to invite visitors into schools – not just "leaders" but "jigsaw individuals" who can share their questions and "mixedness"'.[15] Jigsaw people would be an appropriate way of describing Quakers and Nesbitt may have this in mind when she considers that Quakers are catalysts.[16] While metaphors do not always translate there does seem to be a resonance with this image of a jigsaw people. People are attracted to the ongoing picture or jigsaw and find they are providing a part of themselves or their pieces into the jigsaw and being welcomed for who they are and what they can contribute with the course of time.[17] One respondent thought jigsaw people implied a coherence that was preferable to 'pick and mix' spirituality.[18] Another image is that of a bridge, which carries people over from one point to another. One can return to the other side of the bridge or remain in the middle. In terms of a continuum people can find themselves at different points. It is thus not a matter of arriving but of finding a path near the bridge. It is small metaphors that are significant, like the modest ones of Jesus, a little salt, or yeast, or light.

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[15]Eleanor Nesbitt, "Building Interfaith Understanding: Quaker testimonies in an age of diversity", *Friends Quarterly* 37.1 (2009): 25.
[16]ibid., 26.
[17]Compare Collins and the use he makes of habitus. Collins, "Habitus and the storied self", 155.
[18] Field Work record 46: Account.

The findings in Chapter Six The Place of Social Action.

- The significance of social action amongst Quakers and the place of relationships was present in the responses.
- The Quaker way of life has a deep appeal to the people who decide to become associated with it, to answer the research question. Respondents remain with a respect, noting the modesty associated with such a way. As one put it 'I would not respond to a religion that was being sold like a soap powder'.[19] The Quaker social action was mentioned as having an appeal, although for some it involved too much commitment.

Observers of religion often note the popularity of cathedrals where people can be anonymous. While the individual nature of belief is mentioned in connection with Quakers there is no parallel to the often mentioned individual as typified in the book *Bowling Alone.*[20] They are bowling together which may explain why it is not for everyone. We are concerned with those who have been attracted and remained.

The research was concerned with people's spiritual journeys. I concluded at the end that most people saw themselves as still on a journey and searching, being helped on that journey by Quakers. As I reflect it was the group that was more important than the individual, in contrast

[19]Marilyn Ricci, in *My Faith, My Life* Vol 4 (Leicester: Leicester Quaker Press, 2014),55.
[20]Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000). Compare Robin Bennett who considers that a false value has been placed on 'personal independence'. "'Exalted in Our Nation': some issues in Quaker identities," *The Friends Quarterly* 31.8 (1997): 380.

to those who think that the individual dominates. It may be that the grand narrative of early Quakerism has gone but the communal identity into which one can share the journey is there.

- One can summarise references to Chapter Six with the comment: '*I discovered not only a spirituality that I can understand but also a group of people I feel very much at home with; not because we all think alike, but because we know that, whatever our beliefs, we are respected and valued'.* [21]

Findings in Chapter Seven Reflections on the concept of 'life story/faith journey.

If Chapter Three was concerned with where people have come from Chapter Seven was concerned with where people are now. The chapter recorded states of mind, attitudes, depression, and the question 'Who am I?' It included reflections on what it meant to follow a spiritual/faith journey.

- Quakers often wanted to query the questions approached in the study and this happened with the concept of 'journey'. Some preferred the concept of 'story'. There was felt to be a Quaker story to which they listened, becoming part of it.
- When I started to catalogue the material, I used five areas: Background, the Meeting, Theology, Social Action and Personal reflection. All five find a place in the respondents in the continuity of experience, the attraction of the Meeting, theologies reflecting that of God in everyone have been emphasized, the focus on a simple lifestyle and the place to reflect as an individual. The last one is there but does not dominate and this is a clue to the way Quakers allow the individual to meet with

[21]"I am a Quaker," from members of Central England Area Meeting. http://www.centralenglanquakers.org.uk/we-I-am-a-quaker[accessed 10/05/2017]

something greater in the silence of the Meeting. The congregational form of the story has allowed this to emerge and give a nuanced picture of Quakers today. Stories are essentially tribal and while the data comes from the response of individuals, they are part of a communal whole. I contend that it is this communal whole that attracts people to Quakerism.[22] This can be compared to Abby Day who draws attention to the way that congregations are not just focused on individualism. [23]

8.2 Central Findings

Few people in the study came to Quakers without any religious background. Quaker influences, values, and experiences, whether explicit or implicit, are significant in a person's upbringing. The communal nature of the group is what attracts – people may have arrived home, but it is to a travelling group. Individuals are transformed, usually gradually, rather than converted. People came of their own accord, with at times idiosyncratic reasons. Such reasons for people coming may reflect the nature of the group - a peculiar people. Quakers are more concerned with a way of life than theological discourse. It is performative rather than propositional. It is caught not taught, or rather is gained through accompanying. Quakerism is like aesthetic education in that it is not a matter of judgement but something that needs to be lived. Sympathy seems to be the key. Once it is alive one can discern the qualities.[24] As one

[22] For an example see Aiham Korbage 'Reconnecting with Community Through Quaker Meeting', August 27,2020. Quaker Speak.com/video/community [accessed 28/8/2020]. Here a Muslim finds in Quakers a retreat from hyper-individuality.

[23]Abby Day, *Believing in Belonging: belief and social identity in the modern world* (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 204. The emphasis on the individual has a prominent place. See for example John Punshon, *Encounter with Silence: reflections from the Quaker tradition* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1987), 58ff. Douglas Steere (ed) *Quaker Spirituality*: *Selected Writings*, (London: SPCK, 1984), 3.

[24] Gained from re-reading philosophy seminar notes.

interviewee already quoted concluded ‘It’s mysterious and takes time to get the hang of it and that is part of the hang if it’.[25] Quakerism provides a point of arriving and of continuing to search. I have proposed that this combination be given the academic characteristics of summative and formative experience.

The above present an elusive group that may be declining in number but look assured of a future as they remain faithful and thus leave something for those who are attracted to what is on offer. It does not suit everyone and that ironically is part of its attraction, exhibiting the characteristics of a faithful remnant. Commenting on the Church of England Archbishop Robert Runcie likened it to a swimming pool, with the all the noise at the shallow end.[26] With Quakers, participants’ accounts suggest a depth is provided.

8.3 Links between findings and contemporary analyses.

Reference was made to the arguments of Raimon Pannikar in his article ‘The Jordan, the Tiber, and the Ganges’[27], and these have been used in categorizing the data. He suggested that the example and teaching of Jesus has become immersed in the world [not necessarily the whole world]. The Quakers can be seen as implicitly expressing this position. It is how one lives and specifically how one lives as a Quaker. The emphasis on action which comes out in many of the responses is allied with this implicit ethos. It is difficult to know exactly what a Quaker is, but when you see one you know, and you also know those who are not Quakers. It

[25] Field Work record 102: Interview.
[26] Quoted in *The Times* Nov 19 (2012).
[27] Raimon Pannikar, “The Jordan, the Tiber and the Ganges “in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: towards a pluralistic theology of religion*, edited by John Hick and Paul Knitter (London: SCM, 1987), 89-116.

is thus to this implicit ethos that people are drawn. This is the opposite of creeds which lead to an explicit concern with what is believed and in turn acceptable.

The introduction in Chapter One argued for the usefulness of congregational studies. It is useful as it explains via the group and the individual what is taking place at the ground level in congregations. This study used some of the techniques associated with congregational studies. These included decoding the collected data to ascertain what people thought, as in the central findings above. It looked at positive trends in the responses, as well as the absence or limited presence of material, which also reflected underlying trends. While studies such as Stringer focused on the nature of congregations,[28] this study incorporated individuals from a variety of Meetings.

Previous statistical studies had been undertaken about why people became Quakers. It is apparent that these studies have influenced and aided the current study in both a qualitative and quantitative way. In the case of the former interviews can be compared. In the case of the latter the collecting of statistical categories has provided comparisons.[29] As well as statistical studies theoretical analyses formed the background to the literature search. Peter Collins' use of Bourdieu's concept of habitus was found to resonate in the study. This occurred as people became familiar with Quaker practice and learnt from the way Meeting was conducted and the testimonies lived out in daily practice. This was a two way one with people bringing

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[28]Martin Stringer, *On the Perception of Worship: the ethnography of worship in four Christian congregations in Manchester* (Birmingham, University of Birmingham Press, 1999).
[29]See Pink Dandelion, *A Sociological Analysis of the Theology of Quakers: the silent revolution* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996) and Montemaggi (ed.) *The Changing Face of Faith in Britain.*

something of their embodied meaning to the Meeting as Collins described.[30] Davie[31] and Day[32] were helpful in distinguishing between performative belief and propositional belief. The former has a significant place in Quakerism with an emphasis on the Quaker way of life rather than theological doctrine.

The methodology was outlined in Chapter Two. The methodology involved reading the accounts of life stories/faith journeys already available from Quaker Meetings. New material was obtained from interviews and written accounts. The approach was essentially qualitative, although some quantitative material is included in the appendix. It was intended to collect personal accounts and to identify emerging themes from the data. This has been achieved and the findings outlined above. The material covered more than why people became associated with Quakerism, but this breadth provided the context that attracted those coming later and so completed the picture.

8.4 Implications

8.4.1 Previous Scholarship

There are implications for the way previous studies were handled. Most of these were quantitative with questions asking people to respond to a list of reasons as to why they became associated with Quakers. In the *British Quaker Survey* the following are included: Form of Worship; Quaker Way of Life; Lack of religious dogma; Quaker structure/ lack of

[30]Collins, "Habitus and the Storied Self,"
[31]Grace Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: believing without belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994)
[32]Abby Day, *Believing in Belonging: belief and social identity in the modern world* (Oxford: OUP, 2011).

hierarchy; Company and friendship; a Feeling of coming home.[33] In Chapter Five[5.1] we drew attention to the reasons for people being attracted to Quakers, with 67% doing so because of a lack of dogma and 40% doing so because of the Quaker way. The facts are somewhat stark, and the aim of this study is a more nuanced understanding of the situation. The present study allowed a variety of reasons to emerge and for responses other than those in the questionnaires to explore coincidences and unconscious motivations. The implication is that previous studies may have been worded differently in the light of the current one.

We have argued that it is useful to examine some of the metaphors that have been used in relation to the Quaker journey, which is itself a metaphor.[34] Concepts of bridge, transport, flow and confluence, indicate moving from one place to another, with elements of travelling forward and coming back. I think Quakers are still travelling but they have found a home of people with which to travel, and with which to advance and retreat. Exploring metaphors and nuanced positions is unlikely to be found if a literature search were to be conducted fifty years ago.

8.4.2 Future Research.

There are implications for future research. It has been assumed that because people became associated with Quakerism, they can then believe what they like, as Anglican ministers have suggested when finding out about my research.[35] This does not come out in the data as the

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[33] *British Quaker Survey.* Question 6. http:www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/quaker-survey.html [accessed 5/11/18]
[34] See Chapter Seven.
[35] This is clearly not the case as one person reading the study pointed out that a Member or Attender promoting white witchcraft was deemed to be going too far by a Meeting of Elders. Pagan Quakers exist, though.

reason for the journey is often the appeal of the 'gathered Meeting'. There is a confusion in the way references to an 'inward spiritual journey' have led to the assumption that this means resultant action is individualised.[36] Future research needs to reflect this, rather than considering individualism has been 'internalised' and adopted as the cultural norm.[37] Popular culture may focus on the individual with people referring to being content in their own skins. I contend that Quaker culture is built with a collective emphasis. Group practice is different from individual.[38] Some would want to take this further suggesting that 'A Quaker community should practice the communal discernment that helps us to distinguish the voice of the Spirit from our own wishes or obsessions'. [39] In terms of my thesis this approach can find a contextual home in the work of Day whose study of performative belief is seminal to this study. In relation to the individual she considers that her argument 'counters a prevailing fiction in social science that late modernity is characterized by individualism'.[40] One respondent on reading the thesis observed that she thought she was the only person to follow her path in life but now realised that she was part of a larger group. For me that has been one of the benefits of the applied aspects of the story.[41]

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[36]Jonathan Dale, *Beyond the Spirit of Age: Quaker social responsibility at the end of the twentieth century*. Swarthmore Lecture 2009 (London: Friends Home Service, 2009), 87.
[37]Rex Ambler, "Quaker Identity: anything goes?" *The Friends Quarterly* 31.8 (1997), 372.
[38]For an analysis of the two see James Spickard, "Charting the inward journey: applying Blackmore's model to meditative experience," *Archiv für Religionpsychologue*, 26 (2004): 157-180.
[39] Craig Barnett, *Quaker Renewal* (London: A Friend Publication, 2017), 55. Compare Rhiannon Grant, who considers that entry to community should not have barriers "Are You Playing Your Religion Games by Quaker Rules?", *Friends Journal* June 1, 2020 [www.friendsjournal.org/are-you-playing-your-religion-games-by quaker-rules[accessed 30/6/2020].
[40]Day, *Believing in Belonging*, 203.
[41] Field Work record 45: Account.

The area of gender has been raised in connection with churches and the fact that women are more likely to uses phrases like 'I feel part of the family, I feel at home'.[42] I believe that such responses may be more likely with women in a Quaker context. It would be interesting to know whether women favoured ideas of belonging as this might influence the emphasis of the Meeting.

It would be interesting to place the findings alongside possible analyses of other denominations. The ebb and flow of Quaker attendance is unlikely to be found and conversion experiences are more likely to be the norm, especially in the case of evangelical churches. By looking at such characteristics of other denominations it is more likely that the distinctive aspects of Quakerism are isolated. This is to incorporate an *etic* or external element to the focus on religious groups while re-focussing on the significance of an *emic* or indigenous approach.

One area which I think would be of value is to compare other communities such as the "Sunday Assembly" which has the features of worship, but no theological basis.[43] Linda Woodhead believes that 'Community is not enough to keep people coming'.[44] While glorifying God in a family of believers gives a centre point, the focus of a Quaker Meeting could be analysed. At places in the study it has been suggested that there is an advantage to

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[42] Heather Wraight, 'What is Belonging?' *Future First* 42 (Dec 2015), published by Brierley Consultancy, Tonbridge, 1 and 4. Compare Heather Wraight, *Eve's Glue: the role women play in holding the church together* (Carlisle: Paternoster and Christian Research, 2001).

[43] Josh Bullock, "The Sociology of the Sunday Assembly: 'belonging without believing' in a Post-Christian context" (PhD diss., Kingston University, 2017). Jesse Smith, "Can the secular be the object of belief and belonging? the Sunday assembly," *Qualitative Sociology* 40.1 (2017): 83-109.

[44] Quoted in Peter Brierley. *Future First* February 2020.

diversity in Quakerism, but for some this is a disadvantage in that it reduces identity. This would be a crucial focus for future research, to see whether what is an advantage could turn upon itself. A telling observation by one respondent raises questions for future research and for current reflection. The person realised that he would have found it difficult to fit into Quakerism during much of its history but now believed that he had found a spiritual home.[45] Has that home changed the roots of its existence?

In some of the earlier studies I have noted that respondents did not always answer the questions or provided alternatives.[46] In this study original answers were encouraged from the start, providing an indicator for future work in his area.

8.4.3 Quaker Studies

There are implications for Quaker Studies as a whole. To ascertain these one asks where the results sit within Quaker Studies. Previous studies tended to move towards an understanding of the provisional nature of theological assumptions. It is possible to suggest that this position is now the norm and the question is asked as to what therefore the new emphasis is. I would suggest that this study unveils the variety of nuanced positions that are possible. It is as if people are aware of the starkness of previous positions and wish to reclaim a middle position and celebrate the communal distinctiveness of Quakers. This reinstates the nature of congregational studies which was concerned with groups. By using some of the methodology of congregational studies at the individual level, and particularly while using snowball

[45] Field Work record 80: Account.
[46] Roger Homan and Pink Dandelion, "The Religious Basis of Resistance and Non-responses: a methodological note," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 12.2 (1997):205-214.

selection, this allowed for underlying group identities and attitudes to emerge. Individuals sometimes spoke in relation to others and knew who had been involved having volunteered them. While conducted at the individual level many of the respondents answered as part of a group with which they were proud to be associated. The total is more than a sum of the parts and this needs to be remembered when conducting Quaker Studies.

A person on the information desk at Friends House felt that the thesis may have relevance for those dealing with enquiries into Quakerism. On reading the draft thesis people compared their own journey with elements of admiration and disappointment. Admiration for where they had arrived and disappointment that it had taken them so long. Clearly the way that people are attracted to Quakers is significant, although it is difficult to replicate the conditions that attract people as there is such a variety. It is a matter of Quakers staying close to their tradition as that is what ultimately attracts. This has been seen as complacent with the assurance that people will find Quakers 'when they are ready'.[47] It is not a matter of expanding but of remaining faithful. This includes the notion that for some Quakerism is caught not taught. I am aware that not all agree with this adage and consider that 'as a result many Friends who have been members for decades remain ignorant about traditional Quaker practices and spirituality'.[48] At this point the study has highlighted contrasting positions on the value of outreach. John Hull suggested that while growing is necessary it is not a sufficient condition for a congregation.[49] Einstein is attributed to have written the following on a blackboard: 'Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be

[47] Barnett, *Quaker Renewa*l,36.
[48] Ibid.,
[49] Remembered from a lecture by John Hull at Oxford Brookes University on 19/3/2014.

counted counts'. Quakers in the twenty first century can be placed within the context of expanding mega congregations on the one hand and declining religious adherence on the other.

8.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents a picture of the findings in the interviews and the accounts. The findings of the five areas of focus in Chapters Three to Seven are presented in summary form. Key factors are listed, thus outlining the overall significance of the study. A link is made between these findings and the wider literature. This enables one to see the comparisons and contrasts between the two. Some observations in the study have counterparts in the literature such as Quakers being involved in performative rather than propositional belief. The division between the two can be bridged with Quakerism in that belief does not have to be a condition of participation. Other observations have arisen in relation to the analysis of the data and have provided new understandings. These included the distinction that Quakers see themselves as being gradually transformed rather than converted on one occasion. The communal nature of Quakers that is observed in the study can run counter to the individualism that is often commented upon. The chapter proposes that while numbers decline there is a certain attraction that is dependent on existing factors, which Quakers would do well to reflect upon, ensuring that these are present in the Meeting as far as possible. Such factors contribute to overall Quaker influence, with the focus being there, if somewhat elusive. In conclusion the

importance of expressing belief in the context of the gathered Meeting echoes the arguments of Day and her work on believing in belonging. This is performative belief in the context of a place of belonging. I have proposed that for some it is a place for formative exploration whilst for others it is a place of summative arrival, and for some it is both. For all it is a place for further exploration of British Quaker life stories/faith journeys.

CHAPTER NINE

RESEARCH REFLEXIVITY

This chapter provides a picture of the interaction between the researcher and the people being studied, the observer and the observed. This is achieved by the researcher constructing an interview of his life, thus allowing for a return to some of the key elements of the study in a different format. This chapter involved a link back to congregational studies and performative belief that formed the bedrock of Chapter One. The fact that there is a positive return enables the value of the starting point to be established. The motivation of people to become associated with Quakers is seen in terms of a communal engagement. This is another way of describing believing in belonging. By allowing respondents to see a final draft of the thesis has enabled the interaction to continue.

People have asked me about the purpose of this study and what have I learnt from it, or what does it all add up to, implying ‘so what?’. I have been asked how I would respond if I was interviewed, and therefore I decided to do just that and see if this provided clarity.

I can remember as a primary school pupil having my scarf taken away and being put up a lamp post. I decided to leave it rather than retaliate. This is the sort of early experience that people often refer to when exploring the roots of testimonies such as pacifism.

I remember being intrigued by the local Meeting House and reading the notice board outside with a thoughtful reflection posted on it. Many people have similar experiences and memories that emerge later to provide a patterning in life.

I remember contacting Harold Loukes, a well know Religious Educator and a Quaker writer [1916-1980] to introduce Meeting to some of my students. He quite rightly pointed out that students were welcome to come along at any time. This is however an example where there is a link or guide for people to make the move towards experiencing Quakerism.

I integrated attending Meeting with other faith groups, and this is also an experience that I discovered when approaching people. Sometimes the dual commitment continued, while others became Members, or at another point on the continuum some decided to leave having valued the experience.

The introduction of a continuum is a central concept in the way I perceive Quakers. There are in fact many continua, for example some are concerned with belief, some with the involvement in social action, some with the approach to peace matters. People can be found at different points on a continuum. There are those who are birthright Quakers, and those who have joined recently as adults; those who have a deep Christian commitment, and those who operate with a Sea of Faith perspective. Experiences can cause people to move up and down a continuum. Those who have recently experienced bereavement may feel differently about belief in an after-life than they did before. I am aware of having moved within a theological

continuum from an evangelical position, through a liberal one, to a radical one. In my experience I have been welcomed to express and to listen to views with which others may not have agreed. The difference of opinion is however within the continuum. Unity in diversity is expressed by Rhiannon Grant when she writes that 'I conclude that patterns of Quaker speech not only make sense within a community where certain assumptions are held, but also that they fulfil a role in the maintenance of the community as a single theologically diverse and inclusive Religious Society'.[1] If one was to look for the overarching focus for a continuum the concept of the 'Other' may qualify, in that it helps make sense of the Meeting as well as Social Action.[2] Strhan writes that 'Any act of believing means an orientation towards an "other" – whether God, or people- who transcends the self; and towards a past and a future beyond, but folded within, the present moment'.[3]

The study has its roots in congregational studies. Another significant way of approaching such ethnographic studies is to see them as exploring what has been called 'everyday' or 'lived religion'.[4] This includes the ritual that people practice such as the wearing of religious insignia and tending graves in a particular way. Football flags are placed on graves at the local cemetery near where I live during international matches. Studies of lived religion often explored the way ritual is manifest in the ordinary. I encouraged my students to look for examples of ritual on the shelves of Indian and Chinese takeaways. It takes time to find

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[1]Rhiannon Grant, "Wittgensteinian Investigations of Contemporary Quaker Religious Language" (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2014) chapter 5 etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/7825/

[2]I am grateful to Amy Daughton for this suggestion.

[3] Anna Strhan, *Church Times*, January 31, 2014, 27.

[4]See Nancy Ammerman (ed.), *Everyday Religion: observing modern religious lives* (Oxford: OUP, 2008). and Meredith McGuire, *Lived Religion: faith and practice in everyday life* (Oxford: OUP, 2008).

shrines and auspicious signs, but they are usually there even if not understood by everyone working in the establishment. This is to look for the sacred in the ordinary. It would be tempting to see Quakers in this context as they emphasize the central importance of living a way of life rather than focusing on doctrinal belief. In the case of Quakers such a dichotomy is less evident and lived or everyday religion does not entirely match with Quakers.[5] It is more a matter of living in the context of Quaker values and stories.[6] This encompasses a way of life found in the life stories/ faith journeys of respondents in this study. Here Quaker action or performative belief is considered central. The fact that Quakers share the lack of doctrinal emphasis with lived or everyday Christian religion does not mean that they share the attributes that characterize popular religion. I wondered whether I had overlooked something in terms of popular religion in relation to Quakers. Badges, tea shirts and banners may for some Quakers be of great significance but in general I remain with the judgement that there is something ethereal about being a Quaker and attending Meeting that cannot be equated with the practice that surrounds the phenomena to be found in religion as lived in the everyday. In conclusion it is more appropriate to place Quakerism alongside performative belief than lived or everyday religion. I found the simplicity of Quakerism both an attraction and a challenge. Some people I have spoken to find the same, which may account for the way Quakers join choirs and attend cathedral services. For some it remains the sole focus, but others combine it as I do with leading church services in a lay capacity.

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[5]When asked in the 2013 British Quaker Survey about whether people believed in a luck charm (Question 17) only 3% answered yes http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/national-quaker survey.html [accessed 5/11/2108]
[6]Field Work record 85: Account

Meredith McGuire in her book on lived religion mentions that she is a Quaker, with the implication that she can study and appreciate but does not easily identify with the everyday ritual that she has discovered in for instance medieval Christianities. The essence of Quakerism for her is in the silence of the Meeting.[7] There are however moments when Quakers can talk about descriptive aspects of Quakerism. I dropped into the Meeting House as it was 'Open Doors', which is an occasion when buildings in the town which are not normally open do so. Not being recognized I was treated to a good deal of information about what Quakers did and did not stand for. There is an internal and an external vocabulary. During Open Doors I moved from experiencing what it is to be internal to what it is to be external. This is an important transition as people have commented that they felt unsure about whether they were Quakers or felt that it was a significant step to find themselves accepted.

A reading of the interview accounts and indeed the interviews themselves may reflect an interpretation. One is an 'outsider', new to a mid week meeting where there are just six people. One is welcomed as a stranger, but one who has shown an interest. When asked 'Have you been to a Meeting before?' it would be tempting to say 'no', but in fact by answering truthfully I indicated that one was an 'insider', which provided a fast track through to the important issues of the Meeting, rather than allowing a more formal account to be given. Sometimes it was possible to do both, with an outside at first and an inside view later. I would agree with Russell McCutcheon that the aim is to achieve some 'insider

[7]McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 102-3.

understanding'. [8] I consider that this study has achieved this. My aim was to share my story through the journeys of others, so I hope that this has made as good a read as my experience.[9]

Courtney Bender talks about religious experience and notes: 'The individual, unpractised, pre-cultural, and affective qualities of religious experiences are not usually noted within sociological literature…'.[10] She goes on to say 'As a consequence, sociologists can study experience *accounts* but cannot study religious experiences *themselves*'. [11] I have been dealing with accounts which may have brought me in varying ways to the essence of Quakerism. Bender quotes David Yamane who argues that sociologists who want to study religious experience, 'must bracket any claims to apprehending religious experience itself and instead give our full attention to the primary way people concretize... their experiences….through narratives'.[12] Here we return to the importance of story. As I look back on my life, I see a story or rather perhaps I impose a story upon the random experiences. Respondents did this a lot and perhaps outsiders and those encountering Quakerism for the first time did the same. I have argued that reading the story back and seeing links can be distinguished from the moment of conversion that is found amongst some Christian groups. My work has been described as dealing with conversion narratives and in general terms this is correct, but the distinction outlined here needs to be remembered. As with many areas Quakers attach an

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[8]Russell McCutcheon, *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: a reader* (London: Continuum, 1999),18.
[9] See page 3.
[10]Courtney Bender, "Touching the Transcendent: rethinking religious experience in the sociological study of religion", in Ammerman, *Everyday Religion,* 204.
[11]Ibid., 205.
[12]Ibid.,205.

importance to accuracy and here is a case where I feel I am making an important distinction in relation to 'conversion' amongst Quakers and some denominations.

Quakers offer the Meeting as a space and are happy to learn from those who come and share it. The process reflects the habitus concept that Peter Collins outlined. We saw that Collins developed Bourdieu's use of this concept, with an appreciation of what is being given, as well as possibilities of mutual sharing.[13] This would indicate a high level of reflexivity, with the individual shaping his or her own norms but within the wider context of the Quaker environment. Reflexivity is an aspect of ethnomethodology, which is concerned with the way meaning is ascribed by people to their social reality. Criticisms of this approach include the fact that it contributes little, telling us what we already know. Even if this were the case, I consider it to be significant, reminding me of the lines of T.S. Eliot in "Little Gidding":

> We shall not cease from exploration.
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time[14]

This resonates with some of those associated with Quakerism who feel that they have returned home and have always been Quakers. The study may show what was known but with the addition of 'thick description'.[15]

Towards the end of most interviews there was a moment of sharing. It has been a privilege to hear their story. Anna Bremborg writes about the researcher as a traveller who changes during

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[13]Peter Collins, "Habitus and the Storied Self: religious faith and practice as a dynamic means of consolidating identities", *Culture and Religion* 3.2 (2002), 147-61.
[14]T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber, 1963), 222.
[15]See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Hutchinson, 1975).

the journey and I can identify with this.[16] George Stroup analyses the roles of the historian and finds that one of those roles is a restorative act.[17] I have found the study restorative and I believe I have witnessed restoration in others. It has been useful to follow debates in *The Friend*, where it has been suggested that those coming in later years from other stances wanted to come in and change things. Such people have been accused of 'entryism'. [18] whereas my research has not found this to be the case. On the contrary newcomers want if anything to be changed by the experience of the Meeting, rather than remaining a collection of 'like-minded individuals…' [19]. Here is a case of the research not matching the popular opinion. This can be compared to Bremborg who argues that it is the task of the inquirer to present the interviewee in a new light through theoretical lenses. [20]

I have been attracted to the observation that Catholic women can be divided into two groups, that is those who would like a place at the table, and those who would like to change the menu.[21] My experience of Quakers is in the lives of the former, even if many would be happy to remain Attenders rather than Members. Their visit to the table may be sporadic. They may be just curious but then that may characterise Jesus' disciples. I am sure many were curious on Firbank Fell when George Fox preached there at the outset of his mission in 1652. The focus is on the common activity [the Meeting] rather than individualism. The conclusion of

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16Anna Bremborg, "Interviewing", in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, 310-322, edited by Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London: Routledge, 2014), 311.
17 George Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (London: SCM, 1981),106.
18Peter Bolwell, in *The Friend,* June 14, 2019, letters page.
19 Craig Barnett, *Quaker renewal* (London*:* A Friend Publication, 2017*)*, 36.
20Bremborg, "Interviewing", 320.
21Kathleen Sprows Cummings, "For Catholics, Gradual Reform Is No Longer an Option," *New York Times*, August 17, 2018.

this particular study does not rule out an individualistic position in other Meetings. I would place the communal or gathered emphasis against 'the rise of individualism and the pursuit of personal fulfilment in contemporary culture'.[22] The communal focus can also be placed against the pain of individualism, whereby suffering follows being trapped in oneself. To return to positionality [2:1] one can ask whether this is an empirical observation or an ideal that is being presented. If curiosity about communal Quaker Meetings will have an effect it is not necessary to '*try too hard when the real need is just to be - keeping things going might just sometimes be enough*'.[23] People have been attracted to Quakerism out of curiosity and this continues to be the case.[24] Future studies will show whether this will remain, [25] and the experience of Quakers in the next decade will influence the outcome. If one were looking for a plot [2.8], it would be to balance the wishes of the individual within the needs of The Religious Society of Friends. The need to balance the individual and the social has become important during the coronavirus policy,[26] so the analysis of the balance within Quakerism benefits from a wider context and contributes to it.

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[22] Martyn Percy, *Shaping the Church; the promise of implicit theology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010),40.

[23]Anne Wood, in *The Friend*, March 29, 2019. Tom Shakespeare considers this to be a 'business as usual approach' youtube.com/watch?v=n_Oloq0jNAk [accessed 6/8/20220] Programmes of Quaker Outreach would provide a contrast.

[24] In the 2013 British Quaker Survey Question 6 23% ticked curiosity as the reason for initial attraction to Quakerism. http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/national-quaker -survey.html [accessed 5/11/2018].

[25] For comments on the future of Quakers see Rhiannon Grant, *Quakers Do What Why?* (Winchester: Christian Alternative Books, 2020), 70-71.

[26] Kenan Malik, "What the lessons from Auschwitz teach us about the choices we make," *The Observer,* May 24, 2020, 16

9.1 Chapter Summary

This is the closing chapter of the thesis. While Chapter Eight contains a conclusion in terms of the reasons for joining and thus answers the research question about Quakers, this chapter looks at the intrinsic value that lies between the researcher and those being researched. The insider/outsider issue is raised. I would admit that the depth of material does not allow one to remain an outsider, and indeed such depth may not have been achieved without an element of being a visiting insider. Day writes that experience is 'sustained through performative belief rituals where the account is told, re-told, and elaborated'.[27] The re-telling of their story has enabled respondents to express something of their belief which is found in belonging to the Religious Society of Friends. From this study I would conclude that for many Quakers searching for an ideal becomes part of the reality and attracts the curious. A theme throughout this chapter has been the balance between the individual and the social. Quakerism can be placed alongside the debate between the two in contemporary society.

[27]Day, *Believing in Belonging*, 196.

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APPENDIX A

Outline of project and an invitation to participate

An exploration of how and why people became associated with Quakers in Britain today. Is it a case of ‘coming home’ or of continuing to travel with oneself and with others?

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will 8i8involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

I am a research student at Birmingham University, and I am interested in interviewing Friends (Members and Attenders) about their spiritual journeys. I am interested for example in why people have become associated with the Quakers and what it means to them. This is thus a small-scale qualitative research study which is important in discovering where people are in relation to the Quaker way.

I am based in Oxford and expect most interviews to be within a 50 mile radius.

Interviews can take place at our home or the home of the person being interviewed or in a neutral place like a café or gardens. It is anticipated that the interview would take between 30 minutes to one hour. Notes will be taken during the interview and these will be shared with those participating. I am interested for example in why people have become associated with the Quakers [some will have been to Quaker schools and others will have come through

significant experiences] and what it means to them [some may have been imprisoned as conscientious objectors].

I am also open to receiving written accounts of any length.

Telephone interviews are also possible.

All references in the study would be anonymized as in the previous study which any one is welcome to read either on line or in a hard copy. Both the notes from interviews and the written accounts will be kept in a secure steel filing cabinet and used only for the research study and any subsequent work by the researcher. Under the University Code of Practice they will be kept for ten years.

From previous interviews there appears to be an intrinsic value in reflection on one's journey and it is not anticipated that there would be any risks. Indeed, it is hoped that a furthering and understanding of the topic involved would be beneficial to all. However people are able to withdraw at any point and any notes taken would be destroyed. The cost would be the time involved. Complaints can be directed via The University of Birmingham where I am a registered student.

A copy of the findings of the study will be offered to each participant and indeed further dialogue is seen as an important part of the process.

If you wish to share your life/faith story in written or oral form I would be delighted to hear from you. If you do decide to participate you will be asked to sign an informed consent form to comply with the Ethics Committee of the University of Birmingham.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet.

Richard Martin Bainbridge.email: [redacted]

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for involvement in the study of how and why people became associated with Quakers in Britain today.

MA Research study by Richard Martin Bainbridge at the University of Birmingham

I have read and understood the study information.

I have been able to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I am prepared to volunteer to be interviewed or to provide a written account relating to the focus of the project.

I appreciate that I can refuse to answer questions and can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.

I understand that my details will be confidential and that any details used in the report will be anonymised.

In the case of interviews I understand that notes will be taken and in the case of written accounts anonymised quotations may be used.

I understand that the written material will be used only for the purpose of the research project and any further study by the researcher alone. The material in the report may be used for journal articles and for future research and learning.

APPENDIX C

Interview Schedule

There is no formal interview schedule. Apart from asking for an approximate date of birth interviewees are encouraged to tell their life story/spiritual journey in their own way.

Several prompts/ aide memoires/ important points or issues/probes/ for the interviewer are listed below should the interviewee find it difficult to remember. There is no specific order.

Historical background

Social aspects

Religious [or not] upbringing.

First experience of a Quaker Meeting

Consistency [or otherwise] of attendance

The 1960s

Peace and other Testimonies.

Experience of other faith communities

Doctrine and theology

Grand narrative

Believing and belonging

Worldwide issues

APPENDIX D

Some coding suggestions/categories/headings for data.

Numbers in brackets indicate records found in the total data collection of 547 items from 1997-2020. These formed the basis of the structure to Chapters 3-7, although somewhat altered as the thesis developed.

A Background

A.1 Early background (28)

A.2 Later background (9)

A.3 Education (8)

A.4 Experiences (43)

A.5 Patterns seen through experiences (30)

A.6 lapses (18)

A.7 Influences of literature (33)

1.8 Quotations used (7)

1.9 Influences – family influences; iconic figures; positive/negative influences- attraction to or moving away from (23)

1.10 The effect of the 1960s (10)

B The Meetings

B.1 The Meeting (56)

B.2 Quakers and their Values (67)

B.3 Membership (49)

C Theology

C.1 Theology (94)

C.2 The methodology or style (3)

C.2.1 Implicit Religion (6)

C.2.2 Interpretation (7)

C.2.3 Kenosis (2)

C.2.4. Transformation (2)

C.3.1 Religion and the spiritual in multi-faith contexts (5)

C.3.2 Sacramental living (8)

C.3.3 The Biblical account and the place of Jesus (5)

C.3.4 The concept of an After life (15)

D Social action

D.1 Practice (29)

D.3 Concrete examples of social work (8)

D.3.1. Principles/Testimonies (38)

E Personal reflection

E.1 States of Mind (8)

E.2 Attitudes (10)

E.3 Depression (14)

E.4 Who am I? (10)

E.5 Reflecting on the concept of a journey (36)

E.6 The search (2)

APPENDIX E

This Appendix outlines some of the **quantitative analysis** related to the study. The group was self-selecting, so any data needs to be seen in that context and only certain demographic categories were countable.

To give some idea of numbers for the Britain Yearly Meeting at the end of 2018 there were 12,666 members, 7434 attenders and 1476 children.

The data is presented under six headings:

1. Gender

In the material from 1997-2015 44% were male and 56% were female. In the material from 2016 to the present day 38% were male and 62% female. This is not unusual and in line with other studies. In the British Quaker Survey 60% of respondents were women. Peter Brierley in *Future First*, (October 2018) points out that on average monthly church attendance consists of 40% men and 60% women. This is obtained by averaging the English Church Census (2005), The Scottish Church Census (2016), The Tearfund UK Census (2007) and the YouGov GB poll (2014). There are several suggested reasons. Brierley considers that 'On the one hand, there are research meta-analyses finding men show more risk-taking behaviours, prefer working with things rather than people, and that they use more costly methods of aggression'.[1] See also Annabel Clarke concerning the issue of men in the church and the creation of more gender balance. [2]

[1] Peter Brierley, *Future First* (October 2018), n.p.
[2]Annabel Clarke, 7 *Reasons Your Church Needs Men: how to lead a gender balanced church, supporting healthy singles, dating, marriage and youth.* (Independently Published, 2018).

There are other suggestions concerning the imbalance in the study sample. There are more females than males amongst the elderly as they live longer, and it is this group who have contributed to the current study. It may be that women have more time to respond and are more inclined to do so. They may be closest to the peace testimony. It may be the case that a larger number of women have left the traditional church with its male role models and there may have been an anti-clerical element expressed by the women. These comments are clearly speculation, but it is worth analysing what is clearly a significant gender factor in the project.

In terms of why people are attracted to Quakers it may be that there is an appeal to women of the empathetic element in Quakerism. Like attracts like and women may feel at home in largely female groups, this being true of most organisations. A sociologist will look for underlying reasons, often in terms of the function that the group exhibits. It does however remain a paradox as 106 boys are born to 100 girls. Male mortality is slightly higher than female. Women live longer so the proportion of men in the population can drop to 40% when people are in their over 80s.[3]

2. Age

The average mean age evidenced in the material from 1997-2015 was 66. In the accounts from 2016 it is 69 which may be accounted for by the way some older members were approached and made to feel welcome. The age of the researcher may have contributed to the age data. At the interviews, a question of age was included. The written accounts do not respond to such a question and thus the age is not always in evidence. In the material from

[3] Peter Brierley, *Future First*, June 2020, 6. using Office for National Statistics, *Population Projections*, 2018 based, October 2019.

1997-2015 the median age was 61 while in the material from 2016 it was 72. One can compare the average age with that of the British Quaker Survey where the age was 64. In terms of age groups in this study:

Age	Data 1997-2015	Data 2016-2020
Fifth Age (over 85)	**15**%	20%
Fourth Age (75-84)	18%	22%
Third Age (65-74)	22%	25%
60-64	8%	n/a
50-59	18%	13%
Under 50	19%	20%

Table 1 Age

These figures can be placed in the context of the overall age of those attending church in 2015 which was 48. This clearly included children who are often not present in Quaker Meetings [less than a third have a monthly meeting for children].[4] Those responding were clearly of an age to do so and had the time. It was older people who responded to my request for life journeys/spiritual lives. This would have pushed the average up but nevertheless it is a significant figure. Age is included here to indicate the general background of those providing

[4]Quaker Life Representative Council Report *All are welcome: transforming our Quaker community with young Friends.* 12-14 October 2018

data. There is no suggestion that one can extrapolate from the people involved in the study to a wider group. It presents a picture of those who have journeyed towards Quakerism. This is valuable and could provide a guide as to how others might be expected to respond if circumstances were similar. They are of course not similar, and it is here that the limitations of the quantitative study lead the way for the qualitative study where the respondents have a voice and the opportunity to reflect. The average age would indicate people who have the experience to respond to the nature of the material requested, although it needs to be remembered that not all have been Quakers for any length of time.

3. University attendance

In the earlier material 32% of the people are recorded as having attended university. When the focus is on the new material from 2016 then university attendance is 45%. This can be compared to the 39% of respondents to the 2013 British Quaker Survey who had obtained a degree.[5] University qualifications are an entry into 'cultural capital'. These figures are high in comparison to about 4% of the population who attended university in the early 1960s, with this figure rising to 14% by the end of the 1970s. The national figure us currently 50% [6] with the figure for Quakers being 72%. It reflects the intellectual make up of Quakers which can be seen in tangible terms in the occupations that Quakers undertook.

[5] British Quaker Survey. http://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/pages/national-quaker-survey.html[accessed 5/11/2018]
[6] Kershaw, Alison "More than half of young people are going to university figures show," *The Independent*, September 27, 2019, 1.

4. Occupations

The accounts and interviews were explored for indications of jobs and background. It is estimated from age that 67% were retired so occupation is in the past.[7] The main occupations were:

Occupation	Data 1997-2015	Data 2016-2020
Teachers	22%	8%
Lecturers	13%	12%
Quaker work	6%	25%
Nurses and social workers	8%	8%
Admin and consultancy	12%	8%
Charity work	5%	4%
Doctors	4%	4%
Politics; TV; military	2%	4%
Other [see below]	28%	27%

Table 2 Occupation

The following are listed to show variety but are not statistically recordable:

[7] Compare 61% retired in the 2013 British Quaker Survey (Question 42d)

Artists; Civil Servants; Peace Education; Shop work; Authors; Actors; Film; Scientists; Housewife; Vicar; Forester; Porter; Environmentalist; TUC; Architect; Cook; Post Office; Gardener; Therapist; Surveyor; Met Office; Technician; Pharmacy; Car Sales; Factory Worker; Bus Driver; Shipping; Horses; Ambassador; London Transport; Career Advisor; Solicitor; Nun; Councillor; Musician; Scientist; Librarian.

The caring professions are central. There are few factory workers. Most of the professions are present even if only with one person. It was not possible to identify occupations for many in the sample. This may be accounted for by the fact that Quakers do not wish to be identified by a role but as a person.

5. Religious background

Of the religious background that was recorded 25% had been Anglicans in the material from 1997-2015 and since 2016 it was 28%.[8] 28% were birthright Quakers or brought up as such in both sets of data.[9] Methodists were 8% in both sets of data. The Methodists would seem to be a significant group of those embracing Quakerism. I can recall one respondent saying that she had become a Quaker because the Methodists had not stood up about a sex shop as they had done some twenty years earlier. Memories can be very focussed, and this is often the case when people reflect on their religious roots. It is difficult to compare the Methodist figure with the British Quaker Survey which refers to 'Protestant' upbringing (18%) and 'Other Christians' (19%).

The value of this study is that it allows details to emerge which may not be evident elsewhere. Other religious roots were varied with 8% having been sent to Sunday School on their own

[8]24% were previously Anglicans (2013 British Quaker Survey Question 3) http://www.woodbrooke.org.uj/pages/national-quaket-survey-html [accessed 5/11/2018]

[9] 31% were raised as Quakers. Ibid.

[more recent material 5%] which may reflect the way people during interviews reflected at depth on their earlier experiences or were prompted to do so. 8% had been Roman Catholic. [if more recent accounts it is 10%] which may reflect the way people who had made a significant shift wanted to talk about it. 1% specifically said that they had no religious background [more recent accounts 6%]. It is assumed that this figure would be larger as those who did not mention religion may well have not experienced it. The lack of mention may not indicate an absence, the focus of their life stories being more on the contemporary years. Written accounts do not require people mention a religious upbringing. It is fair to say that most religious groups were mentioned by at least one person, with groups such as the Huguenots and clairvoyants finding a mention. Some had been influenced by grandparents. Our knowledge of these people does not mean that others for which there is no evidence had no background. The implications of the above figures can be interpreted in different ways. Francesca Montemaggi notes that most in her sample had a Christian background yet only just over a half of those with a Christian upbringing identified as Christian before they began coming to a Quaker Meeting.[10] Religious backgrounds may be remembered by people in different ways. In Chapter Three I have observed that many people can remember the roots of their religious thinking before a lapse took place, lapses being a common occurrence for many people at some point. The interpretation of these figures is complicated, and suggestions can be found throughout the study.

6. Geographical location. I have made a rough line across middle of England, that is below Lincolnshire to below Staffordshire and Cheshire. 30% came from the North [new material

[10]Francesca Montemaggi, *The Changing Face of Faith in Britain: how should Quakers respond?* Part 2 *The spirituality of new Quakers* (London: British Yearly Meeting and Woodbrooke, 2018).

26%]. 66% came from the Midlands and South [new material 79%] 2% came from Scotland [new material 4%] and 2% from Wales [new material 1%]. It is difficult to gain a lot from the geographical location. It was included towards the end and because it was available. I have managed to make more visits in the South with day visits on the railway network and this explains the greater number although there are also more Meetings in the South from which to select .The main observation is that the responses came from the whole of the British Yearly Meeting.

APPENDIX F

Example of Interview notes

Field work record 126: Interview.

Born in 1956. Female.

Currently a lecturer in Applied Linguistics

Her parents were Quakers

She felt they were rebellious and funny

She linked their values in with Quakers in the way they had a small holding, their involvement in building and supporting village community, and fact her aunt went to Greenham Common.

They went to the Meeting in Buckinghamshire.

The family also felt it important to be located in the village where they lived so they were involved with the church although she was not confirmed.

She had a belief in God wherever happened and indeed considered that she was the only one of four siblings who retained that belief.

She considered she had the God gene.

She had had mystical experiences and related her first experiences of this to looking a stained-glass window in local church.

She considered began the process of discernment to be ordained in the Anglican church but considered there to be too much of a brand.

She married a French man and lived in France – considered the Catholic Mass to be alien and priest led. Married when 30 and had two children. Married in the Mairie because not Catholic with a blessing in England.

Practised Yoga and meditation.

Divorced

Continued to have mystical experiences

Involved with discernment and spiritual guides.

Returned to the Quakers two years ago. First went to the small meeting which is held in a convent on the outskirts of city [the meeting in a Catholic chapel may have been an issue]

Then went to the city Meeting where she is involved with the newsletter [my 'advert' was read by her]

She wanted to nourish and give back

Thought it important that it was the Religious Society of Friends – she would leave if this changed.

Attended communion on occasions.

Was able to identify with the study and was familiar with grounded research.

Gave me two articles relating to her study of communication.

There is a continuity between her early links with Quakers and her later return.

There is also the lapse period when she was able to explore new experiences.

Observations

All five of the categories [see headings of Chapters Three to Seven] were present - background – the meeting and lapses – radical theology – social action in terms of working for the newsletter – able to reflect on difficult situations - she had looked carefully at the study and was aware of what was needed. There was a balance – she had returned and was involved with the city Meeting and editorial team – believing and belonging were both evident.

APPENDIX G

An account published by a Meeting

The text has been copied.

Apart from the names being removed there are no changes.

At present spirituality is eclipsing almost everything else for me. I never thought it would have the importance it has for me now. In the past I made sense of the world through a rational perspective and it was that which, in my early teens, made me think I was an atheist. The RE at school in Australia was tailored to whatever faith we declared when we enrolled. I had a Catholic instruction, although my family had long since stopped going to church. Facing the option of being confirmed I began to question what I really believed. The more I looked at Catholicism at that time, the less I liked it: ritual seemed to dominate at the expense of genuine spiritual experience.

My dad is Lebanese and had gone to Australia in the post-war years and married my mother who was 3rd generation Australian. My parents separated when I was 4 and we lived with my mother. She remarried in 1979 when we left Australia and we came to England via Greece. We stayed in Greece 9 months when I was 14. Living in Greece opened my eyes to other religious possibilities. This was during my atheist stage (age 12 to 15) and didn't believe there was any afterlife. There I was introduced to the Greek Orthodox Church; exotic, ornate gilded church interiors with lots of candles and their darkened mystery. We experienced an

Easter midnight mas – the call of ‘Christos Anesti!’ (Christ is Risen!) spilling into the streets and the spreading of the light by people in the crowd lighting their candles from the flame of those beside them.

Prayer was never a driving force for me, and even today I very rarely feel the need to pray. One spiritual experience in my childhood stands out for me. I attended the Salvation Army’s Youth Club with two of my sisters (I am the youngest of five) and we sang in the choir and used to go with them on camps. We took part in one of their welcome ceremonies where they gave us a blessing. As we walked home together afterwards, we said to each other that we felt changed. We all felt it was a genuine spiritual experience. It did not feel like an empty ritual and I think it is now a recognisable step on the spiritual path.

The relaxing of my spiritual outlook was reflected in the friends I made in my teenage years. My friends had intellectual interests as well as spiritual ones and that was important to me, as most of interests were intellectual then. I was enjoying school – especially learning languages – and wanted to find a way of combining languages with science. I learnt German and Japanese while at school in Australia, then some Greek in Greece, and continued to A level in England.

Using my mother’s Oxford Dictionary, with its etymological analysis of each word, opened up a fascination for me of the development of languages. The fact that the dictionary came from Oxford meant that Oxford became a beacon of learning for me as a child, and when we arrived in England it dawned on me that I could apply to Oxford. I wanted to salvage something for myself after all the changes I’d been through. When I started in the 6th form here with only 4 ‘O’ levels, a teacher told me I hadn’t a hope in hell to get into Oxford. It

became a motivating factor. I thought, 'I'll show her!' and I applied to study German and Greek. I was at St. Hilda's for 4 years and took the 3rd year out in Greece, which helped my Greek immensely.

I still think of Oxford as a magical place stemming from its long history of learning in the colleges, with their 'cloisters' and 'quads', originally built for the spiritual life and training of the clergy. By the time I got to Oxford I was agnostic, spiritually curious and fascinated by evensong and carols at the cathedral. The music lifted me, but I was unable to sympathise with the creed or enter into prayers. I'd made friends with Christian Socialists and I attended Quaker Meeting in my second year having met Quakers in the Peace Movement when in the 6th form. I also attended Young Friends meetings here, but it had more of a social function for me.

A key event was in meeting ….in 1994. I had organised a workshop on 'Change' with ….at the Meeting House. …chose me as his partner for a longer conversation. We clicked at a deeper level. It was a genuine meeting of minds and hearts, and I was aware that something else was present – in a spiritual sense. We married 7 years ago in the Meeting House and our intellectual, spiritual and emotional lives have reinforced each other and deepened as time has gone by… Has been interested in spiritual perspectives since he was 17. One of the most important things we have in common is music. …is a guitar teacher, music author and composer.

In 2001, the BBC programme on Near Death Experiences featuring Dr Peter Fenwick, inspired me to read more about NDEs and try to understand consciousness in the light of reports from those who have experienced being conscious while thought to be clinically dead.

These reports include amazing, verifiable detail of what was going on around them while thy were "dead" and the life changing effects that followed. They are ordinary people with nothing to gain by sharing their experience and often have much to lose through people's scepticism. The sincere telling of these experiences spoke to me more clearly than did any religious teaching I had received.

An interesting resonance for me was the description of the 'light' encountered in Near Death Experiences and its parallel with the Light we know of in Quaker practice. My understanding is that early Quakers chose silence as their form of worship because their feeling for God was so deep language was not capable of expressing what they felt. The irony in our time is that some people see the lack of a creed and dogmas in Quakerism as a licence not to believe anything spiritual, and this can result in our losing sight of the Spirit as the ground and being of our Society.

In … joined the Alister Hardy Society which researches spiritual experiences and I became chairperson for the Oxford and Cotswold group in …...The Society sincerely endeavours to being scientific and spiritual knowledge together and this is important for me. I sense that if we want to progress as a species we need to find a way of integrating the spiritual with the intellectual and emotional sides of our lives, i.e. a spiritual evolution accompanying physical evolution in our time.

Over the years I have worked in publishing, as a local councillor and in educational technology (I helped to set up the Association for Learning Technology) and now I work as a staff trainer for the Oxon and Bucks Mental Health Trust. The challenge for me now is to integrate my new spiritual knowledge in my work and daily living. It is all about God and

love. We have a loving God who sustains us and our challenge is to love and evolve in love, which I see as an active participation in creating the world we live in.

Observations

The following categories [see titles to Chapter Three to Seven]

Background -there is reflection on how experiences link with the present. Continuity is seen in past experiences

The Meetings -came to Meeting whilst an undergraduate. The concept of Light is considered in relation to the Meeting and to Near Death Experiences.

Theology – interested but unable to say creeds or pray- refers to spirituality and the hope of integrating this with science

Social Action - Christian Socialists. Talks about linking a spiritual stance with her work

Personal reflection - there is much personal reflection with experience being placed in the context of theology

APPENDIX H

Example of an account since 2016

Field Work record 6: Account.

The text has been copied and style retained.

Apart from the name being removed there are no changes.

Here we go

Baptised + confirmed RC. RC schools 8-18. Avoided that 5 to 8 when no RC school nearby. Happy, good C of E county school before that, thank Whatever. Mainly negative effect of RC education esp prescriptive and negative ethics esp demonisation of sexuality. Several years of "mortal" sin and fear of Hell etc. Ironically, it was intro to theological argument in 6th form that enabled me to spring that trap, so by late teens was anti-RC and agnostic/atheist (for about 15 years.

Then in mid 30s had traumatic bereavement, which left me totally at sea emotionally and intellectually. I began searching (mostly ineffectually) for a stand point that was both plausible and comforting. (helpful exception was reading W. James's Varieties of Religious Experience)

Then had an experience which made me aware of the connectedness of everything, which enabled me to spring

that trap, too. So I was open to finding a religious community of some sort, though I could not (and still can't) believe in God in the traditional sense.

At that time I had a Q colleague who lent me some books and took me to a MfW where, in time, I became a regular attender It seemed this helped me, as I put it to myself, to be "more in touch with reality" which was less scary in the company of the (mostly!)kind and reasonable Qs I found there. It took another 10 years before I was ready to make the commitment to membership.

So here I am many years later. It isn't always easy, for mainly mundane reasons (limited resources of energy and time), but it feels rather like family, with all the pluses and minuses of that!

In the last 5 or so years I've become interested in what different religious traditions have in common and practice a form of Buddhist meditation, which seems very congruent with Quakerism and each tradition enriches the other for me. I have traditionally Christian friends who use the term Salvation also when l'm asked I say that I think that anyone who has found a sound enough way of living constructively in the face of human limits of understanding and control is about as saved as can be expected. And "there are more than one of those"

I am quite realistic really. Don't think the" dark gods" need my help!

Hope this isn't too rambling.

Observations

Categories [see headings of Chapter Three to Seven] present in the account

Background including experiences

Choice of Meeting and Quaker values

Theology evident

Personal dimension – attitude.

Description of RC school and sixth form. The background then moves to his/her 30s. Came to Meeting through a friend. Considers own theological position and that of others. Social Action does not appear – this is one of the categories least mentioned - difficult to argue from silence. The personal dimension is evident throughout and the journey is well described.

APPENDIX I

During the study I was able to visit the following Meetings:

Abingdon; Alton; Amersham; Aylesbury, Banbury; Bedford; Berkhampstead; Blackheath; Bournemouth; Bournville; Bridport; Brigflatts; Broad Campden; Bull Street; Bunhill Fields; Burford; Charlbury; Chesham; Cirencester; Coventry; Derby; Dorking; Durham; East Garston; Esher; Ettington; Faringdon; Friends House; Golders Green; Hampstead; Harpenden; Harrow; Hartshill; Headington; Hemel Hempstead; Henley; Hereford; Hertford; Heswall; High Wycombe; Isle of Wight; Jordans; Kendal; Lancaster; Leicester; Leighton Buzzard; Loughborough; Malvern; Marlborough; Milton Keynes; Nailsworth; New Milton; Newbury; Northampton; Nottingham; Oakham; Oundle; Oxford; Painswick; Poole; Reading; Selly Oak; St Andrews; Stourbridge; Sutton Coldfield; Swanage; Swarthmoor; Swindon; Uxbridge; Wallingford; Wandsworth; Warwick; Watford; Wellingborough; Westminster; Weymouth; Winchester; Winchmore Hill; Witney; Wolverhampton; Worcester; Worthing.

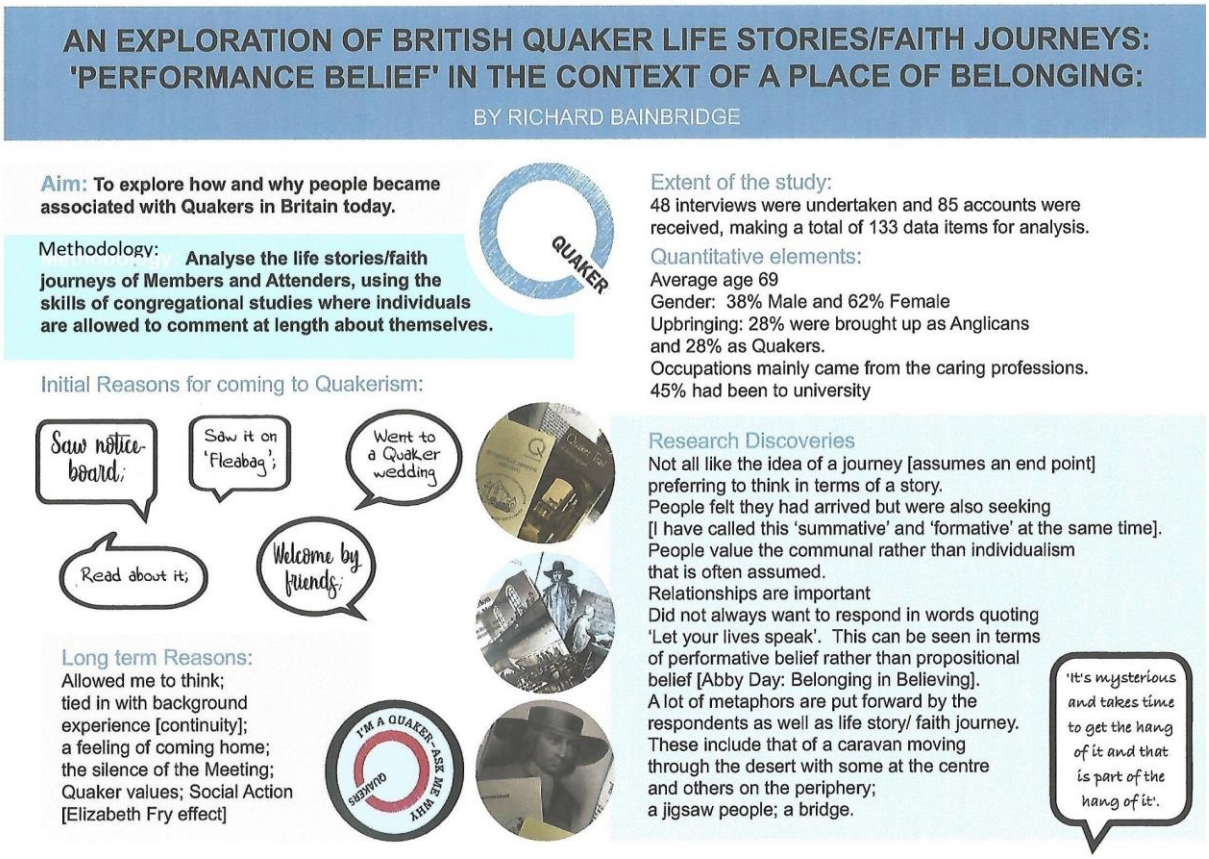
I had correspondence with the following Meetings:

Bolton; Cardiff; Carlisle; Darlington; Godalming; Hastings; Horfield; Oswestry; Powys; Spiceland; Wooldale.

65% of all Local Meetings responded. This is similar to the response (61%) to the request for information as to how Meetings were responding to the lock down following the corona virus. see http://www.woodbrooke%20summary%20of96%20online%20meeting%20responses [accessed 8/5/2020]. Relations at the individual and communal level in lockdown have caused one to reflect on the nature of such relations in normal circumstances.

APPENDIX J

POSTER PRESENTED AT COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LAW VIRTUAL CONFERENCE on JUNE 24th, 2020.



Erratum to poster which should have read Abby Day: Believing in Belonging