Lives Lived in Spirit:
Quaker Service for Peace and Social Justice in the Canadian Context

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis provides an account of Quaker service work for peace and social justice in the Canadian context, drawing from life history interviews gathered during attendance at Canadian Yearly Meeting and Canadian Friends Service Committee meetings. Interviews explored each individual's involvement in peace and social justice within the context of their Quaker spirituality. The analysis of the interviews emphasizes that religion is woven into each person's life over time and through experiences. Further, because Quaker spirituality emphasizes that each person has the capacity to commune with the Divine on an individual basis, the nature of religious experience will differ. This problematizes the notion that religiously-based service for peace and social justice derives from one type of religious experience. Instead, this research shows how, for Quakers, involvement in peace and social justice is intimately connected to personal experiences of the Divine, which are both fostered and tempered by their spiritual community.

Dedication

For my Grandma Min, whose story has inspired me!
Her life has been full of challenges and tribulations and yet she has never given up on
what she believes in.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Introduction

> *John*[1]*:* I can't speak for anyone else, but for me this experience of listening and of
> opening myself to the spirit has been very undeniably strongly linked to how I live my
> life everyday. This is not about some spiritual life in isolation; this is not about Sunday
> morning only. This is not about living my life on top of a mountain or in a cave.
> Everything that I've experienced through this shared worship has been very very closely
> tied to my life and what I do everyday. And again that's been my experience, but that
> connection is there in my face. And one of the most beautiful, short sentences that I've
> ever read anywhere was from a Quaker woman ... "Let your life speak". You don't need
> to go out and preach anything. You don't need to convince people of this and that. You
> just let your life speak. Let your actions speak.

If someone had told me that I would write a thesis on a religious group a few years ago I

do not think I would have believed them. While I was relatively open to learning and

observing different forms of religious experience, I did not always fully think about how

it played a role in people's lives. Like many people raised in a "secular" household, I had

if not anti-religious, then at least pro-secularization sentiments. I generally perceived

religion as a dissipating way of understanding the world which would be replaced by

more rational and objective viewpoints. Interestingly, it was through my own work in the

prisons and the restorative justice community that I stumbled into studying a Christian

group, the Quakers. When my work colleague first told me she was a Quaker, I did not

really know how to react. First, I did not really know anything about Quakers, although,

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[1] The names of all participants have been changed, as well as identifying information, to protect their
confidentiality. For a more complete discussion of the measures taken to protect confidentiality see
Chapter two, section 2.2.3.

I thought they might be somehow related to the Quaker Oats guy. Was he a Quaker I wondered? Or maybe the Amish, maybe they are Quakers too. Maybe the Quakers are a new religious movement, I thought. Was she a brain-washed cult member? Was she going to try and convert me? Needless to say, I knew little of Quaker ways in the world or the particulars of their spiritual practice.

So, I was surprised to find that Quakers did not fit my perception of religious believers. Their views about spirituality--that connecting to the Divine is a very personal thing—and the values they embraced—equality, simplicity, pacifism, and nonviolence— were not incompatible with my own beliefs. Further, I became aware of the work they did in the world for peace and social justice, such as nuclear disarmament and advancing human rights, from a premise of working towards a nonviolent outcome. Many of their interests and areas of concern were very similar to my own. Thus, it was through my own experiences with Quaker-based nonviolence training workshops, such as Alternatives to Violence, or attending worship sessions, which are based in shared silence, that I saw how deeply the Quakers I came to know drew on their spiritual experience in living out their value system in their daily lives. I became extremely curious to explore in-depth the history, religious practice, and peace and social justice involvement of Quakers. Who are Quakers? What do they value in the expression of their religious experience? Why do they worship in silence? How is their involvement in peace and social justice connected to their spiritual experience? Thus, this thesis is an attempt on my part to explore a group which has challenged my own understanding of religion, religious experience and the role which spirituality plays in working towards peace and social justice.

Through stories I have gathered from Canadian Friends I have sought to shed light on the diverse individuals who make up this fascinating group and how their spiritual journey is woven into the work they do for peace and social justice. Interestingly, my own journey of finding Quakerism as a sociologist mirrored the journey of many of the Friends[2] I came to know through my research project. Like many of them, through my own life experience and the work I was doing in the interests of justice, I came across Quakers. This is no surprise, given the ongoing involvement of Friends around the world in issues of peace and social justice. For many of the participants, coming to Quakerism led to a significant shift in their viewpoint of religion. Further, in almost all cases becoming part of Quakers intensified their involvement in issues of peace and social justice. And yet, Quaker processes of worship and organization embrace and foster diversity. How is it that a group which emphasizes diversity shares a similar penchant towards action for peace and social justice? As John's words capture at the opening of this section, he seeks to let his actions speak, and this is a central aspect of his spiritual experience. This sense of obligation to carry one's spiritual experience outwards into the world was what united all of the Friends I came across; yet, the manner in which individuals realize their spirituality through service for peace and social justice reflects the diversity in spiritual and life experience because not every Quaker is involved

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[2] The terms "Friend(s)" and "Quaker(s)" can be used interchangeably. The term Religious Society of Friends is the general name for the religious group. Some individual meetings have dropped the term "religious" and simply refer to themselves as the "Society of Friends". Originally, those who adhered to the movement referred to themselves as "children of the light", "Friends of truth", or "Friends of Jesus". These two latter names are the basis for the term "Friend". The name Quaker was first used in the 17th century when George Fox was brought before the court on a charge of blasphemy. The judge said that the group called others to quake and tremble at the "word of God". The term also refers to the deep physical passion which some early Friends displayed at meeting for worship, shaking and trembling in their experience of God. The term Quaker remained the general name applied to the society up until the 18th century, when the group began to use the "Religious Society of Friends". In the contemporary context, this is the official name of the group. For the most part, Quakers will refer to their affiliation with the group using both terms, Quaker and Friend.

in the same issues or in the same way. This thesis provides a consideration of the multiple ways which Quakers engage in work for peace and social justice in striving to live their lives in spirit.

1.2 Quaker Lives Lived in Spirit

For those unfamiliar with Quaker spirituality or Quakers, Quakerism is a derivation of Protestantism which emerged in 17th century England. In present day, they are found in many countries throughout the world, although their population is most concentrated in the United States, the United Kingdom and parts of Africa. Early Friends professed a message of religious equality, that the Divine lives within the heart of each individual, as conveyed in the phrase "that of God in everyone".[3] This phrase expresses that every individual has the capacity to directly connect with God and further that in interactions with others Quakers should strive to recognize that all individuals have that of God in them.

The deep belief in equality underpins all aspects of the society. The form of worship practiced by Quakers, corporate[4] silent worship, employs silence as a unifying factor. All those present are free to minister. The internal organization of the society and processes of decision-making maintain a bottom-up structure. Concerns[5] of the organization are brought to light by individual Friends, to their Monthly Meeting or through one of the various committees.[6] Within any Monthly Meeting or committee, Quakers move towards a particular form of consensus, where the final decision of the

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[3] Quakers also use the phrase the "inner light" to express this sentiment.

[4] Corporate in the Quaker context refers to the notion of shared or group-based process.

[5] Friends use the word concerns to refer to the sense that God or the Divine has called them to carry forward a particular issue.

[6] Monthly Meetings are the Quaker term for the local congregation. Depending on the size of the population Monthly Meetings will be part of larger congregations, called Quarterly Meetings. The national body is called a Yearly Meeting.

group will not be taken until all present agree that the "way forward"[7] has been discerned. Individual concerns are fostered by the collective context and the collective concerns of the organization arise from individual leadings. This explains how a religious group which emphasizes and values personal religious experience also tends towards involvement in peace and social justice, as the Divine is realized not only in worship, but in relations with others. For Quakers, outward action is an integral part of the spiritual experience. The form of that action, in any setting, must be guided by and reflect their experience of the Divine.

Quakers further their connection to the Divine by deepening the integration of their spirituality and their everyday life. It is not enough just to act for peace and social justice, but that the action taken must emphasize pacifism and nonviolence. This is because the form of one's actions must be consistent with one's beliefs, that the Divine is present within all human beings. Thus, the insistence on pacifism and nonviolence does not necessarily originate from a strict adherence to religious beliefs deriving from creeds or doctrines particular to Quakers, but from a desire to replicate the values underpinning one's spiritual experience in all relations. None of the Friends I talked to drew strictly on the testimonies of Quakers as a basis for their involvement. For Julie, it is because she seeks to fully realize her spirituality that she feels she must give something back.

> *Julie*: But I do have that sense of service as well. That it's not just about me being comfortable in my life. It's about serving my community and my people. And that God isn't just there to make me feel good. That it's a challenge and that I have some gifts and I'm expected to share them with people.

Quaker involvement in the public political realm for peace and social justice originates from a sense of obligation to make a difference in whatever way they can. Historically,

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[7] This phrase refers to the notion that the action is of the Divine.

this has led to the involvement of the society in the anti-slavery campaign, the prison reform movement, relief work during numerous wars and the advancement of various peace initiatives. In the contemporary context, Quakers continue to be involved in numerous issues from peace work, human rights issues on a national and international basis, and environmental issues. Beyond Quaker specific committees which are dedicated to advancing particular issues, the members of the society can be found in a wide array of organizations from the United Nations, to Trident Ploughshares[8], to the Raging Grannies.[9] Furthermore, the day to day work of individual Friends often seeks to advance on a personal level, issues from penal abolition to community health.

Furthermore, while the tendency of Quakers is towards nonviolent and peaceful protest, this does not suppose that all Quakers see the same action or outcome as the best way forward, nor does the motivation behind their involvement necessarily derive from one type of spiritual experience. Interestingly, Quakers foster a spiritual community which values and encourages diverse religious experiences, as well as view points. The individuals in this study generally noted an increased involvement in issues of peace and social justice upon joining Quakers, in part because they had an increased capacity to become involved, but also because their own interests were supported and encouraged by their spiritual community. In relation to personal courses of action, the individuals in this

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[8] "Trident Ploughshares is a campaign to disarm the United Kingdom's Trident nuclear weapons system in a non-violent, open, peaceful and fully accountable manner" ("Trident Ploughshares, retrieved May 19, 2006). For more information see http://www.tridentploughshares.org/index.php3.

[9] A group of women dedicated to protesting for a better world. They frequent protests wearing outrageous costumes and singing songs. The philosophy of the groups is as follows: "The delights of grannying include: dressing like innocent little old ladies so we can get close to our 'target', writing songs from old favourites that skewer modern wrongs, satirizing evil-doing in public and getting everyone singing about it, watching a wrong back down and turn tail and run, sharing a history with other women who know who they are and what they're about" ("Raging Grannies Philosophy", retrieved May 19, 2006). While the organization was not founded by Quakers, many Grannies are Friends. For more information on the group see their website, http://www.geocities.com/raginggrannies/.

study drew on the support of their Quaker community in both tangible ways, such as clearness committees[10], which assist the individual to discern if the action they desire to take is truly a leading[11]; however, as Susan describes this support is often of a more intangible form.

> *Lisa:* What do you think gave you the strength to do that?
> *Susan:* The desire to get well, myself. And finding some spiritual centre and spiritual grounding. And I didn't, my meeting didn't support me in that. It's not something I shared with people. But they were there, you know, Quakers were there. I had a supportive family that wasn't biological for the first time.

For Susan, having a spiritual community provides her with an invisible support network she can draw on in difficult times.

This research emphasizes that for Quakers, involvement in peace and social justice is intimately connected to personal experiences of the Divine, which are both tempered and fostered by the communal spiritual context. Thus, service for peace and social justice manifests in diverse ways as each individual strives to live their life in a manner consistent with their experience of the spirit. The Quakers I came to know each had a unique spiritual path. Within Quakers each found space to enrich their experience in diverse ways, either in the form of worship, the lifestyle or relations within the group, all of which are part of Quaker spirituality. In this study, each person's involvement in issues of peace and social justice is similarly diverse, in terms of the issues involved in, the extent to which their work is connected to their Quaker community, and the basis for their involvement.

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[10] Quakers will often ask for a committee of clearness or a clearness committee when they are seeking to work through a particularly difficult issue. This can be for something related to a particular action they desire to take either in relation to their personal or professional life.

[11] Friends define a leading as a course of action that is inspired of, or by, God.

1.3 Rationale for the study

The aim of this research is to attend to the diversity amongst Quakers, both in relation to spiritual experience and outward involvement in peace and social justice. There are numerous accounts of how Quaker theology is connected to the peace and social justice work of Friends (Byrd, 1960; Kent & Spickard, 1994; Woodward, 1968); however, there are no ethnographic investigations into how the involvement of Friends in these issues is connected to their individual experiences of spirituality. This misses a significant peculiarity of Quakerism, in that while there is general consensus over values such as equality, not all Quakers share the same religious beliefs.[12] As Dandelion (2005) notes, in terms of religious belief, the Quakers are a liberal[13] religious group; diversity is encouraged, accepted and expected. Further, in the contemporary context the majority of Friends are convinced[14] rather than birthright[15] (Dandelion, 1996: 1; Steere, 1984: 53). In some cases new Friends will even continue to draw on their previous religious or non-religious belief systems and yet primarily identify as a Quaker.[16] There are Jewish

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[12] Within this thesis I am distinguishing between general values, such as equality, pacifism and simplicity, and religious beliefs, such as a belief in God or Jesus Christ. While this does not preclude that for some Quakers the reason they value and uphold equality, pacifism and simplicity is because of a belief in God or Jesus Christ, it is not a requirement of the group. What is required by the group is that the processes, which are rooted in the values, are upheld. It is in this manner that a distinction is maintained between the values of the group and the diverse religious belief systems of different members.

[13] Dandelion (2004) classifies liberal religious groups in opposition to conservative and sect religious groups which emphasize a strict adherence to a set of religious beliefs and practices. In contrast, liberal religious groups "...do not claim a unique possession of the truth. These latter groups accept that there is more than one way to God. They tend to be inclusive and tolerant and operate "diffuse belief systems" " (219). Included within the category of liberal religious groups would be groups such as the Quakers and the Unitarians.

[14] Historically this term referred to those Friends who were not born into a Quaker family. The decision to become a Quaker was called "convincement". This refers to the sense that individuals religious affinity is freely chosen and a result of a deep and personal experience of God in their lives.

[15] Birthright Friends are those who were born into a Quaker family and raised as a Quaker. In the contemporary context, this term is not used as frequently as young people are expected to take up membership when they are older and have decided they wish to remain part of the society.

[16] As Dandelion (2004) notes, this tendency towards diverse religious belief systems being incorporated within the group is more of a contemporary trend. Historically, Quakers would have been a predominantly Christian group, even though diverse religious experiences would have been fostered.

Quakers, Moonie Quakers and even atheist Quakers![17] These diverse individuals may all

be found within Quaker communities and will often be found working on the same peace

committee. Thus, while it is useful in a general sense to identify Quakers as a religious

group, they are truly a religious group of individuals.[18]

According to Collins (2002), Coleman & Collins (2001), and Dandelion (1996;

2004), Quakers are united by the form of religious practice, which is primarily reflected

in corporate silent worship. The basis of corporate silent worship is the shared mystical

experience, where unity is perceived to bring individuals closer to the Divine. By using

silence as a unifying factor and inviting all those present to minister, corporate silent

worship abolishes the top-down hierarchical structure associated with traditional church

services. This opens space for individual and therefore varied experiences of the Divine.

In fact, the process is meant to accommodate these different experiences. The value

underpinning the form of worship—a deep belief in equality of all individuals --informs

everything from First Day School[19] to Meetings for Business for Worship.[20] In the

absence of shared religious beliefs, the particular worldview[21] of Friends diffuses

throughout the organization. Thus, while Quakers do have a tendency towards

involvement in peace and social justice issues, with an emphasis on nonviolent and

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[17] For an examination of identity issues amongst Quakers who ascribe to other faith groups, in this case Buddhism, see Huber, Klaus. 2001. "Questions of Identity Among 'Buddhist Quakers'." *Quaker Studies* 6:80-106.

[18] This does not deny that other religious groups embrace individual identity as well. Quakers are among those religious groups for which individual identity is a uniting, rather than a dividing factor.

[19] Quaker Sunday School.

[20] Meetings for Business for Worship occur at Monthly Meetings, committee meetings and yearly gatherings. In the meetings those present determine the business of the organization, from issues of membership to official statements of the society. Business meetings are understood by Friends as a form of worship. For this reason, they begin and end with a period of silent worship. The aim of the gathering is to discern the will of the Spirit (called "unity" or the "sense of the meeting").

[21] By worldview I mean the value system particular to Quakers, which would include equality, pacifism and simplicity. This would also encompass the more general principle that one's actions must be consistent with what one values.

pacifist means, not all Quakers define their motivation for becoming involved in the same way. Nor are all Friends engaged in the same type of peace and social justice issues or at the same level. This thesis emphasizes the diverse manner in which Quaker spirituality is woven into an individual's involvement in peace and social justice.

Despite large numbers in Britain and the United States, the Quakers are not a majority group in any setting. The website of Canadian Yearly Meeting[22], indicates that membership has never risen above about 1600 members in Canada (Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, retrieved May 15, 2006).[23] As in other settings, in the Canadian context the Quakers continue to be extremely active both within the wider religious and political community. Yet, with the exception of historical accounts by Dorland (1927; 1968; 1972) and a chapter in a book by Brock (1990) there has been no research on this group in the Canadian context.[24]

Beyond the interesting characteristics of their religious practice and organizational aspects, the important role Quakers have played and continue to play in the Canadian context working for peace and social justice deserves further exploration. This thesis will therefore take as its starting point the life history accounts of a group of Canadian Friends with a view to highlighting their involvement in peace and social justice. The aim is to explore how spirituality informs peace and social justice work

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[22] Canadian Yearly Meeting is the main administrative body for Friends in Canada. Their website is www.quaker.ca .

[23] According to Robinson (2004), in 2001 there were about three thousand Quakers in Canada (retrieved April 13, 2006). The discrepancy in numbers is likely due to the increasing trend in Quakerism for new "members" to remain attenders rather than to take up full membership (Steere, 1984). This would suggest that counting membership to indicate the total Quaker population is somewhat problematic as it would not include those who attended regularly because they might not identify as "official" members of the group. It is likely that the total number of Friends in Canada, if one includes members and regular attenders falls somewhere between these two numbers.

[24] See Schrauwers, Albert. 1999. "'I was a stranger, and ye took me in': Charity, moral economy, and the children of peace." *Canadian Historical Review* 80:624-642. This article is related to an off-shoot of Quakerism and yet provides some indirect in-sight into early development in Friends history in Canada.

without taking for granted a particular spiritual experience or set of religious beliefs based on group affiliation. Instead, I will consider how individuals draw on their spirituality and spiritual community in a personal manner[25], within the context of broader life events, in working towards peace and social justice.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The objective of this study is to provide a uniquely Canadian account of Quaker service work for peace and social justice, building on previous explorations of Quaker theology, religious experience, and social activism. Through the use of in-depth life history interviews, involvement in peace and social justice issues will be considered within the context of each individual's Quaker spirituality. Emphasis will be placed on how involvement in peace and social justice is a complex process which expresses how each person understands, experiences and lives their spirituality.

The main theoretical assumptions underpinning this investigation are as follows. First, that religion and religious identity are social constructions which are lived and experienced by individuals (Beckford, 2003; Orsi, 2003). As with any religious group, even when one has officially become a Quaker, the process of realizing one's spiritual identity is ongoing (Beaman, 1997, 2001; Kaufman, 1991; Peek, 2005). Second, how religion informs involvement in peace and social justice is therefore also a fluid and complex process, which blends with personal experience and negotiation of the place of religion in one's life. This contrasts with the concept of religious activism as a

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[25] This approach does not ignore the important role played by the Quaker community in facilitating individual's involvement through the process of shared worship and corporate decision-making (where the group discerns on a consensus-basis the way forward in relation to a particular issue); this process is central to the society. The focus of this thesis will be on how individual's experience their Quaker spirituality in relation to peace and social justice; reference will be made to corporate decision-making where and when it is brought in in the context of the interviews.

straightforward process, where a dogmatic belief system is understood as the basis for action. The Quakers are a religious group which do not define group unity based on core religious beliefs, such as a belief in God or Jesus Christ, but rather define their unity through shared practice, such as corporate silent worship. The value of shared worship lies in the notion that all present seek to connect to the Divine in a way that allows space for these diverse experiences. In this context, how "religion" influences social action is particularly difficult to determine, as it is not necessarily connected to traditional definitions of religiosity nor is it consistent across the group. Despite a similarity amongst issues involved in and form of actions taken, this approach captures the diversity in how Quakers make sense of their involvement, discern which issues to engage in, and consider the form of the action to be taken.

1.5 Methodology

Even though the primary concepts in this study are religion, religious experience and involvement in peace and social justice, I have sought to provide space to capture the diverse ways that individuals understand and make sense of these terms in reference to their own lives and experiences. The emphasis is not on constructing objective measures of each individual's "religiosity" or level of involvement based on a set of indicators. Instead the objective of this research is to draw out accounts of how involvement in peace and social justice is informed by spirituality based on personal descriptions of religious experience; this approach demands sensitivity to the continuity between events in an individual's life. For this reason, I chose to work with the life history approach which emphasizes the potential of in-depth narrative accounts to illuminate not only individual

experience, but also broader social processes (Berger & Quinney, 2005; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Engel & Munger, 1996).

The participants in this study came from various locations across Canada, the United States and England. Some had been involved with Quakers for many years, while others were still relatively new to the group. Some of the participants were very clear about how they understood their Quaker identity and others were still struggling to find if they actually wanted to assume this label. They were involved at various levels in issues of peace and social justice. Some participants had been engaged in relief work overseas during the Second World War and the Vietnam War; others were engaged in overseas development work and nonviolence training in prisons; other participants were involved in organizing local community events which dealt with issues of injustice. For some participants their work originated from their involvement on a particular Quaker committee; for others it derived from a non-Quaker committee; usually individual's work was a combination of these two sources. The intention of this thesis is to capture this diversity and to consider how each person makes sense of their involvement in relation to their spiritual experience.

The three main analytic categories which emerged from the interviews were as follows: seeking; finding a spiritual home; and outward action blending with spiritual experience. These categories were chosen for how they highlight the spiritual journey of each individual and how it is woven into their work for peace and social justice. An exploration of the narrative accounts was organized around the three main analytic categories within the context of the broader theoretical themes explored such as the social

construction of religion and religious identity and religious experience as the basis for involvement in peace and social justice.

1.6 Organization of Thesis

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. Chapter two introduces the methodological approach of the study, and provides an account of the field work and analysis. Chapter three provides the reader with an introduction to the Quakers, exploring the peace testimony and the particular practices of the group. Chapter four provides an account of Quakers in the Canadian context. Both chapters draw in excerpts from the narratives of participants to consider Quaker worship, process, and the current involvement of Canadian Friends in peace and social justice. Chapter five explores literature and research on Quaker belief and practice and their involvement in peace and social justice issues. This section will provide a consideration of both the peculiarities of Quakerism, and how the connection between Quaker spirituality and peace and social justice work has been traditionally conceived. Chapter six presents theory and research on the social construction of religion, religious identity and religious experience. This chapter will explore issues which arise in studying religious involvement in peace and social justice, in the sociology of religion, as well as sociology more generally. This will involve a discussion of how Quaker involvement in peace and social justice provides a challenge to the maintenance of a distinction between private/public and sacred/secular in relation to religious experience. Chapters, seven and eight, present the main findings of the study organized around the three analysis categories: seeking; finding a spiritual home; and outward action blending with spiritual experience. Chapter seven explores the participants' early experiences with religion, as well as their early views on spirituality

and peace and social justice. This chapter also explores each individual's journey to becoming part of Quakers. Chapter eight explores the participants' involvement in issues of peace and social justice, within the context of Quaker spirituality. This chapter also provides an in-depth exploration of the types of issues individuals have been involved in, how and why they have carried out particular actions. Chapter nine concludes the thesis and considers areas of contribution and future research.

1.7 Summary

The purpose of this thesis is to shed light on a religious group previously unexplored in the Canadian context. Although the focus of this particular research is the peace and social justice work of Canadian Friends, the implications extend beyond this area and delve into theories of religion, social change and subjectivity. The hope is to provide a starting point for future research about Quakers in Canada, as well as the connection between spirituality and action for peace and social justice (issues which are continuously shown to be tied together). The diversity in the group, their unique religious practice and organizational aspects, as well as their ongoing witness for peace and social justice provide a rich landscape through which to explore this fascinating and relevant subject matter. In a broader sense, the recent attention given to violent terrorism and its associations with religious groups requires the complexity in religiously motivated political action to be explored in both its *pro*ductive and *de*structive modes. As Haar and Bussutil (2005) note in their recent edited collection, religion can be a force for peace or violence, and manifests in multiple ways in the public sphere. It is the subtleties of this process which I hope to capture through an intimate account of these particular Quaker individuals and the work that they do.

This thesis explores what it has meant for these Quakers to live their lives in spirit. Throughout the course of this research, I have been constantly pushed to reconsider my own understanding of who a religious believer is and what a religious life looks like. However, as a sociologist there is perhaps no greater joy than having your own assumptions challenged through personal experience and observation. A brief glimpse at the history of Quaker involvement in issues of peace and social justice suggests that the dedicated involvement of individuals motivated by an experience of the spirit can often play a pivotal role in deciding the course of history. However, the diffuse manner in which Quaker spirituality manifests through individual's lives and experiences further suggests that this process is far from simple or straightforward.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

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2.2 Method, Sample and Confidentiality
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2.6 Contributions of study
2.7 Summary

2.1 Introduction

> *John:* I remember having a conversation with [my mom]. Because she was puzzled as to why I would believe in... the divine, in some kind of divinity, in some kind of supreme being. And all I could say to her is that I have experienced it personally. I have an experience of it. Primarily in those, what I call mystical experiences and what followed, where I sort of knew what I had to do. And I did it and it turned out that this was what I needed to do. There was no doubt. And I remember her question was that, well, why did this happen to you and not to me? And I said it may have happened to you a number of times but you just didn't see what it was. Because you're very focused on not believing.
> *Lisa:* And what was her reaction?
> *John:* Well then she says, it's just a matter of perspective. So what's real, and what's true, I mean what is real, I have no idea. I mean nothing is really real. I mean especially if you look at the world from the point of view of Quantum Physics, there is no such thing as reality. There's just what we experience, and what I experience is valid for me, but it doesn't mean anything for you. Which is one of the problems with organized religions right, it becomes what should be real for everyone. Instead of just that's my experience.

As John captures in this quote "one of the problems with organized religions" is that it describes an experience that should be "real for everyone". I would argue that a similar problem exists in theorizing and research about religion, where a particular view of religion--church, traditional prayer and affiliation with an identified religious organization--is meant to be "real religion" for everyone. Thus, in selecting a method of data collection I sought to build a framework which would highlight and bring out the

diverse ways that individuals experience spirituality; this allows attention to be directed towards the many ways that individuals understand the role of religion and their spiritual community in their lives and how this relates to their involvement in peace and social justice issues.

In research on Friends, there are numerous accounts of how Quaker spiritual beliefs are connected to peace and social justice work (Byrd, 1960; Jonas, 1971; Kent & Spickard, 1994; Woodward, 1968) and the important role Friends have played in specific peace and social justice issues (Hamm et al., 2004, 2005 on the struggle against slavery; Ward, 2005 on the Southern civil rights movement). Research usually connects Quaker involvement in issues of peace and social justice back to Quaker theology or the various testimonies (Brock, 1990, 1998; Ceadel, 2002). However, with the exception of Waugh's (2001) account of the role of Bertram Pickard at the United Nations (written after his death) and Bailey's (2001) exploration of the challenges Friends have experienced in their work at the United Nations, there are no investigations into how the involvement of Friends in these issues is connected to their individual experiences of spirituality. This misses a significant peculiarity of Quakerism in that while there is general consensus over basic principles, such as equality, not all Quakers understand or experience their spirituality in the same way. What is missing in accounts which focus solely on the theology or the testimonies of Quakerism is the unique spiritual journey of each individual.

In relation to religious belief, the Quakers can be understood as a liberal religious group, meaning neither creeds nor doctrines are imposed. Further, in the contemporary context the majority of Friends are convinced rather than birthright (Dandelion, 1996: 1;

Steere, 1984: 53). In some cases new Friends will merge their previous belief system with their Quaker spirituality. There are Jewish Quakers, Moonie Quakers and even atheist Quakers! This holds true for the participants in this study some of whom have maintained an attachment to a previous religious identity. Others noted drawing on other spiritual traditions in building their own religious experience. At meetings I attended individuals would often read spiritual passages from Buddhism to Sufism and relate this to their own spiritual experience. Diversity is encouraged, accepted and expected.[26]

Despite large numbers in Britain and the United States, the Quakers are not a majority group in any setting. In Canada, from 1991 to 2001 the group has shown a seven percent increase in membership, indicating that as a group they are growing (Robinson, 2004, retrieved April 13, 2006).[27] According to Canadian Yearly Meeting the total population of Quakers in Canada is about 1600 (Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, retrieved May 16, 2006). Canadian Friends have played a significant role in past and present times in Canadian political and religious culture. However, with the exception of historical accounts by Dorland (1927; 1968; 1972) and a chapter in a book by Brock (1990) there has been no research on this group in the Canadian context.

In the context of the sociology of religion, an exploration of this group will add to our understanding of the Canadian religious landscape. The emphasis on life history methodology builds on similar accounts of religious belief and identity as something

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[26] In his research with Quakers Dandelion (1996) found an increased christo-centrism in rural meetings as opposed to urban meetings. Participants tended to use traditional Christian spiritual terminology, such as God and Jesus Christ, in their ministry.

[27] This situation is further complicated by the reality that the increasing trend in Quakerism is for new "members" to remain attenders rather than to take up full membership (Steere, 1984). This would suggest that counting membership to indicate the total Quaker population is somewhat problematic as it would not include those who attended regularly even though they might not identify as members of the group.

which is dynamic rather than static (Beaman, 1997, 2001; Peek, 2005). Further, the abandonment of a causal connection between religion and peace and social justice work provides a more complex account of how religion is connected to social change. There is a tendency amongst accounts of religiously motivated activism to suggest that individual action derives from a theological interpretation particular to the group they are a member of (Kent & Spickard, 1994; Haar & Busuttil, 2006; Martin, 2005). This perspective often results in religious viewpoints being framed as destructive of broader moral aims in the secular political world, for how they are connected to dogmatic and irrational belief systems. In the Quaker context, the spiritual experience is fostered within, but not determined by the group. Unity comes through the acceptance of diversity which is facilitated by the elements of religious practice (Coleman, 2000; Coleman & Collins, 2001; Dandelion, 2004; Spickard, 2005). The overall aim of this thesis is thus to attend to and not gloss over the diversity within Friends when considering how and why they are involved in issues of peace and social justice.

2.2 Method & Sample

2.2.1 Method

The life history method of interviewing was selected as the most appropriate because it emphasizes the potential of individual experiences retold through story to shed light on broader social processes and phenomena (Berger & Quinney, 2005; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Engel & Munger, 1996). In the context of the sociology of religion, this method has proved extremely fruitful for providing in-depth investigations into the nature of religious experience (Beaman, 1997; 2001). This method draws on the narrative turn in sociology and emphasizes the power of story to "connect personal experience to public

narratives, allowing society to "speak itself" through each individual" (Berger &

Quinney, 2005: 10). As Berger & Quinney (2005) point out theoretical suppositions are

not abandoned, however, they are not the main focus. The stories themselves are seen as

holding an inherent value for how they reveal a particular lived experience.

The focal point of this thesis is religion and how it is connected to involvement in

peace and social justice; however, the life history method allows for individual

experiences to emerge in each person's narrative as they construct their life story. This

allows other significant events to be brought in which would be obscured if I focused

only on religion (and specifically a traditional understanding of religion). Thus, while

religious affiliation is what unites each participant it was not necessarily the sole focus of

the interview. Often, the distinction between "religious" and "non-religious" or

"spiritual" and "non-spiritual" has the potential to obscure rather than illuminate religious

experience. As one participant noted, "how can I define what is a religious motivation,

it's everything, it's part of the entirety of who I am". Her feeling was echoed in several

of the other participants' accounts which emphasized the problem they had with placing

boundaries around religiosity and religious belief by providing concrete definitions.

Another benefit of the life history method, especially for this type of research, is

that it allows for an increased level of collaboration between research participant and

researcher. The interview transcript was openly shared with each participant to allow for

corrections and modifications. Follow-up interviews engaged the participant in a

dialogue around the tone of the interview, the description of events and allowed for

further clarification and investigation of key issues. This abandons the traditional

relationship of researcher (as authority) and participant (as informant). In Lawrence-

Lightfoot's words: "relationships imbued with "the life-enhancing glow of respect" challenge conventional notions of power, knowledge, and control between participants and, when authentically developed, sustain and replicate themselves" (cited in Cole & Knowles, 2001: 43). The objective was to make the process collaborative in order to build as complete a picture as possible of the research questions in connection to the person's life: How are Canadian Quakers engaging in peace and social justice? How is this connected to their spiritual lives? The nature of the research relationship plays a pivotal role in ensuring that space is given for the authenticity of stories to emerge. In the context of Quaker spirituality, with the emphasis placed on equality, this method seemed particularly appropriate as it mirrors the notion that knowledge generation should be collaborative and non-hierarchical.

2.2.2 Sample

As Cole & Knowles (2001) note, the life history approach means the researcher opts for "depth over breadth" (70). The interview process is extensive and quite time consuming. In line with the life history approach, the sample size for this investigation was small and purposive. Originally my plan was to draw participants specifically from the CFSC committees, the main organizational body for the peace and social justice concerns of Canadian Friends. However, I found after conducting an initial site-visit at a CFSC quarterly meeting, where I spoke with Friends about my project and the issues CFSC was engaging in, that there were many Friends, not necessarily on committees, who were engaged in peace and social justice activities. For some individuals their work has involved protests and letter writing, while for others it has meant living in simplicity away from society.

It became increasingly important as I proceeded through this project to ensure that I captured this diversity, as there is a tendency in accounts of Quaker service for peace and social justice to emphasize the larger events over smaller daily actions which take place. I do not wish to imply that this privileging is intentional or inappropriate as many of the issues which Friends have been involved in have been extremely important, such as slavery, the civil rights movement, and conflicts with the police and Aboriginal land rights. However, these accounts often obscure the daily actions to advance peace and social justice of Friends who may not be involved in these larger issues.

Interviews and observations were carried out on two occasions: Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) and a CFSC quarterly meeting. Because I chose to conduct my interviews at Friends gatherings as opposed to an individual meeting house, I was able to capture regional variability; however, this also meant that the Friends I interviewed were generally quite involved in Quaker issues, as compared to someone who never attends Yearly Meeting or has never been involved in CFSC.

In total I conducted nine interviews (one additional interview was excluded because the participant withdrew). The interviewees were from seven different monthly meetings, four different provinces, and ranged in age from 45-89. There were five men and four women. All of the Friends I interviewed were Quakers by convincement meaning they were not born Quakers. All but two were full members.[28] Most had been involved in some type of Quaker committee (in some cases multiple committees) at some point, though not all had served a term on CFSC. They were involved in an array of issues, from nuclear disarmament to environmental issues to penal abolition.

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[28] These individuals were regular attenders of Quaker meeting but had not taken of full membership.

2.2.3 Confidentiality

One of the challenges in researching individuals from such a small religious organization is that it is very difficult to maintain confidentiality. Also, because the life history method delves into all aspects of an individual's life, often very personal stories emerge. During the review process, participants were asked to read the transcript and remove anything they did not wish to be communicated in the final results.[29] Further, many of the individuals have had very distinctive lives making them easy to identify if only a pseudonym is used. For this reason, various measures have been taken to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. First, a pseudonym was assigned in the communication of the interview transcripts. Second, the location of the individual's Monthly Meeting will not be disclosed, nor their place of birth. Third, any identifying information in relation to experiences shared will be altered to ensure the participant's privacy is respected.

2.3 The Interviews and Participant Observation

2.3.1 The interviews

The thing that struck me most in the interviews was how diverse each individual was and yet they all still expressed (for the most part) a strong affiliation to the wider Quaker group. Will lived away from society pursuing the path of simplicity; Susan had spent many years traveling the world before she found Quakers and was now fully immersed in the international human rights community; Jen was struggling to find her place in Quakers and was not sure if it was the place for her and organized forum theatre workshops to work with issues of social justice and healing. All of these diverse people

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[29] During the interviews individuals also had the option of having the tape turned off for particularly sensitive topics. During this time, notes were not taken and the subject discussed does not appear in the final analysis.

still managed to find something in Quakers which spoke to them and fed their passions and deepest beliefs about the world and relations within it. The benefit of the life history approach is that it provides space for this diversity to emerge and in fact embraces the difference amongst participants.

The interviews lasted between two and three hours,[30] the longest was five hours. A research guide was prepared which served as a loose map for the types of questions/information I wanted to gather; however, this was a very rough guide and the majority of my questions were directed towards the unique life experiences of the interviewee. The process was at times difficult and exhausting, both for myself and the participants. Participants recalled challenging experiences and encounters which brought up painful memories. Despite this, generally people were grateful to have the opportunity to share their story (and particularly to have a copy of the transcript to keep for their own personal archives).

Following the initial interview, the transcripts were typed up in their entirety and sent to the participant either by mail or email. A second interview was organized by email conversation and phone and in some cases by mail. The transcript was reviewed for accuracy of factual information, typos, and to allow the participant to elaborate further. I also provided each participant with a second set of queries which I had after reviewing the interviews. Participants were extremely helpful and offered clarification of Quaker terms. They also were extremely diligent about ensuring that the meaning of words and phrases adequately captured the sense of their experience.

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[30] Arthur's interview was cut short due to time constraints. His interview lasted approximately one hour. A follow-up interview did not take place due to availability, however, he was provided with a copy of the transcript and we communicated by email.

2.3.2 Participant observation

As I outlined in Chapter one, my interest in Quakers originated from relationships with

Friends which I developed through my own work in the prisons and the restorative justice

community. Over the years I had become somewhat accustomed to Quaker processes

and ideas. When I attended gatherings I was lucky to have a support network of Friends

to help guide me. Because of my relationships within the community for the most part I

was not treated or seen as an outsider. Although, I doubt that anyone approaching the

community with an open agenda, would be treated any differently. I also had three very

helpful Quaker informants who helped me understand various processes and suggested

interviewees! Two of these individuals had been involved in Quakers for some time and

were well-known members. The other was a young Friend who had been raised as a

Quaker. She provided me with an alternative perspective to the adults.

After initial site-visits to Quaker committee meetings my first venture into the

field was at Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM) which was held at Camrose, Alberta, in the

summer of 2005. I spent one and a half weeks at CYM in the campground[31] with 300

Friends in attendance from all different regions of Canada. Even though the atmosphere

felt frantic at times because so many people were present, there was a sense of people just

going about their business, meeting with familiar faces, and generally just enjoying each

other's company. The meeting was organized around worship sessions, Meetings for

Worship for business and special workshops. I attended worship sessions, a worship

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[31] Unfortunately we got rained out and had to move indoors.

sharing group, business meetings as much as possible, lectures, evening events and a workshop with Quaker youth dealing with justice.[32]

Aside from these formal events Friends also gathered around meals three times a day and in the evenings for social activities (anything from card making to recorder playing). One of the main hubs of activity was the food co-op where you pay five dollars a day for all three meals.[33] Everyone who registers is obligated to help with either food clean up or prep. Before eating everyone shares in singing Johnny Appleseed and then lines up to serve themselves. During meal time, as well as prep and clean up people discussed business issues or sometimes just shared stories. Most attenders knew of my presence and were eager to learn more of my project. I was often approached both at meal time or during breaks with offers of assistance, resources to check out or suggestions for interesting individuals to talk to.

In my second foray into the field, I attended a CFSC quarterly meeting, in the spring of 2005. I attended worship, meetings for business and had informal discussions with committee members. In contrast to CYM food was organized and prepared by a Friend from Toronto Monthly Meeting who volunteered on a continuous basis to take on this task. Again meal times figured prominently for both socializing and conducting informal business. I sat in on different committee meetings, all of which employed corporate silent worship as a means of opening and closing the sessions.

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[32] This workshop was facilitated by two of the Quakers I interviewed. I also attended the follow-up presentation of the workshop at an evening event and asked follow-up questions for both interviewees about their experience of the workshop and the method they employed.

[33] After a hunger-strike by young Friends in a previous year, the Food co-op used only organic products.

2.4 Analysis

Because the interviews were tailored to capture each individual's story there was considerable variation in the details covered. In presenting the analysis my objective was to weave together the stories not into a cohesive unit, but rather to allow space for the individual voices and unique experiences of each participant to emerge. The participants came from a variety of locations across Canada, England and the United States. To a degree they have similar cultural backgrounds; however, their individual life paths have taken them in drastically different directions and exposed them to diverse experiences. The spiritual journey of each individual has not followed a linear path and has grown over time, with significant events experienced in the past shaping later perceptions. Further, how the journey to Quakerism has been woven into each person's involvement in peace and social justice reflects their personal experiences and belief systems. Once the interviews were transcribed and second meetings carried out they were further examined in order to pull out key themes. Through reviewing the transcripts I pulled out three main analytic categories in order to code the interviews: seeking; finding a spiritual home; and outward action blending with spiritual experience.

In exploring the spiritual journey of the participants, I used the term seekers because they were struggling on an ongoing basis to find a convergence between what they value and the way they live in the world. This follows Roof's (1996) consideration of how baby boomers became alienated from "traditional religion", and as seekers, moved in the direction of "alternative, spiritual and religious trajectories" (102). However, the sense of seeking is not confined to spirituality or to the time before individuals found Quakerism. In fact, seeking for all of the participants is understood as

a continuous process. This highlights how an individual's religious identity builds over time, as explored in the work of Beaman (1997, 1999, 2001), Kaufman (1991), and Peek (2005). It is in this sense that their seeking, both before and as part of Quakers, is inherently linked to their involvement in peace and social justice because both are expressions of their value systems. In the context of this study the process of seeking is framed around the individual's experience of Quaker spirituality and how this can help make sense of their involvement in peace and social justice; however, the variability in level of involvement and the types of issues each person is engaged in requires an awareness and sensitivity to broader life experiences. In this sense, "spiritual" seeking was not always the primary source of motivation for many participants in coming to Quakers, even though they valued the religious aspect.

The notion of finding a spiritual home figured prominently in how all the participants described both their first experience at Quaker meeting, but also the more general experience of "finally" finding Quakerism. The word home in this context is used to describe a sense of personal comfort, a sense of belonging, which for most participants derived from the overall experience of shared values and beliefs. As expressed by Steere (1984), for some, this sense of convergence related to the spiritual aspects, for others the lifestyle aspects, but for most it was a combination of both. However, interestingly, not all of the participants chose to join Quakers right away, and two of the participants remained attenders. Thus, the extent to which participants asserted their own identity as a Quaker by taking up membership affected how they saw their place within the group and understood their own spirituality.

The final category, outward action blending with spiritual experience, explores how becoming part of Quakers, for most participants merged their previous peace and justice interests with their views about and experience of spirituality. In exploring the peace and social justice work of Friends, it is easy to get caught up in how amazing the work is that individuals are doing. I do not want to obscure this; however, at the same time I do not want to make this the focus of my project. What I will focus on is the process itself—drawing where necessary for context on specific experiences—of how spiritual experience informs peace and social justice work. This approach emphasizes how Quaker spirituality for these participants plays a role in their involvement in peace and social justice. This involves a consideration of how their spiritual experience interacts with their personal experiences, interests and areas of concern. It also draws attention towards the important role played by the individual's Quaker community in facilitating the work that they do.

2.5 Limitations of study

The Quakers who participated in this study were all chosen from those present at Canadian Yearly Meeting and CFSC gatherings. Generally those who attend Yearly Meeting and in particular those that are members of CFSC, are Friends who are engaged in a very active manner in Quaker issues. This means that many Friends in Canada who do not attend Yearly Meeting or CFSC gatherings were excluded. However, arguably, because most individuals identifying as Friends in Canada are Quakers by convincement, it is unlikely that they would identify as Quaker, unless they adhered to at least the basic tenets of Quakerism, even if they are not actively involved in the community.

A second limitation of this study which is that all the Friends interviewed were Quaker by convincement. Even though this is the dominant trend amongst Friends and accounts for the largest growth in population, it again reflects a subset of Friends. Further study could explore the distinction, if there is any, between birth-right Friends, and Quakers by convincement. The experience of Quakerism is likely to be different for someone who has come to be a Friend at age forty as opposed to someone who has been involved with Quakers since birth or a very young age.

Another group which is not represented in this study is young Friends. This omission is due to issues surrounding release of information as opposed to lack of access. While the age range covered in this study spans over forty years, arguably the experience of young Friends would be quite different from adults. Again this is an area worth further investigation.

2.6 Contributions of study

The main contribution of this study is that it provides an introductory sketch of a religious group which has been generally understudied and has been completely ignored in the Canadian context. From a methodological perspective it provides rich narrative accounts of individuals' experiences which would be obscured by a mass survey which utilized pre-determined categories. The exploratory and informal interviewing style allowed for the themes to emerge through the unique stories of each individual. While the accounts cannot be taken as definitive representations, similarities do emerge which support previous literature which has explored Quaker belief and practice.

Further, the abandonment of a causal connection between religion and peace and social justice work provides a more complex account of how religion is connected to

social change. This thesis explores how for Quakers, religiously motivated action for peace and social justice, is grounded in a shifting understanding of the Divine. Furthermore, the strong emphasis on practice amongst Quakers suggests that their spiritual values extend into all aspects of their lives. This problematizes the strict secularity of political spaces and highlights the continuity between private religious experience and public action. For Quakers, and arguably all religious groups, their religious experience extends into all aspects of their lives and informs their daily relations as much as their "political" work.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has detailed the life history method as the basis for considering how religious experience informs Quaker service for peace and social justice. The interview process, as well as participant observation were reviewed, noting the length of time spent on location and in interviews with participants. In accordance with the life history method the interviews were coded based on common themes which emerged from the interviews: seeking; finding a spiritual home; and outward action blending with spiritual experience. The limitations of the study, which mainly relate to the exclusion of certain groups were considered. Finally, the contributions of the study, which include an exploration of a much understudied group, as well as the unique methodological approach, make this study an excellent starting point for considering future research directions. The following chapter will provide the reader with an account of Quaker social history and the origins of the peace testimony.

CHAPTER 3: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with the basics of Quaker social history with a particular focus on service for peace and social justice. First, the reader will be introduced to the origins of the Quaker movement and the peace testimony, emphasizing its connection to the service work of Friends. The origins of Quakerism in Britain as an alternative expression of Christianity will be considered, along with the origins of the peace testimony. Although the original message of Quakerism was one of religious equality, the concern for peace emerged largely out of the society's own experience of persecution, and came to be consolidated as one of its central mandates. It continues to inform the peaceful involvement of Friends in wars, conscientious objection and civil protest. Second, corporate silent worship and the decision-making process of Friends will be explored. This section will provide an exploration of corporate silent worship and Quaker decision-making processes.

3.2 An Introduction to the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Quakers emerged as one of many Protestant alternatives to Christianity in 17th century England out of the teachings of George Fox and Margaret Fell.[34] What sets them apart as a religious group, and in particular as a Christian group, is the decentralized character of their religious beliefs and practice, as well as their emphasis on equality, simplicity, pacifism and nonviolence. The basic tenet of Quakerism is a message of religious equality, which is grounded in a belief that each individual has the capacity to commune with God in a direct manner. Early Friends protested the inequality within the church and its structures, as well as the high level of involvement of the religious structures of the time in the government (in particular the Anglican Church). The basis of the movement was a push for religious revival which at the outset was largely isolated to Britain. Friends very quickly became involved in issues of social justice, partly as a result of their own persecution, but also because of the strong statements from prominent Friends against war and violence in all its forms. The outward manifestation of Quaker service for peace and social justice is thus connected to both their religious beliefs, as well as their particular social history.

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[34] Although in most literature Fox is cited as the founder of Quakerism, it is commonly accepted amongst Quakers that Margaret Fell, known as the "mother of Quakerism", is similarly responsible for developing the society's core philosophies. During the early days of the movement her husband sheltered Friends from persecution. Many years later, after the death of her husband, she married George Fox. There is an on-going debate as to whether many of Fox's writings were actually those of Fell. For this reason, this thesis will use "early Friends" in referring to the development of the society and its ideas. Fox will be referred to when drawing from his journal and other personal quotes. For a more complete discussion of the role played by Fell, see Ross, Isabel. 1984. *Margaret Fell: mother of Quakerism.* York: William Sessions Book Trust.

3.2.1 Origins of the Movement – 16th Century England

In the introduction to Be*yond Dilemmas* Douglas Steere (1969) notes that George Fox did

not initially seek to found a new Christian sect.[35] He sought to "...quicken and to

transform all those of Christian profession to the point that they should yield to, and live

daily in, the power and spirit in which stood the apostles who set forth the Scriptures"

(Steere, 1969: 12). Early Friends sought to shift the foundations of Christianity within

Britain which they saw as embodying classist hierarchies, rather than reflecting the true

image of God. According to early Friends, God lived within the heart of each person.

Their radical vision was mirrored in the political ideas of many others at the time; even in

Cromwell's government[36], which was violently opposed to the Friends movement, there

was a general rising sentiment towards equality and the breaking down of long-

established class privileges.

> The condition of England around mid-17th-century when Quakerism arose – the year
> 1652 has been assigned traditionally as its starting point – was one in which 'there was a
> great overturning, questioning, revaluing, of everything.' The monarchy had been
> abolished and the king executed after a prolonged civil war between royalists and
> parliamentarians. Not only novel religious, but also revolutionary political social ideas,
> came to the surface and found ardent and able exponents to propagate them throughout
> the country (Brock, 1990: 9).

Early Friends professed a radical religious message; however, the underlying message of

equality reflects both the political and social climate of the particular time period.

Early Friends asserted that the Divine resided within each one of us. For this

reason, they maintained that each individual had the capacity to foster a personal

relationship with God. The personal experience of this could not be fostered through

clergy or church attendance, but only through the individual looking inward. The

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[35] For a very concise online version of the history of Friends see also Hoare, T. Facts About Friends.
Retrieved October 4, 2004, from http://www.quaker.org/friends.html
[36] 1649-53, Oliver Cromwell abolished the monarchy in England, installing a Republican style government.

message of the Quaker movement would have been extremely appealing considering the

dominant religious discourse of the time legitimated the existing social structure and

hierarchy. Further, the message of Quakerism was simple and yet still drew on familiar

religious teachings, such as the Bible, and Christian cultural references. The teachings of

early Friends spread quickly through the charismatic ministering of its founders, such as

Fox, and the society gathered a number of followers in a relatively short amount of time.

At its height the movement had more than 60,000 followers.

Perhaps, if the English government (both Cromwell and George II) had not

responded with such force[37], the Quakers may have merely remained a peculiar offshoot

of mainstream Christianity without any concrete identity. However, persecution to some

extent forced the individuals involved in this new movement to band together. Meeting

for Sufferings[38], was one of the first formal Quaker organizations and was set up to aid

Friends in prison and their families. Friends expanded outwards sending missions to the

new Americas as well as many other parts of the world. The emphasis on spreading the

truth, which characterized the early Friends movement, has largely dissipated and grown

into a distaste for proselytizing in any form.[39]

It is important to note that even though from the early days the Friends movement

had a tendency towards nonviolence, the initial message of Quakerism was one of

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[37] The Quakers were the single most persecuted religious group in 17th century England. 15,000 Quakers were imprisoned for refusal to conform to the church in Cromwellian England (Kent & Spickard, 1994: 378).

[38] In the contemporary context, "Meeting for Sufferings is an executive committee of Britain Yearly Meeting, the body which acts on behalf of members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Great Britain and the crown dependencies. It has about 200 members, who meet once a month to make decisions when the Yearly Meeting is not in session. Meeting for Sufferings mostly operates through a complex system of subcommittees and councils." (Meeting for Sufferings, Retrieved April 27, 2006) In Canada, the current equivalent body of Canadian Yearly Meeting would be Representative Meeting.

[39] In informal conversations, some Friends expressed frustration at the pressure to not proselytize in any form. They felt that this dislike for sharing their faith with others prevented the growth of the organization.

religious revival, not of pacifism. As Brock (1998) notes the "...question of peace did not figure very prominently among the concerns of Fox and his Friends" who were more interested in spreading faith than in social action (28). However, the outward manifestations of Quakerism in social reform and protest have always existed in varying forms; the strong message of equality demanded certain behaviours, such as objecting to pay tithes or observe social hierarchies.[40] It was for this reason that Friends were originally persecuted. The Quakers did form into a Christian sect and to this day many of the traditional practices associated with early Quakerism, such as corporate silent worship and the lack of clergy, are still maintained.[41]

3.2.2 Origins of the Peace Testimony

> I told [the Commonwealth Commissioners] I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars and I knew from whence all wars did rise, from the lust, according to James's doctrine... I told them I was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strifes were.
> - *George Fox, 1651*

> We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world. The spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight any war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.
> - *A Declaration from the harmless and innocent people of God, called Quakers, 1660*

> A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil that good may come of it... Let us then try what Love will do; for if men did once see we love them, we should soon find they would not harm us. Force may subdue, but Love gains; and he that forgives first, wins the laurel.
> - *William Penn*

The words of George Fox which appear above are commonly held to be one of the early statements (1651) on Quaker pacifism and the basis for consolidating the peace testimony

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[40] Early Friends refused to doff their hats to their social superiors.

[41] The emphasis on religious equality has also played a strong role in informing the emphasis on consensus decision-making in Quaker process. The group will not take a decision without complete consensus meaning that it can take hours or sometimes days for a final decision to be reached. For a more complete discussion of this process see the work of Sheeran, Michael J. 1983. *Beyond Majority Rule: Voteless Decision Making in the Religious Society of Friends*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

as one of the central concerns of Friends. As Brock (1998) notes, Fox drew on the

teachings of Jesus Christ contained within the New Testament arguing for the

"...incompatibility of war with Christian spirit and the Light within" (28). The statement

underneath Fox's was issued nine years later and reflects an official statement from the

society. The final quote at the opening of this section comes from William Penn.[42] Here

he highlights that the basis of action should be grounded in values that are consistent with

the desired outcome. Thus, nonviolent and peaceful actions are the ultimate goal in

seeking the reconciliation of a conflict.

The closest thing to official statements of Quaker belief are the various

testimonies. The testimonies are not lengthy documents but rather collections of

statements which capture the general sentiment. Friends will also draw on particular

actions to exemplify the values of the various testimonies. It is generally accepted that

there are four[43] in total: the peace testimony, the testimony of equality, the testimony of

integrity and the testimony of simplicity. The testimonies are discrete and yet they are

very clearly interrelated. They are not generally interpreted by Quakers as definitive

statements for all time; rather, they are drawn on as guide posts. Further, Friends

themselves will admit that it is often a struggle to realize fully the objectives of the

testimonies. In the context of this research I will focus specifically on the origins of the

peace testimony because it is the most directly related to issues of peace and social

justice; however, the other testimonies will be drawn in indirectly in later discussions

about Quaker belief and practice.

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[42] William Penn was a prominent Quaker in the 17th century. He founded the state of Pennsylvania as a Quaker settlement in the United States. Many of the founding principles of the colony such as freedom of religion and fair trials were later incorporated in the American constitution.
[43] Some Quakers will count a fifth, either community or unity. There is also discussion around adding a sixth testimony which emphasizes right relations with the environment.

As highlighted in the previous section, pacifism was not a central issue in the early Friends movement. However, as Jonas (1979) notes, persecution played a large role in shaping the movement in this direction.

> Quakers have been concerned with social justice from the beginning—persecution can be a great teacher in such matters—and by the time the doctrinal nit-picking of the nineteenth century was over, the inheritors of this concern had evolved a far-reaching social gospel, stressing prison reform, care of the mentally ill, racial equality, and reconciliation of differences in a nonviolent atmosphere (13).

The pacifist leadings contained within the peace testimony draws on Friends' direct experience of God, which some understand to manifest through the teachings of Jesus Christ. Further, they reflect to a great extent the early social history of Friends which was rife with persecution.

Brock (1990; 1998), Keene (1979), Kennedy (1989) and Jonas (1971) all point to the central role played by the peace testimony in rousing Quaker involvement in issues of peace and social justice from wars, to conscientious objection, to civil protest.[44] Yet, not all Quakers openly embrace the testimony, nor do those Quakers who do embrace the testimony understand it in absolute terms. It is often as a result of extreme circumstances that the place of the testimony is tested both for individual Quakers and the larger group. Schisms have arisen as a result of some Quakers enlisting and fighting in World War I and II. This demonstrates that the testimonies themselves are seen as living ideas which are not confined to the past. At the Meetings for Business for Worship which I attended, Friends used common sense language in describing their reasons for objection and drew on the specifics of the testimonies to further legitimate their position. In the current context, the Quaker testimonies continue to play a key role in the justification for

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[44] For details of the peace testimony and its application, see Roberts, Helen. 2002. "Witness Against War: Researching the History of the Quaker Peace Testimony." *Quaker Studies* 7:79-101.

involvement in peace and social justice, largely through the founding principles of the Quaker organizational bodies dedicated to advancing the peace and social justice work of Friends, such as the Canadian Friends Service Committee, the American Friends Service Committee and the British Friends Service Council.

However, as Ceadal (2002) points out, the basis of Quaker influence comes more from individual Friends and the involvement of committees in various projects, rather than the diffusion of the testimony itself. It is for this reason that individuals from various backgrounds are involved in these projects and their involvement does not always derive from a Quaker or a religious basis.

> The Committee [American Friends Service Committee] does no proselytizing of any kind, and the great majority of the 50,000 individuals who support its work through annual donations are not members of the Religious Society of Friends. Yet the program for reforming society that has emerged from the Committee's day-to-day operations is no less radical or ambitious than the one enunciated in the late seventeenth century (Jonas, 1971: 13).

Thus, while the group is a religious group, its testimonies embrace a wider vision which connect with many people in the "secular" world.

3.3 Quaker Practice

Quakers have garnered considerable attention from researchers both for the form of their worship and the decision-making processes of the group. One participant described the society as his first experience of "practical anarchy", which refers to the sense that the organization truly functions without hierarchy and embraces equality in all its processes. Before attending a Friends meeting (either for worship or business) one may be skeptical as to how this is possible. However, after having attended a number of worship groups, business meetings and workshops, I was amazed to see how space is created for the unification of what seem to be disparate and often irreconcilable viewpoints. The

continuation of these processes is possible because Friends so highly value the experiences they have had as a result of their own participation. As one Friend put it after having experienced a different way of interacting with others, it made her work in hierarchal based organizations, whether religious or secular, increasingly difficult. Interestingly, many Friends noted importing the processes of consensus decision-making into their personal life and work place, even though they would not specifically identify it as a religious process to family, friends or colleagues. The following will begin with an exploration of corporate silent worship, as this is the most obvious representation of the strong belief in equality exemplified by Quakers. This will be followed by an elucidation of the decision-making process of Quakers, which will highlight how this process shapes, but does not determine the individual leadings of Friends.

3.3.1 Corporate Silent Worship

> *Jean*: The Unitarians did appeal to us. I think that what appealed to us even more in the Friends meeting was that the people involved had the same very liberal[45] outlook that the Unitarians did, but the silence gave room for the more mystical experience to come out. And the Unitarian program service, which was very pleasant, I don't want to put it down, uh, didn't. And it was that mystical element, that, do you know what I mean by mystical?
> *Lisa*: It's good for me to have you tell me.
> *Jean*: The sense that we were not programmed in the way we were going to worship or meet God during that time. But that it would come to us during the silence, whether it was a message or an experience for ourselves alone, or whether it was something that we felt we've been moved to share. So that's what I mean by the difference between the Unitarian service and the Quaker meeting.

The basis of Quaker meeting is corporate silent worship or the communal mystic experience. It has been the most consistent factor in Quakerism since its beginning and for this reason an understanding of the experience of corporate silent worship is essential to understanding Quaker spirituality. As Jean describes above, the mystical element of

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[45] In reference to Jean's use of liberal, here she is referring to the political values of the group. Having grown up in the States her use of the word would differ from the common Canadian use of the term in relation to political values.

Quakerism is the basis for the unprogrammed form of worship. Despite changes in the beliefs and testimonies of Friends, the form of worship has remained relatively unchanged for over 300 years. Regional variations of Quakerism have developed, particularly amongst American Quakers, where in some places worship is more reflective of traditional Protestant services. There is a traditional service and only a brief period of silence; this thesis will focus solely on the "...unprogrammed, nonpastoral, silent-meeting-for-worship type of Quakerism" (Steere, 1984: 3). This form remains dominant in the Canadian context, as well as Britain, some forms of Quakerism in the U.S. and many other regions of the world.

Meeting for worship is usually held weekly, on a Sunday, in a designated gathering place. Often there is a Meeting House; however, Friends will also gather at each other's houses. In formal Meeting Houses, there is usually someone holding the door greeting individuals as they enter with a silent nod. The atmosphere is friendly, but reserved. Chairs are arranged in a circle or semi-circle and individuals are left to select a chair. There is usually a small table with something at the centre of the circle; it is often some kind of flower arrangement. Different texts may be also available on the table for Friends to use during the service (Christian Faith and Practice, Organization and Practice, a copy of Advices and Queries, for example). There are not usually any other adornments. The emphasis is on simplicity and 'plainness' (Coleman & Collins, 2002: 321) to draw the individual's attention inwards.

Individuals will sit, often with hands folded, heads usually bowed for about an hour. Some individuals define this time as communing with God, while others define it as a deeply spiritual experience, employing more general language. Some individuals

describe that they use this time as meditation or just silence. Not every Quaker will define this time as communing with God even though they may still see it as a spiritual experience.[46]

There is usually background noise such as children playing, occasionally cell-phones will ring, and some individuals will arrive late. The silence is broken in a more formal sense by the ministry of those present, which can take the form of spoken sharings of experiences of Divinity, readings from the bible, literature, poetry or song. In some meetings the ministry is very Christocentric, in others it is less so.[47] As Susan describes, her first experience with ministry was deeply moving.

> *Susan*: The ministry that came out of the silence, whether intended for me or not, was deeply fulfilling. Mine is a very quiet meeting. Some meetings have a lot of vocal ministry, my Monthly Meeting does not. And when vocal ministry happens it comes from a very deep place.

As Susan notes, there are meetings where there is no ministry and some where there is more. Irregardless of the level and frequency of ministry, there is a sense of spontaneity that would not generally be present in a church service, and this is characteristic of all the meetings I have attended.

> *Susan:* Stunning moments happen in small things. Sitting in Meeting for Worship with a group of Friends, and by then I had fallen in love with the song "How Can I Keep From Singing." But I hadn't ever learned the words. I hadn't sat down and made the commitment to, you know, learn it all the way through. But I love it, and I had this deep ache in Meeting for Worship to sing this song and I knew I couldn't start it because I didn't know the words. So I'm sitting there with this deep longing and suddenly one Friend began to sing "How Can I Keep From Singing." That was just so amazing!! And afterwards I said, "What made you do that?" And he said, "I just felt I had to sing that song."

As Susan's experience captures the floor is open to the various ways which individuals feel called to share. This sense of openness is often the source of the deep sense of

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[46] Some participants even admitted to falling asleep at times!

[47] In his extensive ethnographic work of British Friends Dandelion has explored the form of ministry in different meetings. He found that urban Friends tended to be less Christo-centric, and rural meetings tended to draw on more traditional Christian readings such as the bible and Jesus Christ.

comfort individuals felt upon first coming to Quakerism. The giving of ministry is not meant to be conversation or dialogue between those present, rather a personal sharing of that which arises from the individual communing with God. Quakers will generally describe the giving of ministry as "feeling led"[48] to speak or in the example above to sing.

For John, the process of listening connects him to the other individuals in the meeting and reflects the diversity in how each person experiences the process.

> *John:* I found that I enjoyed the silence and the meditation. And I found that the ministry that people do share out of the silence, that if I really listened, the first thing it did for me is that it taught me to listen. And that was something really big, and it's a really important thing that we don't really learn, as children. And, so I learned to listen to the ministry, and to just listen, without any judgment. Because I was used to anything that I listened to, the moment the person starts talking I'm making all these judgments. Oh, there he goes again with his anti-militarism you know because, it's the same thing every Sunday, and we've all heard it all before. And so I started really just listening to the words, and to the message, and all of a sudden I realized that there was something for me in everything that was shared, no matter what, if only I listened. If I truly listened, openly, with an open heart and an open mind.

The experience of worship provides the individual with a very real representation of the values of the group. Because no voice is privileged over another the hierarchies traditionally associated with church services are eliminated. There is no minister who gives ministry; instead, everyone present is invited to share.[49] It is in this manner that individuals are able to bring in anything and everything they are struggling with before the group. This also helps to explain why the experience of corporate silent worship extends into other aspects of the individual's life.

After about an hour the silence will be broken by an elder commencing the shaking of hands. Following the meeting usually coffee and tea is shared and individuals

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[48] The sense of compulsion describes the strong feeling that the thought they share in the meeting derives from some higher source, whether this refers to God or the Divine, or the more general sense of shared worship.

[49] This goes for non-Quakers and researchers too! In all the Meetings for Worship, for Business and worship sharing groups I attended I was invited to shared with the group if I felt led to do so.

discuss anything from family issues to work they are involved in. Depending on the meeting house coffee and tea will be organized by a Friend living in the house or sometimes will be pot luck. Visitors will be acknowledged and new attenders will be asked to identify themselves and will be welcomed.

3.3.2 Decision-Making Process

> *Lisa:* I want to know what you find useful about working with Quaker process?
> *Susan:* I think what I would say would apply to any context in which I've worked on a Quaker committee. I find that people are willing to listen to each other. That people are willing to reflect on what's being said. That people are willing to ask clarifying questions about what's been said. And that people are also willing to hold issues and hold conversations in a spiritual light. And reflect on it and seek a greater unity. And you don't find that very often. When unity's not there we don't move. We refine and refine and refine. Or we leave something because it isn't right and it never turns right. And that is so valuable and when you have the blessing to be able to be invited to work in that context, you gain experience from the wisdom of others and the waiting in the Light. It makes the rest of the world seem very harsh in its decision making. It makes Roberts Rules of Order impossible.
> *Lisa:* What does waiting in the light mean?
> *Sarah:* That means, early Friends, the Light is an image that's used to express the spirit. And so, for me, I mean I can't say what it means to every Friend, but to me it's you know, part of our metaphor about the "light went on and I got it". But it's a spiritual light, it's waiting for clearness on something that's fuzzy, or something that's dark, or something that's uncertain. .... Holding something in the Light is sort of seeking out a spiritual clearness before the decision is made...one that would be ... in accordance with the role of God.

Above, Susan describes the process of decision-making characteristic of all Quaker committees, as well as the values underpinning the process. As her words highlight, the process of corporate silent worship diffuses throughout all aspects of the society. Formal decisions of the society (of committees and Meetings) are determined in Meetings for Business for Worship, which reinforce the deep belief of equality[50] held by the group, and the sense that the Divine reveals itself through the collective discernment of the group. These meetings are understood as more than a formal business meeting, and are

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[50] While Meetings for Business for Worship are held at all levels, the Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meeting, the Monthly Meeting holds ultimate authority. Further, because concerns are raised by individual Friends, Quaker process maintains a bottom-up approach.

described by Friends as a form of worship. For this reason, all meetings begin and end with silent worship.[51]

In reaching a decision within meetings there is no voting. Rather the meeting continues until all those present are satisfied that the "way forward"[52] has been discerned. As with corporate silent worship, all those present are free to contribute, young and old. This leads to diverse viewpoints and often conflicting opinions of the group coming forth. For this reason, unity is often unattainable on a first meeting.[53] As one Friend recounted, when Canadian Friends sought to pass a minute[54] on same sex marriage, Canadian Yearly Meeting was unable to reach unity. A sub-committee was arranged composed of the various view points to develop a minute. After one year the committee was finally able to agree on a statement. It reflected and brought together the diverse viewpoints of the organization. As emphasized by the statement the group expresses those things they hold in common and can agree on. Since the beginnings of the society, Quakers have not always agreed on issues of peace and social justice. The society evolves and grows with its members and the wider cultural context, and is generally open to this process.

For the participants in this study they recounted that encountering the decision-making process of Friends provided them with a sense that another way was possible. From an outsider perspective the process can seem extremely tedious. However, by the time the group finally reaches a decision there is a sense of unity not commonly found in

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[51] In a number of sessions which I attend where the discussion became heated the clerk (or head of the meeting) called for a period of silence. This is meant to redirect individuals away from their own desires and towards discerning the source of unity or the Spirit in the meeting. The clerk does not have authority over the group or its final decision. Instead, they are meant to facilitate the group in bringing together their diverse views.

[52] This describes when the meeting has reached unity around a particular issue.

[53] In some cases, individual members who do not agree with the final outcome will "stand aside". This means that while they do not fully agree they are willing to let the minute pass.

[54] An official statement of the society.

non-consensus based processes. The society has maintained this form of decision-making since its inception and Friends often draw on the difficult decisions of the past for inspiration in working through the issues which come forward.

This form of dialogue within the group provides the basis for all group decisions, from the official business of the society to meetings called by individuals in the society in relation to personal issues. In the context of this thesis participants noted approaching their local Monthly Meeting to work through anything from personal problems, professional problems, as well as particular peace and social justice concerns that they had. As John expressed, approaching his Quaker community for assistance provided him with both spiritual and practical support in planning his involvement as a volunteer in development work.

> *John:* I did most of the exploring on my own. But I you know, trying to figure out what, is this that really, what I need to do, and how do I go about it. And, and then I had to find an organization to volunteer with that had, goals and a way of working that I felt comfortable with. It ended up being a Quaker organization, now, it also had to be a fit for them, they don't want to take a volunteer and be responsible for a volunteer who's not going to be doing something that fits in to the scope of their work, right. So, we did find, I did find an organization where there was a good fit all around. And, then discerning, what I would be doing, so that was with them (Clearness Committee).

However, not all the participants noted drawing as strongly on these processes. Further, some expressed a sense of amazement with the processes, but a feeling that they did not know if they felt they had a place within them.

> *Jen:* I think the process and the way they do business is an amazing process. But I'm trying to really discern....
> *Lisa:* Is there a space for you.
> *Jen:* Yeah. Is this where I belong? You know. Um...
> *Lisa:* So where do you feel you're at in that process?
> *Jen:* I'm not decided yet. I mean obviously I feel more comfortable now at this point. I've made more connections with people who I think are amazing. I look at this week [Canadian Yearly Meeting] and how hard it's been really even though I've been sleeping indoors and have meals. It's been very draining. But I don't know if I want to do this. Seriously, you know. I don't know if I want to do this again, and in that case am I really a Quaker? Because clearly lots of Quakers do. And they do it year after year after year. They say they get tired and they love it. I don't want to. I don't love it. I really don't. I do think the process is amazing. Just wow! Tedious. But amazing.

Jen, and others, admitted to struggling with the process of business, and yet she still felt her Quaker community played an important role in shaping the work that she did. This suggests that even though there are formal processes in place, not all Quakers identify as strongly with these or participate fully. For the purpose of this thesis, the experience of Quaker process will be understood for how it provides an exemplary model of the group's values, as noted by Coleman & Collins (2000). They emphasize how new members learn about the group and it's values through the various practices associated with Quakers, as opposed to becoming indoctrinated into a particular belief system. The processes of the society-- corporate decision-making and corporate silent worship--are the basis of continuity.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter, the origins of Quakerism in Britain as an alternative expression of Christianity were provided, as well as the origins of the peace testimony. Though the main message of Quakerism at the outset was one of spiritual renewal, the origins of the peace testimony can be found in the strong message of religious equality which marked the formation of corporate silent worship and unprogrammed ministry. The peace testimony has grown to play a central role amongst Friends in Britain, Canada and parts of the United States, where it has motivated peaceful involvement in wars, conscientious objection and civil protest. This was followed by an exploration of corporate silent worship and Quaker decision-making processes, which since the origins of the society have formed the strongest source of unity amongst the group. The following chapter will explore the history of Friends in the Canadian context, paying particular attention to their involvement in peace and social justice.

CHAPTER 4: QUAKERS IN THE CANADIAN CONTEXT

4.1 Introduction
4.2 History of Friends in Canada
4.3 Peace and Social Justice Work of Canadian Friends
4.4 Summary

4.1 Introduction

> *Lisa:* After attending all of these meetings in all of these different places is there
> something that you feel distinguished you as a Canadian Friend?
> *Susan:* No I don't think so. There may be things that other people observed that
> distinguished me or us. But the common thread of Friends worship is what has drawn me
> and I found it in all of those places. I suppose in Britain the one thing that distinguished
> me was that I was less formal than British Friends for sure. And more willing to get to
> know people and be in their face. And willing to participate where a British Friend
> would feel reserved. And so I would be kind of stepping over boundaries. But they
> would sort of say, "Oh well she's from Canada." Maybe that informality vs. formality
> would be a distinguishing factor. But in terms of substantive issues I don't think so.

In "Forever Fallen? Trickster and God-Centred Identity" Jane Orion-Smith (2001)

explores the meaning of God as Trickster. As she notes: "Trickster is broadly speaking, a

part of my identity as a Canadian. …woven into wider non-Aboriginal culture along with

smudging rituals and sweat lodges" (9). However, she also points out the challenge of

interpreting "cultures and experiences not our own" and is careful to do so in a respectful

tone (10). She highlights the ongoing struggle within her own life to find her identity

within a Canadian cultural context as well as within a Quaker context. Part of her

narrative explores an interesting comparison between Quakers and Canadians, both of

whom define themselves by what they are not, the Quakers in relation to traditional

churches, and Canadians in relation to Americans. So what is a Canadian Quaker beyond

being a non-American non-conventional Christian? Or, as Susan found, a less formal

British Quaker? The situation is further complicated given that the original Quaker

settlers came to Canada from the United States, and many new members of Canadian

Yearly Meeting emigrate from the United States and Britain. What have been the social

and cultural influences which have impacted the growth of the society in Canada? How have Canadian Quakers responded to the call for peace and social justice in the Canadian context?

The following section will explore the history of Friends in the Canadian context and explore the role of the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC). First, the history of Friends in the Canadian context will be presented with attention to their involvement in issues of peace and social justice. Second, the work of Canadian Friends for peace and social justice will be explored both in past and present times. This final section will consider the role played by the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) in advancing the peace and social justice concerns of Canadian Friends. The CFSC does not determine the individual leadings of Friends and the issues the committees take on are meant to arise from the interests of the society and its members. Woven into this discussion will be an exploration of the peace and social justice work of the Friends in this study. This latter aspect will consider how Friends engage in various types of issues and draw on support from their Quaker community in varying capacities.

4.2 History of Friends in Canada

Arthur Dorland is the most well-known author on Canadian Quakerism. As a historian his three books *The Quakers in Canada: A History, Former Days & Quaker Ways* and *A History of the Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada* provide a painstakingly complete account of Quakers in Canada, woven in with his personal family history. As he notes there is a particular challenge in tracing the development of Quakerism in Canada because it has never had large numbers as in Britain or America. The situation is further

complicated because the majority of Quaker meetings began in rural districts as opposed to metropolitan centres.

> Friends [in Canada] were in the main a simple agricultural folk. They left few records, and they shrank from publicity of any kind. For many years they were inclined to discourage active participation in politics and in all worldly affairs. Nevertheless, they were pioneers in the communities in which they settled, and they have in some measure left their impression on the life and thought of the Canadian people. Their influence though real was, however, of an unobtrusive, intangible kind which it is difficult for the historian to estimate precisely (Dorland, 1968: 2).

Despite the challenge of tracing connections, Dorland argues that Quakers have had a considerable influence on the culture of churches in Canada, as well as Canadian society more generally.

> The influence of Quakerism as an attitude towards life and the peculiar testimonies of Friends are no longer peculiar to them, but to an increasing degree are becoming a part of the common life and thought of all Christian peoples. The larger place given to women in the Church, the increasing use of periods of silent devotion in worship, a quickened social conscience, the growth of Christian pacifism, the marked tendency to get away from rigid doctrinal creed as the basis of religion, and the recent movement towards Church Union in Canada, all owe something to this Quaker leaven (Dorland, 1968: 29).

The Friends interviewed for this thesis demonstrate a continued ecumenical and inter-faith trend, (with their involvement in organizations such as KAIROS[55]) as well as involvement with national and international government and non-government organizations (such as the United Nations). This suggests that the history of social engagement continues even in the Canadian context where the overall number of Quakers is relatively small.

As mentioned previously, the first Quakers who came to Canada emigrated from the United States. This first settlement came to Nova Scotia in the late 18th century. The second and more substantial emigration came to Upper Canada from the United States in the latter part of the 18th century up until the early part of the 19th century. Many of the Quakers who came were loyal British citizens and claimed neutrality to the interests of

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[55] Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, www.kairoscanada.org

the revolution. Dorland is careful to point out though that these Quakers were more

objectors to violence and were not associated with the Loyalist migrations to Canada.

Friends also migrated from Britain throughout the nineteenth century. The population of

Quakers in Canada was at its height in the 1870s, around 7,000, mostly in the rural areas

of Ontario (Springer, 1996: para.24). The number of Friends in Canada declined from

then on. As Springer (1996) notes:

> We were weakened by schisms that divided rival Quaker groups, by evangelical revivals
> that wooed many away, and by the fact that the close pioneer communities began to be
> diffused as the shift to urban centres began (para.24).

The survival of Quakerism in Canada in these early days was further curtailed by an

orthodoxy around marriage, which resulted in disownment in the case of marriage outside

of the Quaker community.

Originally, the Canadian government sought to attract Quakers, along with the

other peace churches such as the Mennonites and Dukhobors, to settle the vast expanses

of land to the West (Dorland, 1927; Janzen, 1990). They were promised military

exemption, and the government substituted a tax, which Friends refused to pay. Their

property and possessions were confiscated in lieu of the tax. In the early part of the life

of the Canadian Friends community they tended to shy away from direct engagement in

political issues. The expression of their pacifist leadings was mostly in objection to taxes

and in lifestyle choices, such as simplicity.

4.3 Peace and Social Justice Work of Canadian Friends

In the early part of the twentieth century Quakerism in Canada began to take on a more

outward expression as well-known Friends began to engage in writing campaigns to

encourage pacifism, amongst youth in particular. This was in response to rising tensions

overseas and military conscription beginning with the First World War. Despite shifting

levels of engagement, splinters and off-shoots, the dominant trend among Canadian

Friends as in Britain has been towards pacifist leadings. As Brock (1990) notes "In

World War I, as in the Second World War, absolute pacifism found support in Canada

chiefly among the Quakers and other peace sects like the Mennonites or Dukhobors"

(214). In this sense, Quakers have contributed to both the political and religious

landscape of Canada, and continue to do so.

In his personal narrative of his life as a Quaker in Canada, Arthur Dorland (1978)

notes that "...Quaker ways and beliefs ... inevitably conditioned my outlook on life"

(191). He further observes the challenge which confronted him and others in his

generation, to "test the validity of these inherited ideas and values" (191). Dorland

differs from the participants in this study because he was born and raised in a Quaker

environment. However, in a similar fashion the Quakers in this study often described

reflecting upon and seeking to honour their Quaker past[56]; they identified older Friends as

strong sources of inspiration for the work that they do.[57] In the Canadian context, the two

World Wars figured prominently in terms of defining the position of all Christians, both

Quaker and non-Quaker.

> Though opposed to war and human oppression of any kind, Quakers have not been
> insensible to the moral dilemma involved in appearing sometimes to condone human
> oppression and injustice by opposing all war, especially when actual fighting has already
> begun. But though opposing what they believe to be wrong, they are actively engaged in
> peace-making. They have sought wherever possible to overcome evil with good and to
> use constructive, Christian methods rather than destructive violence (Dorland, 1978:
> 195).

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[56] The theme of the Yearly Meeting which I attended to carry out field work was exploring the past in the
Canadian context. A daily seminar explored the early beginnings of Friends, then Friends in Canada and
covered the involvement of Canadian Friends in various issues. Past lectures have explored in a similar
manner the specific life experiences of Canadian Friends asking them to recount their spiritual lives and the
work they have engaged in for peace and social justice. Key historical events often figure prominently in
these accounts (such as the two World Wars) for how they call Friends to struggle with their own spiritual
beliefs and moral obligations.

[57] For some participants they expressed, though, that the pressure of this Quaker past often made them feel
inadequate for not being involved enough in peace and social justice issues.

Quaker relief during the War took the form of relief units both on the continent and elsewhere. Often these were organized by American and British Friends organizations, and Canadian Friends joined to assist. Similarly, during the Vietnam War Canadian Friends provided relief to all those involved in the conflict by sending medical supplies.

These types of actions reflect the non-partisan attitude of Friends to be of service where needed in the interests of promoting peace as opposed to engaging directly in the conflict. The involvement of Canadian Friends in this type of relief work continues to this day, and is largely facilitated by the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) which is the main organizational body for the peace and social justice concerns of Canadian Friends. However, as explored in this section the concern of Quakers in particular issues arises out of individual leadings, which are brought forth for consideration. While some of these issues will be taken up in a general manner by the society, many of the resulting actions are carried out on an individual basis. In many cases the individual receives guidance and financial support from their Monthly Meeting, CFSC and other Quaker organizations. In other cases, the support is of a much more intangible kind. Participants often noted that their meeting provided them with a community or family which grounded their work through relationships of support. In this sense not all individuals relate the specifics of their work to Quaker organizational bodies. In most cases, individuals noted drawing on a combination of both formal and more intangible sources of support from their Quaker community.

The following section will elucidate the main purpose of the CFSC and its various committees and consider the types of issues they have and are currently engaging in. This is important for it provides a glimpse of the work of the general Canadian Quaker

body. The emphasis placed on the CFSC does not preclude the reality that Friends are engaged in many capacities with peace and social justice issues, both in their personal and official "working" time. In most cases individuals noted a strong connection between their professional/personal lives and their spirituality. This supports the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis which explores how religion flows throughout an individual's life. This will be explored more fully in the analysis chapters, seven and eight; however, an exploration of the purpose and activities of the CFSC is useful for providing an understanding of the "official" involvement of Canadian Friends. The particular issues which Friends in this study are involved in will be woven into this discussion. I want to emphasize, that this is by no means an exhaustive account of the work that Friends in this study have been involved in.[58] In fact, especially with the older Friends to document everything they have been involved in would be an entire thesis unto itself. What I will provide both within this section, and the analysis chapters, is a sketch of the types of activities people have been involved. This will emphasize the diversity in the types of issues individuals are involved in, how and why they describe the reasons for their involvement and the extent to which their work is connected to their Quaker community. This will be situated within an exploration of the main interests and actions currently engaging the CFSC and its various committees.

The Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) was founded in 1931 and "acts on the peace and social justice concerns of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada" (The Work of Canadian Friends Service Committee, para.1). The three main committees represent the various concerns of Canadian Friends: Quaker Aboriginal

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[58] For those interested to learn more about the peace and social justice work of Friends refer to the CFSC website, http://cfsc.quaker.ca/index.html or the website for Canadian Yearly Meeting, http://www.quaker.ca/.

Affairs Committee (QAAC), Quaker Committee on Jails and Justice (QCJJ), and Quaker Peace and Sustainable Communities Committee (QPASCC) (dealing with both national and international concerns).[59] These committees reflect the Canadian context as well as global concerns.

As Bishop (1999) notes, Aboriginal issues have always been a concern of Friends, both in Britain and America. In the Canadian context, the issue of right relations has continued to figure prominently and has challenged Friends to both think and act about the nature of these relations.[60] (See Sarah Chandler's Sunderland P. Gardner lecture for an exploration of the obligations of Canadian Friends towards Aboriginal people).

The participants in this study noted involvement in various capacities from Aboriginal justice, land rights and human rights issues. For Susan, it was through her involvement in a land rights protest, spearheaded by the local Aboriginal community where she lived, that she found Quakers. Upon joining Quakers, Susan became a member of QAAC, where she pursued Aboriginal land rights issues both at the national and international policy level. Despite finishing her term on QAAC, she continues to be involved in a number of organizations working to advance the rights of Aboriginal people around the world. In her current work, both on Quaker committees and in her

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[59] The committees meet two times a year in Toronto for a specific CFSC gathering. They also meet once a year during Canadian Yearly Meeting. The process of the committees' decision-making mirrors Meeting for Worship for Business. There is usually a brief period of silence when the meeting starts, and at times silence is called during the meeting when the Clerk deems it appropriate. While the committees do not form the only basis for Quaker service for peace and social justice work, they provide an organizational framework around which Friends' leadings can have support, both spiritual and financial. In this sense the committees, along with small sub-committees in Monthly Meetings, form an organizational structure to aid Friends in carrying out their work, and ensuring that it is guided by a communal context, and not merely carried out by individuals without community consultation. This allows for discernment and consideration of Friends' concerns within a corporate context.

[60] Also, as mentioned previously by Smith (2001), and as discussed by Friends in this study their socio-cultural location as Canadians has brought them into contact with Aboriginal culture and spirituality. Some participants noted drawing on Aboriginal myths and stories in exploring their own spiritual experience.

professional life, Aboriginal issues figured prominently. She related this concern both to her own life and experiences, as well as the particular history and testimonies of Friends.

Like Susan, Eric's professional work in international development and agriculture, as well as his personal involvement in his community even before joining Quakers, led him to become involved in Aboriginal issues. Since joining Quakers, he became very involved in Quaker committees which dealt with these issues. He has acted as a liaison on numerous occasions between the Aboriginal community and the government. John's work in the prisons has made him aware of the gross overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in Canadian prisons. Further, his wider interests in human rights have led him to becoming involved in various organizations to advance the rights of Aboriginal people, from the United Nations to local community groups.

Jean's involvement with Aboriginal justice issues has been extensive. Most notably, when Friends became aware of a violent stand-off which erupted between police and Aboriginal people over land rights issues, she and a group of Friends erected tents between the two groups. They sought to move all parties involved in the conflict towards a more peaceful resolution. As a result of her involvement in this particular issue, the Society became further involved in a campaign to investigate mercury poisoning on a remote reserve.

In fact, QAAC was formed in 1974 in response to Quaker involvement in a number of conflicts between Aboriginal people and the government, one of which Jean was involved in. The mandate reflects these specific concerns, as well as more general

ethical and moral obligations that Friends identify in relation to Aboriginal issues.

> QAAC believes Aboriginal Peoples in Canada do not have justice. The Quaker
> Aboriginal Affairs Committee believes that Friends need to develop and nurture
> relationships of trust and mutual respect between ourselves, others in Canada, and the
> Aboriginal Peoples of Canada (Aboriginal Affairs Committee, para.2).

Their current projects include community outreach at the local and national level, as well

as international work with the United Nations in relation to the human and land rights of

Indigenous peoples. As with all committees there is a strong component in their work

which emphasizes the importance of education of both the Friends community and the

general community. As Eric expressed, in the work he does, he seeks to shift the attitude

or outlook of the "settler" population as a fundamental part of the solution. He did not

describe himself as fighting the battle for Aboriginal people, but saw himself as a witness

working to promote a peaceful resolution of conflict. In this sense he works towards

building relationships with all interested parties in seeking resolution.

A similar approach is mirrored in the work of the Quaker Committee on Jails &

Justice (QCJJ).[61] Friends have a longstanding history of prison ministry and since

adopting an official minute advocating for the abolition of prisons Friends have

designated this as one of the official interests of CFSC.[62] The concern of Friends for

prisons arises from a belief that:

> The prison system is both a cause and a result of violence and social injustice.
> Throughout history, the majority of prisoners have been the powerless and the oppressed.
> We are increasingly clear that the imprisonment of human beings, like their enslavement,
> is inherently immoral and is as destructive to the cagers as to the caged (Jails & Justice
> Committee, para.2).

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[61] Recently renamed Quakers Fostering Justice.

[62] The importance of this issue has also been pushed forward through the work of prominent Canadian
Friends such as Ruth Morris, who wrote extensively on alternative justice practices and penal abolition
(West and Morris, 2000; Morris, 1995, 2000).

In a similar fashion to QAAC, QCJJ engages in education and advocacy work to promote awareness around prison[63] abolition.

Among the participants in this study, John was the most directly involved in issues of penal abolition. Through Quakers he became involved in the Alternatives to Violence Project, a prison based nonviolence training program developed in collaboration with prisoners and Quakers. He was involved for a number of years with the QCJJ and was involved in a number of projects dedicated to education, advocacy and outreach. He continues to work as a facilitator and trainer in a range of settings from international human rights to local educational settings, on penal abolition and restorative justice. His work for penal abolition engages Quaker committees and organizations, other faith groups, and secular settings, such as schools, prisons, and other government organizations. John expressed that his concern for penal abolition has been very much influenced by his experience of Quaker spirituality and his involvement with the community. In addition to her work with Aboriginal rights, Susan has also been involved in advancing restorative justice[64] in her community as a trained facilitator and program coordinator. She credited her interest in restorative justice, as well as other forms of mediation and consensus-based decision making, as being fostered by her involvement in Quakers.

Quaker Peace and Sustainable Communities Committee (QPASCC) deals with the national and international concerns of Friends in relation to economic inequality and

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[63] It should be noted that the current mandate of the organization is working towards the abolition of prisons. In recent discussions the group is looking towards shifting the mandate to the abolition of punishment more generally, or "penal" abolition. John expressed that his interest in prison's was part of a wider concern for how the ethic of punishment pervaded society. For this reason, in relation to his work it is more representative to speak of a concern for penal abolition, as opposed to prison abolition.

[64] "Restorative justice is a philosophy that views harm and crime as violations of people and relationships. It is a holistic process that addresses the repercussions and obligations created by harm, with a view to putting things as right as possible" (The Centre for Restorative Justice, retrieved May 20, 2006).

development work. They support projects for a range of issues: aiding in reconciliation and rebuilding following war and conflict; working towards peace in zones of conflict and combat; sustainable development for local organizations; and supporting the individual leadings of Friends for peace work at home and overseas.

Most of the Friends in this study were involved in work which would fall under the more general mandate of QPASCC. Almost all had been involved in their local Peace and Social Action committee at some point, which usually engages in letter writing campaigns and peace marches. Some Friends, like Gary had a particular interest in environmental issues. While others, like John and Arthur had spent time overseas. John had spent a number of years in South America doing community development and nonviolence training in prisons. Arthur was involved in relief work in Asia during the Second World War. Jean had been involved in relief efforts during the Vietnam War, as well as post-war reconstruction efforts. Eric expressed that his current involvement was leaning more towards the interests of QPASCC. He linked this interest to his own professional history in international development issues and the sense that he could contribute something because of his experience. As reflected in all of the participants, not all their interests were connected to the various committees of Quakers. Individuals who carry out actions which fall under the mandate of a particular committee may get anything from financial to moral support. However, they may also only receive support from their Monthly Meeting. Furthermore, they may carry out the action independently and draw on the moral and spiritual support of their Quaker community.

Both the mandates of the committees and the individual leadings of Friends demonstrate that Canadian Quakers continue to carry on the strong tradition of peace and

social justice work found in Quaker history, often with an approach tailored to Canadian issues. The individual leadings of Friends draw on support from the committees, both financially and spiritually. However, not all peace and social justice work draws on the committees or even other Quaker organizations. This is demonstrated by the participants in this study, some of whom have done work through other religious and secular organizations, independently of Quakers.

Julie was a member of a few committees at the level of her Monthly Meeting which were involved in peace issues. However, for her, one of the most significant events she was involved in was a demonstration for the Hiroshima bombing, for which she was the primary organizer. This was not through a Quaker organization even though there were Quakers involved in the organization. Through her work as a nurse, Julie also spent time overseas helping local doctors and nurses, as well as community practitioners develop better treatment practices. She notes that this work was helped by her Quaker community and her spiritual experience, but was not directly related to her involvement in the society. Similarly, Jen became involved in forum theatre as a means to work with issues of conflict and injustice in her local community. She describes the connection between this work and her spirituality as part of the bigger picture of her life quest to make her life meaningful and worthwhile. She has always been interested in acting and theatre, and the workshop provides a way for her to employ her skills in a manner that she believes in and is passionate about.

Will has been extremely involved in Friends, both as a teacher at a Friends school and through his work on various committees. Will's particular interest in simplicity developed over the years as a result of a growing concern he had over the degradation of

the environment. Through consultation with a Quaker committee he decided to turn towards living in simplicity. Despite living in relative isolation, Will remains involved on Quaker committees. Will expresses that his turn to living simply is deeply connected to his spirituality as a Quaker for how it is an expression of what he most deeply values.

The activities of individual Friends and the CFSC cover a wide range of approaches and issues, and yet reflect a uniting principle in the philosophy of Friends spirituality. Throughout the documents of the CFSC website (www.cfsc.quaker.ca) there are threads of Friends testimony and witness which reflect the guiding values of the actions carried out both by the committees and on their behalf. The basis for action is always linked back to the sense of the importance of "outward expression" grounded in a belief in the value of all individuals or to use Quaker speak, "that of God in everyone". Woven throughout the stories individuals in this study recounted in explaining why they became involved in a particular issue is the influence of their Quaker spirituality. It is not always overt and it is different for each individual. Thus, how Quaker spirituality is realized for each individual, in peace and social justice work, draws on the character of their spiritual experience and their relations within the community.

4.4 Summary

This chapter has provided a brief history of Friends in the Canadian context and the service work of Canadian Friends for peace and social justice. In Canada, the number of Quakers has never been as substantial as in Britain or America. Even so, Canadian Friends have continued to act as witnesses for social change. The organizational structure and main interests of the CFSC demonstrate a strong commitment towards continuing to make possible the individual leadings of Friends, as well as providing a

forum for more general interests to be represented. Woven into this discussion was an introductory sketch of the particular peace and social justice involvement of the individuals in this study. In some cases, this is related to committee work; however, individuals noted being involved in various settings and capacities. The following section will explore literature and research on Quaker belief and practice and consider how Quaker involvement in peace and social justice is traditionally conceived.

CHAPTER 5: LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Introduction

The literature review is divided into two sections. The first section explores literature

and research on Quaker belief and practice. Bourke (2003) and Dandelion (1996; 2004)

have explored the diversity amongst Quakers in their religious beliefs. This suggests that

unity amongst Quakers does not derive from a set of shared religious beliefs. Dandelion

(1996; 2004), Collins (2002), and Coleman & Collins (2000) emphasize that what unites

Friends are the aspects of practice which diffuse throughout worship and the various

organizational aspects of the society. Thus, while there are strict boundaries around the

form of practice the group is not characterized by orthodoxy around religious beliefs.

The basis of Quaker spirituality is thus a shifting conception of the Divine which emerges

from within the individual. Individual spiritual experience is enriched and fostered by the

communal context but is not determined by it.

The second section will consider how the connection between Quaker spirituality

and involvement in peace and social justice is traditionally conceived. Usually Quaker

involvement is explained with reference to the various testimonies, spiritual beliefs and

theology of Friends (Byrd, 1960; Kent & Spickard, 1994; Woodward, 1968). However,

in light of the various spiritual experiences of Quaker individuals within the group,

Quaker service for peace and social justice can be more fully understood by drawing

attention towards this diversity. This approach builds on accounts of Quaker service

work for peace and social justice, which relate Quaker activism to the various testimonies and belief systems, and yet provides a more nuanced view by emphasizing the central role played by personal experience of the Divine. As emphasized by the individuals in this study, it is their experience of being and becoming a Quaker, their views on spirituality, their views on peace and social justice, which have inspired their involvement. It is the relationships they establish within their Quaker community, which are fostered in the experience of corporate silent worship and corporate decision-making, which maintains their involvement in the society.

5.2 Quaker Belief & Practice

Although distinctly mystical, the Quakers share the majority of the beliefs associated with mainstream Christianity. While less so now, many Friends still read the Bible, express a belief in the importance of Jesus Christ and the centrality of God in their spirituality (Bourke, 2003: 229; Dandelion, 1996). This is partly because many newcomers to Quakerism come with a background in a Christian faith group, or at least a familiarity with Christianity. All of the participants in this study were raised in an environment where some variation of Christianity was the dominant faith group. In seeking spiritual roots individuals indicated a sense of comfort in finding an alternative spiritual group which had cultural references they could identify with. However, what actually attracted participants in this study to join Quakers was usually a combination of factors, from the form of spiritual practice to lifestyle. This fits with Steere's (1984) observation that,

> People are drawn into the Society of Friends today through a number of doors: the form
> of worship, the commitment to simplicity in life style, the accent of religious experience
> rather than creeds, the peace witness, and the implemented concern for the troubled areas
> of the world which the service bodies of the Society seek to serve (52).

The fact that many new Friends do not primarily identify with the religious basis of the

society, has resulted in the curious situation that while the Quakers are commonly

identified as a Christian sect because of their cultural location and history, many Quakers

are not "Christian".[65] Bourke (2003) found that only 50% of Quakers can actually be

considered Christian in the formal sense (229). In her study of Quakers' religious beliefs,

Bourke (2003) found that the centrality of the Bible, as well as a belief in Jesus Christ

and God is less prevalent amongst Quakers than other non-Quaker Christian groups

(230). Her findings support earlier research carried out by Dandelion (1996) which

indicated considerable variation in not only individual Quakers' religious beliefs, but also

variations between Meetings. This suggests that the group maintains a sense of unity

despite the growth of regional variations across national and international boundaries.

Bourke (2003) points out that Quakers are a group of individuals holding

"...apparently irreconcilable theological views, often deeply opposed to each other,

[who] coexist peacefully within one religious movement" (236). This challenges the

notion that a shared religious belief system is the primary basis for religious unity (Bibby

1987; 1993; Stark, 2000). Bourke (2003), Coleman & Collins (2000), Collins (2002) and

Dandelion (1996; 2004) argue that the source of Quaker unity lies in shared practice, and

is based in a set of shared values, which does not require that all individuals accept the

same understanding of God or the Divine.

Thus, the main source of unity amongst Quakers is practice rather than religious

ideology. Because there is a great deal of diversity, Dandelion (2004) argues that

Quakers are often misconstrued as a liberal religious group, meaning they do not

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[65] It is not noted in the paper how Bourke defines "Christian", however, one can imagine she would employ traditional measures such as belief in the Christian God, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the importance of the Holy Spirit, and the Bible as a central text in religious interpretation.

demonstrate a strict statement on the religious beliefs of the group. He proposes that Quakers maintain a shared group identity in the absence of strict theology and dogma. While the form of Friends worship has not changed since its inception in the 1600s, the composite of Friends has changed, or at least the types of beliefs they hold. Dandelion (2004) calls this "orthopraxis rather than an orthodoxy" (221). For this reason it is not particularly useful to document the religious "beliefs" of Quakers. Diversity is accepted and expected. As Dandelion (2004) argues, belief is not used to define Quakerism even by individual Quakers; "unity within the Quaker group is founded on the way in which it practices its religion" (220). An examination of the characteristics of corporate silent worship and Quaker decision-making processes provides a sense of how Quakers, as a religious group, maintain a set of shared values, without necessarily maintaining the same religious beliefs. The process of corporate silent worship and Quaker decision-making processes were outlined in Chapter three, in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2. In this chapter the broader theoretical implications of these processes will be considered.

Corporate silent worship is peculiar both within the Christian tradition and among other organized religions. Whereas mysticism is traditionally conceived of as an individual state (Jantzen, 1995), Quakers diverge from other mystics in that "...mystical union with God [is] blended with mystical union with fellow worshipers into a single indivisible experience" (Brinton, 1969: 80). Steere (1984) notes that corporate silent worship reflects the importance of the inward experience of communion and "the pan-sacramental sense of the holiness of every life relationship" (18).

The shared experience of silent communion is meant to provide a transcendent state which would not arise if the individual worshipped alone. Brinton (1969) notes that

the form of worship which has come to be associated with Quakerism was an intricate blend between the social and the individual. Fox "…gave to the doctrine of the Inner Light a social rather than an individualized interpretation. This made group worship and an *organized* society of mystics possible" (emphasis added, Brinton, 1969: 79). Brinton (1969), Steere (1969, 1984), Dandelion (2001), and Smith (2001) all describe the experience of corporate silent worship as transformative because it connects individuals to a sense of non-imposed unity.

The value of group worship is that it allows those present to connect to a higher source of unity which would not be possible if they worshiped alone. This feeling is often described by Friends, as transformative (Brinton, 1969: 92) because it shifts their perspective of the world and relations within it. In her personal narrative Smith (2001) describes the experience of transformation as a realization of God-centred identity; she describes this as the realization of a transcendent identity beyond the self through the sense of interconnectedness to others. Although the basic process of corporate silent worship is the same in most Quaker meetings, each individual experiences corporate worship in a personal manner because it is not a guided form of prayer. Some will define it as a religious or spiritual experience, yet, this is not the case for everyone. Others will describe the experience in non-religious terms, such as a time to commune with their thoughts and work through troubling issues.

The process of corporate silent worship diffuses throughout all aspects of Quaker process. In the context of corporate decision-making the process itself reflects the strong belief in equality held by the group. In relation to both worship and business process, Coleman & Collins (2000) and Collins (2002) argue that Quaker practice provides an

exemplary model for religious belief which subsequently impacts an individual's daily life. While all religion is lived, this suggests that some religions more than others emphasis the lived expression of religion. The practices of Quaker spirituality allow for the maintenance of diversity, equality and the importance of individual experience. The value attached to these core processes provides a sense of unity and shared purpose, whether in relation to justice or personal issues. Through personal experience of corporate silent worship, Meetings for Worship for Business or attending a committee meeting, the individual experiences the values of the group.

> Although it is unlikely that new attenders will be indoctrinated in Quaker theology (if
> such a thing exists), they will soon be aware of a consistent Quaker aesthetic which they
> will appropriate and reinvent within parameters established and re-established by the
> group. ... s / he will come to know 'experimentally' (that is, experientially), as George
> Fox succinctly put it. S / he may participate in a peace vigil, a worship sharing group,
> and will inevitably find her / himself nominated on to one of the several committees. ...
> Every aspect of the newly constituted life-world of the adept may, from now on, manifest
> the sacred—everything s / he touches turns to God (Coleman & Collins, 2000: 325).

In a similar fashion, Spickard (2005) connects the social justice work of individuals in the Catholic Worker House Movement, to the shared ritual experience which fosters and reinforces the beliefs of the group. Similarly, for Quakers, the tendency towards social action originates in individual leadings but is shaped by the communal context through shared practice. The tendency to emphasize the theology of Friends thus misses the central role played by how Quakers practice not only their worship, but how this process diffuses throughout all aspects of an individual's life.

5.3 Quaker service for peace & social justice

Theological accounts of the connection between Quaker spirituality and their involvement in peace and social justice are helpful for situating the issues Quakers have been involved in within Quaker belief systems. Historical explanations situate the Quakers as playing a formative role in particular issues from slavery (Hamm et al., 2004,

2005) to civil rights (Ward, 2005). However, just as the experience of corporate silent worship is an intensely individual experience, so too is the individual's involvement in issues of peace and social justice. Although Quakers do issue general statements to the government and other organizations, not all Quakers are actively involved in political issues. As Ceadel (2002) notes, "…because there is no clear doctrinal statement, participation has been varied" in relation to peace activism (10). Further, as mentioned in Chapter three, even when the society does reach a decision it is still up to the local Monthly Meeting to determine the application of the decision. Just as the religious beliefs of Friends differ, so too does their involvement and views on peace and social justice.

Participation in peace activism has also varied as a result of the wider cultural context. Hamm et al. (2000) found a gradual decline amongst pacifism in a case study of an Indiana meeting as they slowly became integrated within the dominant American culture, whereas Ceadal (2002) describes pacifism as prospering amongst British Friends due to a thriving peace culture in British society more generally. This thesis will not provide a regional comparison; however, it will provide a much needed exploration of individual accounts which will add to already existing scholarship in this area. This individualized approach builds on Waugh's (2001) account of Bertram Pickard's work with the United Nations. She explores the challenges he confronted as a Quaker in attempting to work within an organization with values which were not always congruent with his Quaker spirituality. By employing the life history method in interviews with Friends currently engaged in diverse issues in varying capacities the objective is to

provide an alternative to theological explanations by drawing on the benefit of personal descriptions of these experiences.

As explored in Chapter three, the particular concern for peace and social justice of Quakers, has to some extent always been a characteristic of the society. However, as a result of persecution the pacifist leadings of Friends and the clear elaboration of a peace testimony were solidified (Jonas, 1971). Service for peace and social justice has thus emerged as perhaps the most active element of Quakers[66], as they strive to create social relations which are more closely reflective of how they understand the Divine. Violence, in all its forms, is a violation of the spirit of an individual. Thus, Quakers refuse to participate in violent processes because doing so would be untrue to the way they conceptualize the Divine (as living in the heart of each individual). To use Byrd's words (1960), "Doing good is not the fundamental reason...but the fact that he suffers a corrosion of spirit who stands by unconcerned in the presence of the burdened spirits of others" (Byrd, 1960:17). Quakers oppose the law using nonviolent and pacifist strategies because they seek to disobey in a way which does not further violate their own individual integrity or the integrity of other individuals (Hoare: 2).

Kent & Spickard (1994) build on Bellah's[67] theoretical concept of "civil religion" as interpreted by Baltzell. They challenge Baltzell's assumption that the theology of the Boston Puritans has formed the only ideological basis for the place of religion in the public sphere in the United States. They point out that viewpoints about the place of

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[66] In the absence of proselytization.

[67] Bellah (2005) conceives of modern 'civil' religion in the American context as the political system and various cultural symbols associated with American identity. In his view these have come to fulfill the function of religious belief for the American population. Like religion in "primitive" societies, American "civil" religion provides social cohesion through a representation of society which people revere and worship, and yet it is integrated within the secular political system.

religion in public life relate to the religious theology of two of the United States' dominant religious traditions: the Boston Puritans and Quakers. The religious theology of the Boston Puritans emphasized primary evil amongst humanity, believed that institutions and authority were divinely created to keep evil at bay. Fighting against the established order would be concomitant to confronting God. However, they similarly point out that Baltzell's vision of American culture points to only one religious viewpoint in relation to civil engagement. In contrast, the Quakers, an equally important group in forming American society, do not see "...the U.S. as a divinely destined nation whose institutions and leaders [are] acting out God's plan on earth" (Kent & Spickard, 1994: 373). It is important to note that the former, as well as the latter view, lead to a form of outward action. The dominant view that the government and its institutions are "providentially guided" provides the justification for the desire to proliferate the same system elsewhere. Because the system is a representation of God, it is therefore the best and most true representation, and should be reproduced. The Quaker view reflects a vision of constant effort to create institutions which actually do reflect the Divine, and foster "that of God in every person".

Kent & Spickard (1994) relate this to the theological underpinnings of the two religious traditions which reflect differing views of the relationship between God and the individual, human nature, and the basis for human action in the world. Quakers believe that "God live[s] in the human heart", "all [individuals] have within them His Inner Light", and through reproducing equality in our relations with others we come closer to knowing God in our hearts. Similarly, Byrd (1960) highlights that Quakers are obligated to disobey laws which are inconsistent with the recognition of equality because to not do

so would offend God. An excerpt from the minutes of London Yearly Meeting expresses this sentiment:

> [A] Christian is right in combining with others to obtain justice for himself and his fellows, but he should set his face against oppression and violence as being inconsistent with the example and teaching of our Lord (London Yearly Meeting cited in Kent & Spickard, 1994: 377).

Quakers perceive a unity amongst the worth of all individuals and this unity transcends and is inherent to social interactions; there is no separation between sacred and secular spaces.

This fits with Woodward's (1969) observation that for Quakers all of life is blended, rather than divided into sacred and secular. In this context the government and the State "...is brought within the circle of Friendly concern" (Woodward, 1969: 211).

> In this vision, government is immoral when it stifles freedom and justice anywhere in the world. If its laws contribute to oppression, then they are to be disobeyed. Under such circumstances righteousness lies in rebellion, not obedience (Kent & Spickard, 1994: 373).

The government and the law are not perceived as having any hierarchal value which inherently accords respect. Rather it is their actions which must be evaluated. This notion harks back to the similar view held by Quakers in relation to religious authorities and hierarchy. It is the obligation of concerned individuals to envision social institutions which improve the condition of all human beings, rather than reproduce suffering and inequality.

The research reviewed in the previous section on belief and practice (Bourke, 2003; Dandelion, 2004; Collins, 2002; Coleman and Collins, 2000) points to a conceptual problem with emphasizing the theology of Friends. Particularly in the contemporary context, Quaker spirituality is less a definitive religious belief system, and more a set of practices grounded in a particular worldview. So it is not that Kent & Spickard's, Byrd's

and Woodward's descriptions are completely inaccurate but that what they are describing is grounded in process. This would explain why the types of social justice issues Friends have engaged in have shifted over time and across space. It is the outward manifestation or the obligation towards action which remains unchanged, or the sense that one's actions should and must be consistent with one's values. The value of process is mirrored in the consensus based decision-making of Friends business meetings and also in the process of discernment which individual Friends engage in before carrying forward a particular concern. In all cases the desire is to strive towards bringing action closer to a true expression of spiritual experience. While generally this takes the form of nonviolence and pacifism, Friends themselves would admit that their quest for social justice is one of continual renewal.[68]

This points to a more general problem, while Kent & Spickard argue that Baltzell only focuses on what Quakers "have not done"[69], accounts of Quaker involvement in social justice tend to focus only on the positive. O'Donnell (2001) points out that although Quakerism is often associated with feminism because of their emphasis on equality, gender inequality still existed in the early days of the movement. This suggests that while there is an element of consistency in Quaker involvement in peace and social justice issues, the process is subtle and complex, and Quakers themselves are not without a social and cultural context. Despite the principles espoused in the peace testimony Friends have participated in wars and owned slaves.

A generalized account of Quaker service work for peace and social justice, which only described the connections between Quaker theology and peace and social justice,

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[68] Quakers use the phrase "the truth is continually being revealed".
[69] He refers to their disengagement with the public sphere and its institutions.

would miss the diverse life experiences of Friends. It is their experience of being and becoming a Quaker, their views on spirituality, their views on peace and social justice, and the motivation behind each individual's involvement which will provide the best understanding of how Quaker service for peace and social justice manifests. It is the acceptance and embracing of this diversity which ironically provides unity amongst Quakers and defines the boundaries of their religious group.

Furthermore, how an individual draws on their spiritual community for guidance is a negotiation between their own identity as a Quaker and their perception of their place within the group. Even though the emphasis of this thesis is the individual spiritual experience, the importance of the individual's Quaker community cannot be ignored. The experience of community is fostered in the experience of corporate silent worship and corporate decision-making; for many individuals in this study, these processes were what attracted them to become part of a religious group. Many of the participants noted that they can worship or meditate on their own. It is the shared experience which helps individuals to discern whether what they seek to do is "of God" or if it derives from more personal concerns. The importance of the individual's religious community will be explored more fully in the analysis of the interviews, in chapters seven and eight.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has explored literature and research on Quaker belief and practice, as well as the manner in which Quaker involvement in peace and social justice has been traditionally conceived. There is a tendency amongst researchers of religious groups to emphasize unity based on a particular set of beliefs. As demonstrated by Bourke (2003), Collins (2002), Coleman & Collins (2000) and Dandelion (2004), Quakers are

characterized by an orthodoxy around religious practice as opposed to belief. This emphasizes that the manner in which religious experience manifests in outward action is not always connected to a concrete understanding of the Divine. Instead, by emphasizing unity through religious practice this opens space for considering how involvement in peace and social justice derives from a shifting understanding of the Divine. This approach captures the diverse manner in which religion is experienced and lived by individuals and explains why not all Quakers are involved at the same level or in the same types of issues. This provides an important addition to theological or belief-based explanations of the peace and social justice work of Friends. Further, it provides space to consider the important role played by the individual's spiritual community in shaping actions of individual Friends. The following chapter will explore theory on the social construction of religion and religious identity and the manner in which religiously based involvement in peace and social justice is conceived.

CHAPTER 6: THEORY

6.1 Introduction
6.2 Social Construction of Religion
6.3 (Re)considering Religiously Based Action for Peace and Social Justice
6.4 Challenging the Sacred/Secular Divide
6.5 Summary

6.1 Introduction

The study of religion, whether it originates from a historical, political or sociological

perspective, defines the boundaries of what religion is; this usually includes, regardless of

intention, normative statements about the role of religion in modern societies. For this

reason, the study of religion is always involved in politics even if the issue at hand seems

to be solely descriptive in terms of theology or the practices of a particular group. This is

because the way in which religion is described, interpreted and framed always reveals

assumptions about what the essence of the phenomena is. In this sense, the theoretical

framework employed by the researcher shapes the direction of any analysis of a religious

group, making certain aspects important and others irrelevant. As this is a sociological

exploration of Canadian Quakers, the theoretical influences I will draw on emphasize the

importance of issues of culture, power and subjectivity in relation to religion and

religious experience. This approach does not discount the importance of theology, rather,

it pays attention to the manner in which religion is experienced by individuals, and how it

interacts with the wider social context.

The main theoretical assumptions of this thesis are as follows. First, following

the work of Beckford (2003) religion, religious belief and religious identity are

understood as socially constructed phenomenon which are lived and experienced by

individuals (Orsi, 2003). This captures the sense that even when one fully identifies as a member of a religious group one continues to build a religious identity (Beaman, 1997, 2001; Kaufman, 1991; Peek, 2005). In this context, the form of religious experience and subjectivity are understood as key sites for the exercise of power relations.

Second, the motivation of religious believers to become involved in peace and social justice issues is understood as a fluid and complex process, which emphasizes that religion, is woven into individuals' lives in imperceptible ways. This contrasts with the conception of religious activism as a straightforward process, where a dogmatic belief system is understood as the basis for action. As explored by Hashem (2006) the involvement of individuals in activism manifests in multiple ways even within a religious group perceived to have a strict set of beliefs and practices, such as Islam. The situation is further complicated in the context of a religious group such as the Quakers who are characterized by diversity in relation to religious beliefs. As explored in Chapter five the Quakers do not define unity based on a set of religious beliefs, but rather define their unity through shared practice. Therefore, the influence of "religion" is not straightforward because each individual brings their own spiritual beliefs and experiences to the group. As emphasized by the individuals in this study, despite all identifying with Quakers, they were involved in diverse ways in issues of peace and social justice.

Finally, this thesis considers how Quaker spirituality problematizes the maintenance of strict conceptual boundaries between public and private spaces or the sacred and the secular. By rethinking religious experience in broader terms, it is possible to consider the continuing importance of religion in bringing meaning and motivation to people's lives. In the context of Quaker spirituality, the emphasis on elements of practice

means that the religious experience inherently extends throughout all aspects of an individual's life. This problematizes the secularization hypothesis which frames religion as only relevant to private lives and experiences. The Quakers inhabit a religious identity which is both a political statement of equality and necessitates outward action to foster this experience in the outside world. This inherently links their spiritual experience within both the public and private realms and politicizes both worlds. Further, because this thesis emphasizes the various manifestations of peace and social justice work of Friends, this often crosses boundaries between their personal, professional and volunteer work, and thus, private and public spaces.

6.2 Social Construction of Religion

Bibby (1987; 1993) has documented the state of religion in Canada through numerous sociological surveys. Despite the fact that his results suggest that religion is on the decline in Canada, Bibby argues that Canadians maintain a fascination with mystery, and that religion can continue to fulfill their needs. Some of his later work even provides practical suggestions for how Canadian churches might reinvigorate interest and attendance, particularly amongst youth, by responding directly to those needs. While there is an implicit value in Bibby's work in tracing the current religious scene in the Canadian context, his work also demonstrates a series of assumptions about what religion is. Bibby's definition of religion relies on indicators such as church attendance and belief in the authority of religious texts and God.

This limited definition of religion rules out a whole other set of experiences, which would not be considered religious because they are too personal and do not occur within the appropriate setting, such as a church. This perspective limits the experience of

religious belief as solely attached to institutional affiliation with a particular church, and religious expression to certain spaces. As Orsi (2003) argues this is problematic as *all* religions, even those which emphasize theological orthodoxy are reproduced on a daily basis in people's lives through practice. What is defined as religiosity fluctuates according to the social and cultural context.

As discussed in the previous section, the mystical element of Quakerism presents an alternative view of the basis of religious experience, which originates in the individual's personal relationship with the Divine. However, because it does not necessarily occur within a formal setting, it may not be counted as a religious experience. Corporate silent worship, which while in some cases occurs in a formal meeting house, often occurs with a small group of Friends, in a person's home. Or in some cases, Friends who live in isolation have worship by themselves. Further, there are many individuals who regularly attend Quaker meetings, but who do not define themselves as members, and there are members who do not attend meetings. The point is that traditional behaviours associated with religious practice, such as regular church attendance, are not always the most accurate measure for considering how religion plays a role in a person's life. This highlights that the way in which religion is defined will affect the manner in which religion is thought about.

James Beckford (2003) argues that the process of thinking about religion and religious belief reveals not only the underlying assumptions of the researcher, but about society as well. Beckford's approach allows us to think of the study of religion as a key site where the meaning of religion is contested and fought over. As exemplified by Barker (1984) and Dawson (1998) the concepts we use to make sense of religion in

popular culture—such as cults[70]—reveal the boundaries around which religion is constructed. Further, debates which occur within social institutions reflect the actualization of these broader debates, whether in the local school board or the Supreme Court. In all cases debates about religion engage relations of power and inequality and demonstrate that the meaning of religion has no constant value.

Thus the process of defining "appropriate" religion—regardless of whether this takes place in the courts or in an academic setting--in any given society, provides ample ground for tracing the fault line along which certain groups are excluded and others are legitimated as "religion". For this reason, Beckford argues that as sociologists it is useful to think of religion and religious belief as socially constructed. This emphasizes, as suggested by Orsi (2003), that religion is a lived experience which is reproduced in daily life through the actions of individuals. Like Beckford, Orsi conceptualizes religion as an active and ongoing process which is practiced *by* people *in* social relationships.

> Rethinking religion as a form of cultural work, the study of lived religion directs attention to institutions *and* persons, texts *and* rituals, practice *and* theology, things *and* ideas—all as media of making and unmaking worlds. The key questions concern what people *do* with religious idioms, how they use them, what they make of themselves and their worlds with them, and how, in turn, men, women, and children are fundamentally shaped by worlds they are making as they make these worlds. There is no religion apart from this, no religion that people do not take up in their hands (Orsi, 2003: 172).

In both cases, the emphasis is placed on how religion is a product of social relationships not in the sense that it does not exist, but in how it is shaped by and reacts to broader social forces. Religion is defined and redefined on an ongoing basis.

In a similar fashion, religion is defined and redefined within an individual's life. As Peek (2005) suggests, the development of religious identity is a fluid rather than a static process. An individual's religious identity builds over time and through their

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[70] In the sociology of religion the term cults is usually replaced by new religious movements.

experiences. Further, even when one becomes a member of a religious group they do not necessarily abandon their previous religious or life views, even though they may affiliate with the group. Huber (2001) explored the question of identity amongst Buddhist Quakers and considered the diverse manner in which individuals relied on distinct spiritual traditions. The process of negotiating one's spiritual identity is an ongoing process. This is true of orthodox and conservative groups (Beaman, 1997, 2001; Kaufman, 1991) and even more so amongst a liberal religious group, such as Quakers. As a Quaker, Dandelion (2001) expressed that his process of knowing God has been one of continual "self-definition" (135). Further, not all Quakers join because of the spiritual element; as Steere (1984) notes, in the contemporary context members join because they feel an affiliation with the form of spirituality or the lifestyle. As demonstrated by the individuals in this study it is usually a combination of both. This suggests that religious involvement in peace and social justice, even when carried out by a member of a religious group, does not always have a spiritual basis, or a spiritual basis in a conventional sense. How individuals define their spiritual identity and how this affects various areas of their lives is unique and grows over time through their experiences and relationships.

By questioning how religion is defined, and framing the process of definition as a site of the exercise of power relations, stereotypes of religious groups can be reconsidered as reflections of the fears and anxieties underpinning the culture of any given society. For this reason, questions of power and subjectivity are fundamental to the study of religion as well as religious belief and experience. The study of religion, as Orsi (2003) notes, is incomplete without a consideration of relations of power. The inclusion of post-

structural feminist and postmodern theory in the study of religion similarly links religion to power and subjectivity. Religion defines boundaries and is defined; in both cases issues of inequality, such as gender (Nason-Clark, 1993; Beaman, 2001, 2002) and ethnicity (Mullins, 1984; Choquette, 2004), often mark the fault line along which conflict arises. In many cases, religion is defined by society as "abnormal"; often this is because the manner in which religion is practiced is perceived to be inconsistent with the values of freedom and liberty seen to embody liberal democratic societies. The members of certain religious groups, such as new religious movements, fundamentalist or orthodox groups, are often perceived as "dupes" who need to be rescued.

The extensive ethnographic work of Ammerman (1987) on fundamentalist Christians, Beaman (1997, 2001) on Evangelical Christian women and Mormons, and Barker (1984) on the Moonies provide complex accounts of how religious groups perceived as "abnormal" negotiate between the broader social context and individual religious experience. Individuals within these groups are not "dupes" but are in most cases aware and play a conscious role in constructing their understanding of the world in the context of what are perceived as restrictive religious beliefs and practices.

In a more general sense, religion is one of many forms of legitimating systems, in that it defines relationships of power and situates different types of subjects within this hierarchy. However, power is understood in the Foucauldian sense, not *necessarily* as a negative, but rather as a productive force.

> Power is fundamental to the very meaning of practice generally and of religious practices in particular, not only the power of some over others, but also the power that circulates through as it sustains and vivifies cultural forms—aesthetics, for example, ethics, kinesics, and architecture" (Orsi, 2003: 172).

Religious groups, in past and present times, continue to be a primary site for regulation because they produce meaning systems and define boundaries based on gender, sex, age and race. In the work of Foucault, religion was for the most part ignored, or it was considered as one of many forms of legitimating discourses through which relations of power are maintained and *exercised* upon subjects (Carrette, 1999; 2000). Poststructuralist feminist appropriations of Foucault's work (Butler, 1990; 1997; McNay, 2000; Sawicki, 1991; 1994) shift our attention to the everyday manifestations of power and suggest alternative ways of conceptualizing political responses. Central to these approaches is thinking about how reconceptualizing, or *undoing* the subject is a political exercise. In this sense, religion figures prominently as one of the many possible ways to both define and *un*define the experience of ourselves as subjects (Jantzen, 1995).

As Kent & Spickard (1994) argue, this is often related to the manner in which the relationship between the individual and God is defined for the nature of this relationship has implications for how the subject is characterized. The persecution or regulation of a certain religious group can thus be understood for how they challenge the dominant view of the religious subject held in a particular society. There are numerous examples in the Canadian context; the Doukhobors who emphasized a communal expression of religion (Janzen, 1990), or Aboriginal spirituality which is not compartmentalized to traditional religious spaces and encompasses all of life (Beaman, 2002). In a similar vein, the basis of Quaker spirituality was not to work towards the development of a separate religious sect, but rather advocated a radical vision of equality which challenged the dominant view of hierarchal relations, both within the church and society. The Quakers were

heavily persecuted because they challenged the value system of the dominant culture they lived in and the dominant view of religious subjectivity.

The particular form of spirituality practiced by Quakers suggests that the political nature of religious subjectivity holds true even for a religious experience which is perceived as fundamentally personal, such as mysticism. Employing the work of Butler, Jantzen (1995) demonstrates how by framing the subject's relationship to God as direct and equal, mystical subjectivity is inherently politicized.

> A person who has acknowledged to have direct access to God would be in a position to challenge any form of authority, whether doctrinal or political, which she saw as incompatible with the divine will (Jantzen, 1995: 1).

Mysticism is often conceptualized as an individual psychologized or spiritual state beyond the reach of theoretical analysis; it is distinguished from religion, for how it is diffuse and not concrete. However, Jantzen's approach suggests that the fundamental premise of the mystical experience is a political message in how the individual understands their capacity through a particular view of religious experience. By adopting a more fluid notion of power, this expands analysis beyond how individuals practicing mysticism has been regulated, but also how they potentially engage in breaking down relations of power through the religious subjectivity they inhabit.

6.3 (Re)considering Religiously Based Action for Peace and Social Justice

The basis for Quakerism is the mystical connection with God in a corporate context. By situating an analysis of Quakerism within the context of subjectivity and power relations, I am challenging the notion that the study of religion should be limited to objective and measurable elements. Behaviour attached to the institutions of religion are not always the most accurate indicators of devotion; more importantly, they do little to reveal the nature of religious experience. This does not completely discount the importance of these

factors, but rather argues for a heightened importance to be placed on individual accounts of spiritual experience which are not necessarily confined to what is traditionally thought of as "religion" and "religious experience". By shifting attention towards individual experiences of spirituality an exploration of the diverse manifestations of religious belief in action for peace and social justice becomes possible.

The popular understanding of how religion manifests in political action is driven by a series of largely negative stereotypes and misrepresentations of religious fanatics and fundamentalists looking to destroy the world on the one hand, and "secularists" holding the influence of religion in politics at bay on the other. While it is rare for theorists to completely discount the continued importance of religion, it is very common both in popular and scholarly discourse for the role of religion in the public sphere to be oversimplified in either a positive or negative light. As explored in the previous section, a large part of this mischaracterization originates in how religion and religious believers are conceptualized. Central to this misconception is the belief that religion and religious belief are 'private' matters, while politics is a 'public' matter, and the two should not intersect. As Casanova (1994) and Haar and Busuttil (2005) suggest this image is inaccurate, for despite "secularization" religion continues to be implicated in politics. Furthermore, it is also problematic, as secular politics is perceived to have the only legitimate claim to resolving issues of injustice and inequality in a global context. The sacred/secular divide will be explored more fully in the following section. In this section I will emphasize how the diversity amongst Quaker belief systems challenges popular views of the basis for religious involvement in peace and social justice.

Dandelion, Collins (2002) and Coleman & Collins (2000) emphasize that unity, and therefore the uniqueness of Quakers is engendered through religious practice, rather than a particular set of religious beliefs or texts. Interestingly, not all Quakers define God as the unifying force, because unity is derived from practice rather than a religious belief system. As Bourke (2003) highlights, this helps us to understand why Quakers demonstrate diverse religious orientations, such as Christian, Buddhist or Jewish, and yet share the same spiritual practice. In this sense, outward manifestations, such as political activism and engagement in social justice derive from a shared worldview, rather than shared theology. This makes Quakers unique in both the secular and religiously-based activist contexts. In the former, this is because their involvement in peace and social justice can be understood as an expression of their spiritual experience; in the latter, this is because the basis for their action derives from experience rather than religious doctrine.

While aspects of this are unique to Quaker spirituality, in particular the emphasis on practice or "orthopraxy", the notion of diffuseness is true of all religious groups. As Orsi (2002) notes religious belief is not confined to certain realms and permeates all levels of culture and society through individuals. This is true of orthodox and fundamentalist groups (Ammerman, 1987; Beaman, 1997, 1999, 2001) as well as more liberal faith groups. The Quakers demonstrate a religiously based activism, which does not derive from religious doctrine, but rather from shared spiritual experience. This approach is comparable to Spickard's (2005) examination of the Catholic Worker House movement, as well as Coleman & Collins (2000) examination of Quaker practice, which both emphasize the importance of shared experience in understanding outward manifestations. In both cases, our attention is drawn towards the many ways which

religious groups, and the individuals which make up those groups, are characterized by diversity in motivation and action for peace and social justice.

6.4 Challenging the Sacred/Secular Divide

The rise of secularization means that religion no longer has the ideological legitimacy to define social reality in an exclusive sense, and also that religious belief systems actually conflict with secular explanations of reality. In the *Sacred Canopy*, Berger (1967)[71] argued that as the authority of religion became increasingly decentred and that its legitimacy lost any solid foundation as society moved towards rationalization. He argued that the place of religion lost its unifying properties and shifted according to social context. He suggested that this resulted in the "polarization" of religion towards the private sector, specifically the family; while the public sector, in particular politics, economics and the law came to be dominated by secular values. Wilson (2003) argued religion, even new religious movements, had little to offer to individuals living in a modern society which emphasizes bureaucracy and rationality. Both Berger (1967) and Wilson (2003) argue that regardless of the reality of a general process, the specifics of the process of secularization have emerged in response to local or regional contexts, social systems and culture.

Casanova (1994) proposes that theories of secularization posit that because the structures of previous social systems were religious, the fact that these same institutions seem to be no longer obviously religious is taken to reveal a very obvious decline in religion. However, he argues that this does little to tell us about the personal religious lives which people inhabited and experienced on a daily basis. Casanova's work points

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[71] Berger (1999), who was one of the foremost proponents of the secularization hypothesis, later recanted his hypothesis.

to a more general deficiency in scholarship in the sociology of religion which equates attendance at church with the existence or non-existence of faith, and religious government and church-controlled institutions with the existence of religion in the public sphere. Further, regardless of the variety of conclusions regarding the place of religion in the modern world, from non-existent to the private sphere, this assumes in the face of contrary evidence that religion has no involvement in the public political realm. As Casanova (1994) asserts, the problem is that these accounts provide no explanation for the manner in which religion continues to engage in a public manner in the modern world. He notes:

> [They] have a political role to play which is not necessarily that of "positive" social integration; may not endanger modern functional differentiation; may allow for privatization of religion and pluralism and subjectivism (39).

The secularization hypothesis is quite simply an inadequate tool to measure the intricacies of the role of religion in the modern world.

Issues of religious practice occurring in the private sphere continue to seep into public debates, and the nature of religious practice affects the form of individual's outward actions in the world. In both cases, as Casanova notes, the boundaries between religion and politics are less distinct than commonly assumed. Exploration into political movements often reveals connections with religious values at some level, whether through individual involvement or the importing of value systems (Smith, 1996).

In fact, the government and legal institutions, in particular the courts, continue to exercise a great deal of regulatory force to ensure that religion does in fact stay in its designated place in the private sphere. Issues of religious practice in the home may be framed as private and yet debates about the limits of religious freedom, both in the Canadian and American context, suggest that these issues engage the political values of

the nation in a very public manner. This highlights an interesting paradox in modern liberal democracies. Religion is characterized as a private matter and yet public policy is directed towards maintaining that "religion is and ought to remain a private affair" (Casanova, 1994: 55). For this reason, certain types of spirituality are delegitimized, particularly those which reflect an all-encompassing world-view, whether Aboriginal (Beaman, 2002) or new religious movements (Dawson, 2002; Barker, 1984). The recognition of these religious systems as legitimate religion threatens the foundations of liberal democracies. It is also a curious coincidence that those faith groups which remain legitimate are generally Christian, exhibiting a particular form of religiosity consistent with the modern view of religion in a liberal democracy. And yet, the nation-state continues to be perceived and portrays itself as a "neutral" and non-religious institution. Regardless of whether we accept that the modern state is neutral and non-religious it is inaccurate to portray the emergence of secularization as a neutral process which barrels ahead without the aid of not only formal but also ideological state institutions.

For this reason, Casanova (1994) argues, "that to say that "religion is a private affair" not only describes a historical process of institutional differentiation but actually prescribes the proper place for religion in social life" (64). Because secularization accepts the supremacy of the secular state and rational scientific reasoning, it necessarily follows that politics is expunged of religious systems of knowledge. This restrains a form of public dialogue on religion suggesting politics is anything but neutral towards religious groups.

> The model of a public dialogue based on conversational restraint is not neutral, in that it presupposes a moral and political epistemology; this in turn justifies an implicit separation between the public and the private of such a kind as leads to the silencing of the concerns of certain excluded groups" (Casanova, 1994: 65).

Religious groups seeking to engage with the public sphere do so with a huge disability due to the assumption that all religious groups derive their meaning systems in the same manner making their presence not only antithetical, but their inclusion fundamentally threatening.

> If secularism as a doctrine requires the distinction between private reason and public principle, it also demands the placing of the "religious" in the former by the "secular." Private *reason* is not the same as private *space*; it is the entitlement to difference, the immunity from the force of public reason (Asad, 2003: 8).

This relates not only to certain forms of reasoning and engagement, but all manifestations of political behaviour and action.

In the Quaker context, the experience of corporate mysticism diffuses throughout all aspects of the individual's life; to use the words of Coleman and Collins (2000), the religious practice of Friends leads to a "ritualization of everyday life" (318). It is proposed, in line with Coleman and Collins (2000) that the Quakers practice their spirituality in such a way that it is intimately connected to daily life on an experiential basis. In this sense, the expression of religious belief through "public" political action is reframed as a continuation of "private" expressions of religious belief; rather than a clear divide between different areas of influence and action, there is a blending between what are perceived to be two distinct spheres. The manner in which this occurs is unique for each individual and depends upon a number of factors including their individual life experiences, context and motivation for seeking spirituality. Each individual constructs the form of action out of their own experience of spirituality.

Implicit in these discussions is how an alternative conceptualization of religious belief and experience is a challenge to the notion of a public/private or sacred/secular divide. In both cases, the maintenance of strict definitions on religion and religious belief

are underpinned by a secular discourse which regulates and excludes religion from public spaces; the Quakers demonstrate that religious influence often occurs in a far more diffuse manner and blends with all aspects of an individual's daily life.

Martin Ceadel (2002) notes the important role played by Quakers in the British peace movement because of their emphasis on pacifism. Quakers "...did much to achieve general acceptance of pacifism as more than a sectarian peculiarity or an excuse for avoiding dangerous citizenly duties" (Ceadel, 2002: 29). In this sense Quaker spirituality is mobilized through the secular peace movement. The boundary between sacred/secular is often displayed in an overly simplistic manner; a more in-depth look confirms that the boundary is more an intricate relationship and a strict distinction is not always particularly useful in understanding how religion, politics and the law intersect. The involvement of Quakers in various levels of politics, and the proliferation of the Quaker peace testimony at various levels of "secular" society demonstrates this complexity.

6.5 Summary

This section has explored theory in the sociology of religion, emphasizing the social construction of religion, religious belief and identity. Discussions of power and subjectivity prove central to illuminating the nature of religious experience. Furthermore, by exploring the diffuse nature of religion in people's lives a more complex understanding of the role of religion in motivating action for peace and social justice become possible. Finally, the strong emphasis placed on religious practice suggests an alternative view of religious experience which inherently diffuses throughout all aspects of an individual's life. This problematizes the secularization hypothesis which maintains

a strict distinction between the sacred and the secular. The Quakers' emphasis on unity through religious practice suggests that the way religion manifests in public or private spaces is never a straightforward process. This can be true of any religious group, even those with strict belief systems. The following two chapters are the main analysis sections. An exploration of the main theoretical themes will be provided through a consideration of the narrative accounts of a group of Canadian Friends. The analysis chapters will draw on the history of Friends, as well as previous literature and research.

CHAPTER 7: NINE LIVES LIVED IN SPIRIT: BUILDING A SPIRITUAL IDENTITY

7.1 Introduction

> *Jen:* I think you asked a question at one point about why I do the work I do, what's it got to do with spirituality and really it's more about this is who I am anyway. And it just is like discovering that there's this community of people who think the same way. It's like a process of recognition. They hold the same kind of values that you feel you've been carrying along and trying to carry along or discover and uncover all your life. You know so it's more like that. It's more like saying "Yes" this is where I'm coming from too, or trying to.

As Jen's words capture, finding the "spiritual" connection in the work she does, is not about pin-pointing an exact location. Rather, it is about recognizing the diverse relationships and experiences that make up her life; her Quaker spirituality is one aspect which helps her in what she does. The categories I decided to work with reflect the journey of coming to be part of Quakers. In this sense the focus of the study emphasizes a particular aspect of each individual's life journey, Quakerism, in relation to work for peace and social justice. This focus does not exclude or diminish other significant aspects of the individual's identity. Further, the life history approach emphasizes an integrative approach which draws in other life experiences which might normally be overlooked. The wider context of an individual's life will be emphasized throughout the analysis and the themes are necessarily open to allow for this.

In presenting the findings from the interviews I have drawn out common themes: seeking; finding a spiritual home; and finally, outward action blending with spiritual experience. The analysis is broken into two chapters, with the first two themes being dealt with in this chapter, and the latter theme being dealt with in Chapter seven. This allows for a more complete consideration of the types of peace and social justice work Friends are engaged in. The themes however are interwoven and carry through both chapters. In working with these themes I have sought to link the interviews together, and at the same time to provide space for the unique story of each participant to emerge. The themes are in no way meant to refer to discrete time periods or states of being; rather they are understood as continuous throughout the course of each individual's life.

For example, the sense of being a seeker does not end once an individual has taken up a Quaker identity, nor is it meant to be exclusive to spirituality. Following Roof's (1996) approach, seeking refers to religion, spirituality and more general life experiences. Even after being a Quaker for many years, individuals noted the sense of seeking continued. The same holds true for the individual's involvement in peace and social justice. All of the participants recalled having an interest in issues of peace and social justice from a very young age; some were actively involved while for others it was a more general philosophical interest. Usually, their earlier views about peace and social justice have carried over and inform the work for peace and social justice they do as a Quaker. Thus, the sense of seeking applies to spirituality and peace and social justice.

7.2 Seeking

> *Susan:* When I was probably 13 or 14, I was on a bus trip. And I can't remember what the bus trip was going to oddly enough. We were going somewhere in Iowa or Nebraska or something like that and I can't remember what for. It was a junior high school bus trip. But I was sitting next to a young Jewish boy, named Les Golden. And we spent the whole night talking, trying to come up with a definition of God between us. And it was a real seeking on both of our parts and I remember enjoying this conversation so much. And he did too because we spoke of it later. And we were sort of talking about reincarnation and God, and Holy Spirit and all those kinds of things. And what we came to unity around was that ...(pause) I don't think we used these words, but that there was that of God in every person. And that what was called the soul was that element of every person. And that God was not a finite being of any sort. That God was infinite and omniscient and that that which is the soul or that of God in every person returns to the main. And it flows in a great circle into not only people but all living things and that you know it exists in living things and it returns. It's very hard to put in words. We did the best we could.

Susan spent the early years of her life exploring a variety of religious groups. In terms of forming her spiritual views, these forays into different churches exposed her to different forms of religious experience; however, she did not seem to feel that they significantly formed her views on spirituality beyond highlighting what she did not believe. It was in the conversation she recalled above and others like it, that she recalled her views on spirituality being formed. In this discussion she had with a friend, they were struggling to find meaning in life and within the world, through a particular definition of the Divine. As seekers, all of the participants in this study noted struggling in a similar fashion with the meaning of the Divine or God. Further, they sought to explore how this definition held implications for other aspects of their lives. In this manner, their spiritual seeking was related to their views on peace and social justice, as well as their personal relationships on a daily basis.

The following section will first explore the religious history of the participants, emphasizing how they perceived and experienced the various formal religious institutions they were exposed to. Second, because their personal understanding of spirituality was often quite different from what they experienced in formal religious institutions, such as

church or Sunday school, I will consider how participants distinguished between their experience in more formal religious institutions and the sense of connection to an "other" spiritual realm. Finally, their early views on peace and social justice will be explored, drawing connections to their spirituality where relevant.

7.2.1 Early views of religion

All participants had some exposure to organized religion while growing up, for the most part almost exclusively within the Christian tradition. This reflects social norms at the time in Canada, the United States and England where church attendance within the Christian tradition would have been customary. Growing up as children some participants attended with family and even had family members who were church officials. Arthur remembered fondly traveling with his father to different parishes while growing up.

> *Arthur:* Those were very happy days. We could go to school, kept a couple of cows, we had a horse. Made the rounds in winter, they didn't call them roads in those days, we had a light sled. We had the horse, and I often made the rounds with him.

Will's grandfather was a minister and he recounted being present during sermons at a very young age. These men grew up surrounded by organized religion because it was in their family. Attendance at church was something they were expected to do rather than something they chose to do.

> *Lisa:* What was your involvement in religion growing up as a child?
> *Will:* I can remember crawling around in the church, playing around in the church I should say, while [my grandfather] was preaching. And I didn't know much about what he was preaching about, but I, in my childish arrogance, knew that the congregation didn't believe what he was saying. The only member of that church beside my grandparents that I had any respect for was the janitor. Because he'd let me go up in the tower and ring the bells. So I guess you know I didn't have a favourable opinion about religion at all.
>
> When we moved to New Jersey my grandparents were very very faithful Methodists. And so my sister and I went to the Methodist Sunday School, again because we were expected to. I had no objection to going any more than I had to being in the church when my grandfather was preaching. But it was because we were expected to do so; it wasn't because I had a desire.

Gary and Jen also attended with family members. Below, Jen notes that even though she enjoyed the experience it was "just part of what we did".

> *Jen:* And I remember we'd go to Sunday School, which really was more about my parents having some time to themselves. But I quite enjoyed that, yeah I did. I quite enjoyed going to Sunday school, it was just part of what we did.

Jean, Susan and Julie went independently of their parents, often attending with friends or neighbours. Below, Julie describes how her desire to attend was attached to her need to "be part of a spiritual community".

> *Lisa:* Was religion a part of your life when you were growing up?
> *Julie:* Um, well interestingly enough, we were members of the local Anglican Church. And my mom sent us to Sunday School. I think as much, we always laughed, that it was really just to get rid of us on Sunday morning (laughing), cause she didn't come. Um, and then when we moved. I made really good friends with another girl in Sunday School and ended up singing in the choir and stuff, but I actually all through my later childhood, until I kind of rebelled as a teenager, I actually went to church by myself. Got up on Sunday morning, dressed myself, trundled off, because my sister gave it up, and my younger sister is 6 years younger than me, and she, she was never in the Sunday school period (laughing) of our family. I think of that now, how amazing that really is, as a 10 or 11 year old child to be getting up, I mean the church was only 2 blocks away, but um, getting up and doing that, and it was a, I think from the very beginning it felt very home to me. I felt a big need to be part of a spiritual community.

Like Eric, John did not attend church while growing up.

> *Eric:* No. I remember going to school and coming home and saying, "Mom we're supposed to put religion down", in those days you had to put down what religion you were at certain schools. I said, "What am I supposed to put?" And she said, "Oh you're from England you might as well put Anglican." That was the level of religious commitment in our family.

However, both recall having discussions with their family members about religion.

> *Eric:* But mother's attitude was, I don't think as strongly anti-church as my father's attitude was, but she certainly wasn't, by having to attend church every Sunday at school she certainly didn't attach a positive sense to it. And my father always sort of mentioned that he basically felt just about everybody in the church were hypocrites. And a lot of that came from his experience during the war. Where you have these holy people as you went out to kill people. And he you know pointed out what a contradiction that was. So those values impacted on me.

John remembered attending Sunday school and there were religious studies classes given as part of his school education.

For those participants who did attend church, they recounted both positive and negative aspects. The positive aspects of their experience at church included how it allowed them to maintain relationships with family and their community. Others valued the sense of spirituality and the shared religious experience. In recounting the negative aspects of their church experiences participants often referred to things such as dogmatic belief systems, the emphasis on creeds and the "hypocrisy" of the church. Usually participants recounted something about the behaviour of particular church members or officials which appeared to be confusing or inconsistent with either religious doctrine or their personal understanding of spirituality. Susan recalled that the church was always asking for money.

> *Susan:* The theme that I remember the most that I didn't like was they were always asking for money. And it made me wonder what church was really about. I don't think it was their fault and I don't think they always asked for money, but I had the strange fortune to always be there on tithe Sunday. And so not only did they pass the plate, there was always some excerpt from the pulpit about giving money to the church, which as a kid, and as a teenager, I just thought "Good heavens".

Jen described the sense that she was being blamed or punished for something she had not done when she listened to the sermons.

> *Jen:* Well the nature of his sermons were very you know, how wicked people are and how all the wrongs we've done, and how we have to ask for forgiveness. That was my impression, my recollection anyway, as a little girl. That was how I was kind of making sense of it. So that was always, I didn't get that.

Julie emphasized that she struggled primarily with the sense of judgment.

> *Julie:* But the thing that I really struggled with, going back, was not so much the sort of standard kind of definitions of God and the hierarchy and the maleness and everything, it was the judgment. And I just, for whatever reason, even at that time, I was uncomfortable with the idea that Christianity had the right answer and everybody else is wrong. I just couldn't understand how you could have a loving God, but you were only allowed to love him in a certain way. And, of course it always seems I think when you're in a situation where there's something that's bothering you, it becomes the most obvious thing to you. So there were probably lots of good things and supportive things going on in the church but, all I could ever hear was the judgment when I went there.

Despite struggling with what they experienced with organized religion many of the participants continued searching, often trying different churches, or reading about different faith groups and traditions. For the most part, they identified an ongoing need to seek out a spiritual community, despite expressing frustration with what they experienced in the various churches they came across. In this sense, both the negative and positive experiences which participants had in relation to organized religion formed their understanding of their own spirituality and more importantly what they wanted in a spiritual community.

For those participants who did not attend church while growing up, John and Eric, their view of organized religion was influenced by discussions they had in their home and the views of their parents.

> *Lisa:* Was religion part of your life as a child?
> *John:* In a way, but it was, my parents were both refugees from the Catholic Church.
> *Lisa:* Ok.
> *John:* They were both raised in French Quebec, totally dominated by the Catholic Church. And when I was a young child some things started happening that got them to begin questioning the church. And I was probably about seven years old. The final straw that broke the camel's back happened and they left the church never to go back. And so we were raised in an atmosphere where anything religion was considered bad, anything religious. Any kind of religion was considered bad. My mom used to say religion is a crutch for weak people.

John was careful to point out that the animosity of his parents was largely directed towards organized religion, or in this case the Catholic Church. This is similar to what Eric recounted, where his parents expressed a negative view based on their experience with particular groups.

Eric was somewhat unique in relation to the other participants in that he did not attend any religious group while growing up, nor did he recount any experiences which he defined as spiritual. Like some of the participants he would sometimes attend with friends and their families. He did recall having discussions about religion in his home;

however, it was not until much later in his life when he felt the need to seek out spiritual roots that he directly referred to struggling with definitions of spirituality.

Overall, as is to be expected, the participants emphasized that it was through their experiences that their views of religion and spirituality were formed. In their early life their relationships and interactions with community and family members significantly influenced how they engaged with religion and spirituality, particularly in terms of organized religion. The positive aspects of attending a religious institution were connected to things such as the relationships fostered and were not always connected to a religious experience. Most participants struggled with the sense that there was a lack of convergence between the values preached by the church and the behaviour they saw. This left participants seeking a religious space to explore their broader understanding of spirituality, which for the most part was not found in the organized religions they had come across. While some participants carried out this search in an active and ongoing manner through different spiritual groups, for others their life journey pulled them in different directions and it was not until much later that they pursued a spiritual community.

7.2.2 Understanding of spirituality

> *John:* Somehow I always believed that there was a whole other world that existed. A sort of spiritual realm. And I don't know why, but it was just something that I knew existed, even though I didn't think about it a whole lot. But I was always fascinated by you know sort of the occult. And well mostly like mysticism, you know just learning about the few people I learned about in school, like Saint Theresa of Babylon, um, Saint John of the Cross, and I just thought they seemed like such trippy people.

Interestingly, even for those participants who indicated they were not directly involved in a religious group while growing up, they identified an ongoing fascination with the spiritual realm and questions of morality. These descriptions most often emerged

through the recounting of particular experiences which stood out in their memory. It seems that these experiences stood out because they felt pushed to work through a realization of something "bigger"; sometimes they defined this something bigger as God or the Divine, but the implication was that their understanding of the world and their place within it was challenged. Participants often drew a distinction between these personal spiritual experiences and what they experienced in church.

> *Jen:* You were saying did I ever think of myself as a religious person. Not as in church religious but I do remember all my girlhood certainly, I was really conscious of how lucky I was as a child. I would sit at night in bed and just, just think about that. Think about people who were not lucky.. I would make a promise to myself that I would, I would give it back right. I remember that really clearly. It's hard to say how old I was, because you know how your memory plays with you. You remember being in one place but actually you were in another. I would say around 9, but it could also be older as well, 'cause the room I'm thinking of I must have been older than that. So maybe 13 or 14 even.
> So I think from time to time I would just, I would always, I would gaze at the night sky and be struck with wonder. And I'd look up and go oh, it's SO big. And to me that wasn't, oh it's really frightening cause I was, I was like I am so small. So in a way that means I can do anything, it doesn't matter. What does it count, but that's a good thing. It freed me to just do anything. That sense of wonder, that was when I would always have a sense of a connection with something. Something other. Something that's not just me. And the regular kind of world. Something else that's I guess eternal.

In this passage Jen expresses the sense of being aware of a connection to "something other" and that she remembered having this awareness from a very young age.

In the physical experience which participants described as religious they felt pushed to work through what the "other" presence meant in relation to their own life.

> *Gary:* My first sense of what I would call a religious experience happened when I was approximately 6 years old I would guess. Maybe give or take a year. And I recall it quite clearly because I was sitting on my tricycle. And I had driven that tricycle around to the opposite side of the block from where our house was. And I was watching the sky and that particular day was one of those, actually for where I was living, which at the time was in Belleville, Ontario, it was a very prairie sky. It was one of those skies where all the clouds are distinct and they're kind of attractive and they all have the same base. You know they've got that solid line of a horizon, and they stretched out as far as the eye can see.
> And that was the essence of what I came to consider the religious experience, because I suddenly had this sense of the infinite. You know in a way that I'd not ever really thought about it or had it occur to me. That the horizon somehow went on forever and it's hard to verbalize quite that sensation. But it's a kind of revelation that possibly a person might have if speaking metaphorically they'd always lived in the forest, and then one day they come to a sea shore and they've never been to a sea shore. And for the first

time they have this broad broad vista. Up until that time they've never seen more than you know what you can see through the forest, a matter of several hundred meters in any direction at any one time. I sort of feel as though I responded on some spiritual level where it awakened or you know it just triggered some sense that I had a faculty that was capable of comprehending this brand new experience, or this brand new sense of being somewhere in a universe that as far as I could see was in fact infinite.

For John there were two significant events, both of which he defines as mystical experiences. Like Jen and Gary, his physical experience is described as having broader philosophical and spiritual implications.

> *John:* I had been working with these people, one of whom, had just gotten into rock climbing. And this is years and years ago, before a lot of people were doing it right. So, one day he says to a couple of us let's go rock climbing. I'll show you guys, you know, some things about rock climbing. So we go to Kananaskis country where there's this famous place for rock climbing and he has this little guide book. And we had no equipment, we had no ropes, we had nothing. And so, he showed us, you know you do this and you do that.
>   So we started climbing and part way up he realizes that we're not doing the climb that he thought we were doing we're actually doing one that's much more challenging, much more difficult. But it's harder to go back down, right, at that point. So he figures we're just going to keep going up. And we got to a point where there's a big overhang, and I'm on a little ledge, and the sun's starting to get low, it's in early fall. And I know the temperature is going to drop and this overhang the guy comes back down, they're both taller than me, and so the one guy who'd done some climbing before and he comes back down and he shows me where the holds are, what to hang onto, the little place where you put your fingers and your toes, and the thing with an overhang is that your brain tells you to cling to the rock. But to get the leverage you have to push yourself away into the void and by then we're like 200 feet up. And so, I tried to reach. The holds were too far, I can't use the same holds, because he's much taller, he's like 6 foot 2, right. So, he goes back up and then I remember turning around on my little ledge and looking at the valley, and all of a sudden (pause)... it's really hard to describe but I had a type of clarity, that I've never experienced since or before. I saw the whole world, I saw, like I looked down and I saw every living thing. I saw the trees living, I saw the insects, I saw the animals, I saw all the life that was there, and there was an understanding of the world that was so clear, and just like this moment of (pause)... I can't really describe it, but it was this tremendous, tremendous clarity and understanding. And joy of, it was all alive, everything was alive, the mountains, every, every little thing that was before my eyes was alive. And the next thing I knew I was on top. And when I got there, I could not, I did not know how I got there. It was like there was a little gap.

John describes the experience in such a way that it drastically opened his perspective of the world and provided a sense of connection to something bigger than him. For this reason, he defined it as mystical.

> *Lisa:* Can you explain to me why you felt this was a mystical experience, what was it about it specifically?
> *John:* Well, because it felt... I felt a presence that was much much larger than me or any person. So there was a connection there with something, something other, something

that's not palpable, something that's not visible, audible, but something that definitely exists. That's beyond my understanding, but it was there, and there was this sense of a joy but in that was also safety and just knowing that nothing can go wrong in that moment, it's all perfect, it's all, and then I ended up at the top. And I don't know how, what that little piece is missing, what happened. Because, I remember just getting to the top and going, like at first almost being shocked, how did I get here right. And I don't know if it's because of the stress and I just did it and I did it so quickly and I just I don't know, I have no idea. But there was this total feeling of security, there was no fear. When I was standing on that ledge, when that, all of a sudden I felt this I experienced this clarity and felt this presence, there was no fear anymore.

These examples demonstrate how throughout their early life the participants were seeking to make sense of certain experiences or ideas within a spiritual framework. Also, it would seem that for the most part the organized religions they had come into contact with were not adequately fulfilling their needs.

Through individuals descriptions it became clear that they often felt that their views of the spiritual realm were not supported in the formal religious institutions they attended. As Jean indicates in the following she found it challenging to attend the Baptist church because she was expected to not question what she was learning.

> *Jean:* But the Baptist Church was much too, um, restrictive in terms of, at least the Baptist Church that I went to, was too restrictive. I couldn't ask questions. You couldn't have questions and doubts, and I mean now, "Jean you know you're supposed to believe God, you know that you don't ask those questions." That's not exactly what they said, but that was the meaning of what they said. So, when I was 12 I got fed up with that. And as often happens I went off to the Episcopalian Church because that was where a friend of mine from school went. And my sister went off to the Presbyterian Church cause that's where her friend, one of her friend's went. So that's how I turned into an Episcopalian. But it was a very liberal church and I didn't get told I shouldn't ask questions. I got encouraged to ask questions, and we studied bible study in the way Quakers do in a way. Where you're free to approach it, um, not as a *holy holy* thing, that you don't question. But as something you can say well I wonder what they meant by that or why was this author saying different things from that author. So I appreciated that.

Will indicated that even though he was very active in the Presbyterian Church and was a Sunday school teacher, he had difficulty with what was being taught.

> *Will:* When we moved to Chicago the Presbyterian Church was 2 blocks from the house so we could walk there and it was fine. I figured even if I didn't need this it was probably a good idea to go to church and so I figured the kids would be interested in going. There'd be other kids there too. But I also figured if I'm going to send my kids there I should do something about the, do some of the work anyways. A guy said, "would you be willing to take my Sunday School class when I'm called out of town on

business?" So I said, "well sure I'd try. I don't know anything about what I'll tell them. I may get them all mixed up."

So it turns out he was out of town most of the time. So I took over the high school class. But it seems as though the fact that I was teaching it made a difference because I wasn't just reading what was in the book. You know they had these lesson plans and stuff but I was talking about a lot of other things, things that bothered me.
Lisa: Like what?
Will: Oh the Presbyterian doctrines of predestination and election and they had a whole bunch of things that are just nonsensical. I'd have to find out what they meant before I could talk to the kids about it. So I was bothering the pastor all the time, "When I joined the Presbyterian Church did I say I believed all this stuff?"

Further, he felt the emphasis the Church placed on raising funds was not consistent with his values.

Will: ... the stuff that was going on at the Presbyterian I was finding less and less interesting. I was really repelled when I was called upon to help raise money which was like a million dollars just to refinish the front of the church. Which I did but it left a very bad taste in my mouth.

What emerged as being important for participants was that their personal experiences of spirituality were honoured and given space. This was often expressed as a desire that the organization live by its value system. It is here that the connection between the spiritual experience and issues of peace and social justice begins to become clearer. The spiritual experiences which individuals described challenged the way in which they understood the world and relations within it. Though not always, in most cases participants further described how this pushed them to consider their own position and responsibilities in relation to others.

7.2.3 Early views of peace and social justice

Participants' views of religion and spirituality grew over time and yet seemed to have always been present in both subtle and obvious ways. In a similar fashion, almost all of the participants indicated an interest in issues of peace and social justice from a young age. Before coming to Quakers some of the Friends described their involvement as related to spiritual concerns, while others appealed to broader moral issues. Most

importantly, it was through their experiences and their relationships that particular issues became central to their lives. In this sense, just as participants are spiritual seekers, the sense of searching for meaning is not confined to spirituality and extends into many different aspects of the individuals' lives.

In the previous section, I explored how participants described spiritual experiences and how this was connected to a wider world view. In a similar sense particular experiences of justice or injustice were reflected upon by the participants for how they helped them to work through what peace and social justice meant in their lives and in the world. It is important to highlight that many of the peace and social justice concerns which the participants noted were part of events which were happening on a wider scale and which affected their views. This led to their involvement in various issues and for some participants forced them to take a stand on particular issues.

As a graduate student, at a left leaning university, Eric became very involved in the anti-war movement in Vietnam. Later in his life, during his time in Cuba as a visiting science student, Eric was exposed to issues of development and independence. This pushed him to think about these issues in relation to his own life and the work he wished to pursue. He later pursued various types of development work in Africa and around the world. His deep concern for these issues he related back to his more general moral concern for these issues and a sense that he can contribute something in a practical way. For Arthur, when war broke out he was forced to consider his own position in relation to his beliefs. Through his extensive study of Christian doctrine he came to consider

himself a pacifist.

> *Arthur*: I remember one significant thing that happened, Ridley was an Anglican school,
> it had an Anglican chaplain, and I frequented the chaplains quarters at times to catch up
> on Church reading, the Canadian church magazine. And in it I read articles by Canon
> Raven, an English pacifist cleric. And he was a pacifist and I was persuaded by what I
> read. Christianity generally had gone off the rails in sanctioning violence. So in my later
> high school years I considered myself a pacifist, and went to University as such, intent on
> studying theology.

When Canada declared war, Arthur identified himself as a conscientious objector

based on his strong conviction that violence was inconsistent with the teachings of

the Christian church. It was because of his stance on war that he came to know of

the Quakers at the work camp where he was sent.

For John, his experience was connected with a trip he took to Mexico. Similar to

the mystical experience, he described his experience in Mexico for how it challenged his

perspective of the world and subsequently had broader moral implications.

> *John*: Well, I had an experience in Mexico, when I was 18 years old, 17 or 18, the first
> time I went to Mexico. And that was the first time I was faced, like right here, right there
> in front of me, with abject poverty. With people in the process of starving to death, with
> people living, literally living under a piece of cardboard. You know vast expanses,
> thousands of people living in dirt with no water, no sanitation, no um you know just …
> you know third world poverty.
>   And uh, I remember at some point, I was staying with a wealthy family in
> Mexico city and they lived in a modern subdivision that was walled in, had a big wall
> around it. And it had gates with an armed guard where you'd go in and out. And the
> houses were big and modern, it's like Southern California. And they had you know
> gardeners and cooks, and maids and people to do all the work. And the children who
> were old enough, the one's who were going to university had their own car to drive to
> school. And uh, I remember, getting in the car with them to go some place and every
> time we would go out this one gate, and the gate opened onto a boulevard, and right
> across the boulevard from this wall behind which were all these big wealthy people's
> homes was acres and acres and acres and acres of thousands of people living in the dirt
> under a piece of corrugated tin, or an old car hood. And I thought, the first time I
> thought, man this is unbelievable, how can they live the way they live, in this opulence,
> and affluence, and get in their little Mercedes Benz and drive out that gate and see that
> everyday and see that, and not do anything about it. And, then the next thought that hit
> me was that does it really matter that I live three thousand miles away. I still know it's
> there, everybody in North America has seen images of this. We all know it exists, we all
> know it's there, we know it's there in Mexico. So what's the difference? We learn to
> block it out of our consciences; well these people have to be a little bit more creative with
> blocking it out because they have to drive by it every day. But really there's no
> difference right. It's just different degrees of the same mind set of, I don't want to think
> about that, no I'm just glad that I can enjoy all the stuff I have. And that, was a real, that
> was probably, that was like the… there was always this sort of underdog thing in me,
> right, from the time I was little. And I was always, I mean I was always marginalized

like in school and that, I mean I didn't fit in, and I was always with kids that were sort of marginalized. Um, sometimes in good ways, and sometimes in bad ways. But that was the first time, it, all the pieces fell together. And I realized that... that social justice was a big issue in my life, so that was the first thing.

Will recalled that his interest in the civil rights movement was very strongly tied to an instance of racism during his high school years when the principal would not allow Paul Robison to sing in front of the school.

> *Will:* He came to Princeton to sing and the principal would not allow him to use the auditorium, because Paul Robison was not the right colour. Oh I was furious! He did sing for us not in the auditorium, I think he was in the lunch room standing on a table. I can remember standing there right at his feet listening to this magnificent voice. Magnetic personality black as you can be. You know there's no question about the racial superiority. Here you've got somebody that's well, he's phi-beta capa and all-American football player, and he's a world-famous singer and actor and here he is. So you know I already knew what I believed as far as civil rights legislation is concerned. There should be no racial bars of any kind. Whatever the guy can do it doesn't matter what his colour is. It wasn't that I had to be convinced you know. I knew that. Maybe it wasn't Paul Robison but you know I always associate him with that.
> Maybe I would have already felt that way from the attitude of my grandparents and my mother. I don't know and I guess my Dad was the same way. I know my mother and my Dad were both socialists. I can remember lecturing my mother about wasting her vote by voting for Norman Thomas. He was the socialist candidate for president of the US. But actually I'm sure her vote made a difference. Because the socialists were gaining more and more votes and until Roosevelt was elected. So my political leanings go into this too. But also the civil rights thing which was more than just political. It was a moral factor involved, I won't say religious, it certainly was a moral factor.

Will is careful to point out that it "certainly was a moral factor" although he was not sure if it was a religious factor, which pushed him to become involved in civil rights issues.

For some of the participants, before joining Quakers, they did not seek out involvement beyond attending peace marches with friends or getting involved in charitable. As Jen expresses below the sense of moral obligation she felt derived from a general belief that these activities were quite simply wrong.

> *Jen:* I remember going on one or two peace marches. Ban the bomb kind of thing. Greenham Common was happening around that time. The storage of nuclear arms on a place called Greenham Common and there was a whole like community of women camped out there for years.
> *Lisa:* Really?
> *Jen:* Yeah. So I was aware of that and while I didn't get really heavily involved I was kind of just from a moral point of view, well it can't be good. It's the bomb. I remember going on two marches with my friends.
> *Lisa:* What kind of marches?

> *Jen:* Oh you know CND, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. So I wasn't like really really involved, just well if I believe this is bad, it's something I can go and march. I've never been heavily heavily political.

For Susan, who was not directly involved in peace and social justice issues during her earlier life she described her extensive traveling experiences as playing an important role in opening up her worldview. During this time, she was exposed to many religions but did not attend with any particular group. She often drew on past life events to demonstrate the importance of certain social justice issues in her life.

> *Lisa:* Was this the first time that you had spoken to people about your experience [with child abuse]?
> *Susan:* Yeah. And as I grew up, I realized that friends and neighbours of my parents had always worried. But I don't know if you've ever read Alice Miller there's this whole ethic "thou shalt not be aware of what happens in the family". It's like in international law, what happens internally in a country is nobody's business. And that's why we now have the "responsibility to protect "coming up as an issue. We realize that sovereignty doesn't mean that you can abuse your people, because you have a responsibility to protect your citizens. And if you fail in that the international community has responsibility to come in and protect. And increasingly in society today I think we feel we feel we have a responsibility to protect children who are being abused. But in those days, no. It was," thou shalt not be aware, thou shalt not intervene". So I learned later that some people were concerned, friends of my mother, and neighbours. But my teachers didn't really twig, or if they did they never said anything.

For Jean, some of her early work for social justice was through camps she attended during high school. These were organized through her church and run by a Quaker. Despite the fact that her involvement was through a church she did not use spiritual terms to describe her reasons for becoming involved.

> *Jean:* My first real experience with Quakers actually was through Quaker work camps in Philadelphia. And these were high school work camps and they were for a weekend. And you got sponsored to go by your, mostly your meeting, but the Episcopal Church that I went to, also sponsored people to go. Now sponsored means if you wanted to go they would pay all or most of the very small fee it cost to go. And if you needed transportation, see that you got there, so, I went to a, I don't know, over several years probably half a dozen work camps in Philadelphia. And we, most of them were in the city and we went to the slum areas of the city and we went and helped people to repaint their houses for example. But we also had sessions where we talked to city planners and we tried to find out why some sections of the city were this way. It was really interesting.
> I was in high school, so I would have been, between about 14 and 17 or so. So as I say I didn't go constantly, but I went every once in awhile through those years. Um, the one that, one's that made a particular impression on me were when we went and worked with migrant workers in the fields. These were people who were, um, from, Southern US and from Mexico who were paid very little. Of course you probably know

> something about the situation of migrant workers. They have no rights, uh, and, uh, we found that rather horrifying.
> *Lisa:* And it was something that really made an impact on you?
> *Jean:* Yes. Well in a way it made more of an impact on me than the slum housing, in terms of my own choices. Because, um, I had no connection with slum landlords, there was nothing I knew I could boycott. I could go and help with, doing some rehabilitation, but uh, I had no other action that at least I saw at that time that I could do. Whereas with the migrant workers we knew for whom they were picking and we could boycott Campbell soup for example. So, uh, so that one sort of made me go, what impact does this have on my life, what do I choose to do or not to? And that's the kind of thing that we would talk about as part of the work camp.

Jean notes the importance of having a sense of connection with the issue she is involved in. Notably it is not so much that she thinks it is *the* most important issue, but rather that she has the capacity to make an impact with her actions.

Just as Susan recounted at the opening of this section struggling to define an understanding of the Divine or God, all of the participants expressed at some point the need to seek spiritual fulfillment which reflected how they understood the world. In a similar manner, each individual's concern for issues of peace and social justice was connected to a broader world view which they sought to connect with their actions, even if this initially only occurred in small ways. For some individuals their involvement was defined in spiritual terms, while others related their involvement to broader moral issues. However, for all participants they referred to personal experiences and relationships they valued which shaped what is important to them. In this sense they have been seeking on an ongoing basis to define their lives in relation to the values they hold. This connects the spiritual experience not just to things such as prayer or church attendance but demonstrates how deeply it is connected to everyday *lived* experience. This also helps to clarify why individuals who may define themselves as not deeply religious or Christian come to be part of the same religious group as individuals who define themselves as more conventionally religious.

7.3 Finding a Spiritual Home

> *Jean:* But, so in a way by the time we met, we'd already come to this, this feeling that there are things that are wrong with the system. This is not the way to go about solving these problems. So, you know we were kind of sitting ducks for Quakers (laughing). What could they say, we were already convinced and so it didn't take very much to make us fit very comfortably and to adopt Quaker beliefs.

In the previous section, I explored individuals' early views of spirituality and peace and social justice. Significantly, prior to coming to Quakerism individuals expressed views of spirituality and peace and social justice which in many ways were convergent with Quaker spirituality: the notion that connecting to the Divine is a very personal thing, a view that tolerance of other religious beliefs is important, but also that in a more general sense one's values should and must be consistent with one's actions. As Jean describes above, once she and her husband found Quakers, she did not have to be convinced as many of her beliefs were already consistent with Quaker spirituality. Most of the participants described the same sentiment. All of the participants described coming to Quakerism as finding a spiritual home.

The following section will begin by exploring individuals' first experience at Quaker meeting. Why did they go? Why did they refer to it as a spiritual home? What were the aspects about the experience which they most valued and appreciated? Second, I will explore the decision to become a full-member or in other words a Quaker. Some of the participants joined right away, while others took longer to become a full-member. Two of the participants were not full-members but remained attenders. Thus, the decision to take up full membership played a key role in how each person saw themselves in relation to the group and understood their own Quaker spirituality.

7.3.1 Finding a Spiritual Home

John: The very next morning *[after the second mystical experience]* after, I get up and I'm having breakfast and there's this little thing in the back of my head, saying ... Quakers. And, I thought, where'd that come from, that is exactly what I thought. I mean not physically, you know, but this little thing in the back of my head. And so I went whatever, so I went to work that day, but you know this little thing was there for good.

So then I thought Quakers, that's some kind of Christian group. I don't want anything to do with that (laughing)... so, I ignored it, and this little thing turned into a voice, and it got bigger. And this went on for months, and then I thought, ok, well, maybe I'll check this out. Ok, so I was in Calgary, fairly regularly at the time, and I came up to Calgary, and I looked up the Quakers in the phone book, and I got a number on a post-it note, but I couldn't quite bring myself to call. So I had it on a post-it note on my refrigerator door for maybe 3, 4 months. Finally, I thought, this is ridiculous, so I took it off and put it away.

Well, the little voice got bigger. So then I thought, I know I'll go to the library and get a book and read about the Quakers (laughing)... So I did that and of course I go to the library and the first book I see in the section is, the at that time almost brand new book from Paulist Press, uh called, it's on Western Spirituality. And this one is Quaker Spirituality, which is a collection of readings, selected by Douglas Steere, with something like a 90 page introduction to Quakerism by Douglas Steere. Uh, now that introduction itself has been published as a little pamphlet because it's very concise and to the point. So, I started reading this and I'm going, yeah, but this is what I've always believed, you know. Spiritual beliefs are something very personal and everything is between me and the big It. And that you know I don't need some kind of third party to interpret things for me, and all of that. And that it's also about living my life according to my beliefs, that it's not just about going to church every Sunday. So anyway, so I thought hmmm... this is interesting, well maybe it's not what I thought.

So then, um, then I got that number again, and I decided to call, however, by the time I decided to call their answering machine had broken, so I never got an answer. And I called, and I called another week, and I called another week. And one day I happened to call at lunch time, when a women was picking up the mail and heard the phone ringing. Cause it's not somebody's house, it's a community center. And so she told me where they were meeting at what time. And I mean this was a big thing for me, cause you know I had still had this you know fairly strong anti-religious practice song in my head from my upbringing. And so I had a lot of resistance, but I went, and I remember the first time I went it was like coming home. It was like yeah, yeah, this is where I wanna be.

In John's narrative, a number of interesting things emerge which were common to many of the participants. First, like many of those participants who were seeking Quakers specifically they had great difficulty actually *finding* Quakers. Second, John describes that this was a "big thing" for him because he still had fairly strong "anti-religious" sentiments. Like many of the participants who had had a negative view of religion seeking outwards to a group they knew little or nothing about, was particularly challenging not only in terms of the unknown, but in terms of pushing through their own

boundaries. Finally, John uses the notion of home to describe his feeling upon first attending a Quaker meeting; this term was used by all the participants in describing their experience. Some participants, attached the word "spiritual", some just said home, others said "coming" or "finding" home. In different ways, these describe similar feelings, a sense of comfort and belonging, even though the basis may differ for each participant. For some they were particularly moved by the form of spiritual worship, for others the lifestyle of Quakers, and for others it was a combination of both of these aspects.

As a Christian sect, the Quakers are not commonly known[72] and because they do not have a strong tendency towards proselytizing, they largely recruit new members through individuals who become curious enough to learn more. The decision to attend is thus often related to something individuals heard in conversation, or read about, or in John's case a sense of being pushed in that direction. But regardless of what made them want to attend all of the participants identified that they were seeking a sense of spiritual fulfillment and that what they had come across thus far was not meeting their needs. The decision to attend a meeting was thus a combination of wanting to find a spiritual place that would meet their needs and a sense that Quakerism might have something they could identify with.

For many of the participants they recounted relationships they had had which made them curious to learn what it meant to be a Quaker. These relationships often

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[72] Arguably, Quaker are more well-known in the United States and in England. Also, there are variations of Quakerism in the United States which have a strong evangelical component which emphasize proselytizing.

motivated participants to find out more or shaped how they approached the group.

> *Lisa:* And so at what point did you come to know of the Quakers?
> *Gary:* 1973. So I'm about 23 years old. No I can't have been that old, about 21 whatever. And I volunteered to spend some time during summer vacation at an archeological excavation sponsored by the Royal Ontario Museum. And it's industrial archeology which is basically post-industrial revolution, not native artifacts. It emerges in the time that I spend with the man who was doing the dig, that he is a Quaker. And I vividly recall my first reaction. I kind of burst out laughing and I said I thought you guys were all extinct. And then it turns out I got Quakers confused with Puritans (laughing).
> *Lisa:* So your knowledge of Quakers before this point was very sparse than I imagine?
> *Gary:* Quaker Oats, Quaker Oil, Quaker State. It was pretty much of that degree. Although I had grown, to the extent I ever grew up, in Belleville, Ontario. And in that area Prince Edward County there had been a lot of Quakers, and in the 1950s there still was a Quaker meeting. So I was in an area that had been populated by Quakers and United Empire Loyalists. It didn't translate into any knowledge. Like why are we going to a Baptist Church when we could go to a Quaker Meeting.
> ...
> *Lisa:* I want to go back to something you said. Just before you decided to attend meeting you said the word you used was curious. But what was it that made you say yeah I want to go?
> *Gary:* Oh yeah. It's because knowing my friend was knowing a person who exemplified a whole group of characteristics, discernment, mode of looking at life, of being in this life, relating to the world which I had not really ever encountered. I had never encountered anyone that I could see that practiced principles or expressed themselves through the practice of principles in relatively little things. But my friend did that. And he was a, and he is not deceased, just a very very wonderful person who I immediately sort of identified as the ideal model.

Like Gary, Susan noted that even before attending, she already had a respect for Quakers.

This derived from personal relationships and interactions she had had with individual

Friends during her travels.

> *Susan:* And the other piece to this that you should probably know is during the travels there were some people, these people I met after I knew my current husband. One was a doctor in Mozambique, and another was an Anthropologist that I met in Kenya who had married a Mozambiquan freedom fighter and adopted her children. And they were both Quakers. This is where it starts. They were both Quakers and they were doing the most amazing things and not proselytizing; I found out accidentally that they were Quakers. And I sort of became aware of Quakers doing amazing things in the world. Living their faith in quiet and amazing ways and I felt really like these are people that resonate with my idea of what a spiritual life should be. Of how you live your faith, and how you work for other people in gentle ways without proselytizing. Without tromping on other people's spirituality. Just living and I felt profoundly moved by both of these people.

After moving to Canada she became increasingly interested in seeking out Quakers in her

area. She finally found Quakers through individuals she met while involved in an

Aboriginal land rights protest and attended a meeting.

Julie learned of Quakers through her sister's father-in-law.

Julie: I was at my sister's house and her father in-law was there. And I'm trying to think at that point if I'd ever, I'm sure I'd heard about, well I probably knew about Quaker Oats (laughing). I'm sure I'd heard the term, I'm not sure I really knew anything about Quakers.

And I think I had been to church maybe even that day, cause I remember we were having lunch and we were having this discussion. And I can't even think why we would have been discussing this at my sister's house, cause my sister is, I mean I have a very close and loving relationship with my sister, but not on any kind of spiritual level. I never talk about those things. But I was just, again struggling with that judgment thing. I couldn't ever feel comfortable in the Christian idea that we had the right answer and it was the only right answer. And so something must have happened, my sister's father in-law, a long long long time Quaker, not that I knew that at the time, and he said to me, "I have something that you should read." And he went out to his car and he brought me a Quaker pamphlet, and it was called, "Jesus calls us to be Friends." And it was about the teachings of Jesus from, I guess a Quaker, but basically that it wasn't about judging others at all, or including or excluding. It was about being Friends with people, like walking their walk for awhile, and understanding their joys and sorrows. Um, and that was the way we were to, or Friends were to be with people in the world of whoever they may be. And it just, that Quaker lingo, spoke to my condition (laughing)! Have you heard that one?

Lisa: No I haven't...

Julie: That's um, George Fox, that was his famous quote when he went to Pendle Hill and um, heard what for him was the voice of God, personally for the first time, and it's probably part of a huge bigger speech. That he told people that there was one who could speak to your condition, who spoke to my condition, and that was God, and you could have a personal relationship and so we quite often use that phrase. You know when something really communicates or whatever what you really feel inside or what you're needing or ... so that's what it did. Although at the time I wouldn't have used that lingo. Um...

Lisa: At the time, what were you feeling?

Julie: I just felt really like, like I read that and I thought, I just felt this huge sense of relief. That there was somewhere out there, people who felt the same as I did. Who could believe in the teachings of Jesus and love everything that that stood for, but not see it as exclusive of whatever, anyone else believed, or spiritual belief.

For Julie, even before she attended a meeting she felt a deep sense of affinity with the belief system of Quakerism. This was something she felt she had been looking for and she was very motivated to attend a meeting.

Each person described for different reasons feeling a sense of affinity upon first attending a meeting. The point of convergence was usually a combination of factors which spoke to their previous understanding of spirituality and their more general beliefs

and value systems.

> *Susan:* So then my friends said, "Oh you must come to meeting." And they told me
> when and where to come and I did. And it was again (breathing out) this feels right. And
> then I went to Western Half Yearly Meeting and was moved to tears by the openness and
> acceptance that Quakers had of everybody. You know from family night, whatever little
> talent you had, to whatever you said, to whatever you offered to whoever you were. It
> was this very sort of nonjudgmental environment that I had never ever experienced in my
> life and it felt so spiritual and so connected and I just thought you know I have so much
> to learn but this is where I want to learn it. This resonates with what I've learned about
> war, what I feel about guns, what I feel about life, what I feel about God, the that of God
> in every person. You know it just all sort of, everything I've told you about that had been
> on the learning path came together when I was with Friends. So I decided to stay there.

The sense of finding a spiritual home was thus different for each participant and yet

related to a similar feeling.

As Eric expressed, through what he had encountered with Quakers, he felt that

their way of living was consistent with what he believed in.

> *Eric:* When I looked back at who were the people who's spirituality, who I really highly
> respected for their spiritual dimensions. For the way they lived their spiritual lives. I
> kept on coming up with Quakers. This included a fellow who I'd really respected and
> worked with in East Africa. And of course people that I had worked with in the Anti-
> Vietnam war movement. Any time that you looked back. And the other side of it is that
> certainly people like Catholics and Anglicans, we saw a lot of missionaries in East
> Africa. There was nothing to respect in the missionaries. They were just living high off
> the hog. And being part of the ex-patriot community there, you were running into the
> missionaries all the time. And I didn't meet any I respected.

Further, even though he had not been raised as a Christian, the Christian social and

cultural underpinnings of Quakerism were familiar for him.

> *Eric:* The other thing which was important, which I kind of discovered was important,
> was that Quakers have roots, had the same cultural as I had. And I began to think about it
> more and more, one of the problems, if you look at whatever there's a Buddhist
> community not far from us, Hare Krishna's over in the next valley. These people are so
> disconnected from the culture that that religion comes from that they don't really do it
> right. Do you understand what I'm saying? They just pick pieces of it that they want.
> They don't have the cultural roots for it. Whereas one of the advantages of Quakerism to
> me was that it came from the same cultural roots that I came from. And so it wasn't, I
> wasn't, I could read early Quaker writings and it was things that my parents talked about.
> It was the culture that I was raised with. So that kind of familiarity I think was really
> important to me in terms of looking for spiritual roots.

For Eric, the sense of comfort he found amongst Quakers related to the cultural context,

values of the group and their way of living.

For Jean, she felt comfort in the mystical experience and described herself as a
practical person who enjoyed the active element.

> *Lisa:* I want to ask you some questions about worship and silent worship, your
> experience with that. You've already mentioned some things about mysticism, I imagine
> those things are probably connected?
> *Jean:* Yes. My husband, I'm practical, my husband although he was an inventor, was
> also the mystical one of us. Um, I liked the ethical, uh, when I say practical, I don't
> know how to describe it, the difference. But uh, I liked what I knew of what Quakers did,
> I liked the way people were treated, those, you know those are what I see as the everyday
> practice. My husband liked the idea of a divine presence but without defining that,
> without having to have some kind of a creed, or something that says what that is. So he
> felt that it didn't wipe out his Jewish background, it didn't, his Jewish background just
> flowed right into it and was perfectly accepted. So that he was no longer a Jew, he
> became a Quaker, I mean he wasn't officially any longer a Jew, but he didn't feel he had
> to give up any of, anything that he'd learned or take on any belief in the trinity, or of
> divinity of something or other. Now as I say, we probably could have been equally
> happy from that perspective in the Unitarian Church. My sister goes to a Unitarian
> Church, so I know it quite well. But I think that the fact the Friends meeting was
> unprogrammed and you know met in silence gave much more scope for my husband to
> feel very much at home there, then he ever would have.

For John he felt moved by both the form of worship and the activities the group was
engaging in.

> *Lisa:* I wonder if we can go back to your first experience at meeting. You described it as
> coming home. Can you just describe for me what happened, what you remember?
> *John:* Well, I came in, and um, there's somebody at the door, opening the door, and
> greeting people, and um, of course they had never seen me before, so um, they welcomed
> me, and um gave me a little piece of paper thing that explains what Quaker meeting is
> about. Um, but I'd read Douglas Steere's book by then already and, um, and I sat down
> and it was just very comfortable. I was comfortable in the silence, always have been.
> And, um, and at the end, um, well during meeting, somebody did minister, and it really
> resonated with me. And I thought wow, this is really cool, the whole process, right, is
> opposed to what I had known, which was going to this huge church with all the gold and
> the paintings and this huge huge building right and the priest way up at the front um,
> talking about stuff that was totally irrelevant to me or else yelling at me about something
> that I haven't done. And so this experience was so different from that. Just people sitting
> in a circle, and meditating and having someone share something briefly that, that was
> meaningful to me. Um, it was really, it felt right, it felt you know, and afterwards, you
> know people have tea and that, and again, you know I really felt the people I talked with I
> really felt a connection to them I felt that um, that we had something in common, that you
> know there was, there were people who sort of had the same kind of world view that I
> was starting to develop. For myself, cause I didn't always have that but it goes back to
> my experience in Mexico. But it was like, yeah, you know I feel like I can relate to these
> people, we have the same kind of, of understanding of life and the world.
> *Lisa:* Can you tell me what you mean?
> *John:* Yeah, things about justice, things about um, you know living in total affluence
> while 40,000 children die of starvation every day. Um, and really being aware of that,
> and doing something about it because it's not right. Instead of working hard at
> pretending it doesn't exist.

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As John expresses the sense of convergence between the values of the group and their actions in the world were extremely important for him in feeling that this would be a place he wanted to stay.

Interestingly, Jen felt moved by the experience and felt the values of the group converged with her own, but still felt that there was a certain amount of dogma.

> *Jen:* Well this time in Coventry, and it must have been either just before or just after I'd gotten married, there was a Quaker meeting. And sitting in this room in silence were these people just sharing the silence and allowing whatever comes out to come out and I was moved. It was like coming home. It was just like... yes. Nobody's telling me what to say, or what to think, or what to do; I'm allowed to be true to myself. They're being true to themselves, and we're trying to kind of sound out what the truth is between us all. And we all seem to have a little piece of it and that's just fine. You know. And that's what I always believed, that we all have a little piece. It's like a multi-faceted mirror. Like if there is a God he's got the whole thing going on, lots of different points from which to view. We just have one piece of it. And maybe if we can just listen enough to one another we can start to see more of the pieces.
>
> So that's how it struck me. Now I started attending. There was some people there I loved, but there was some people... you know I never felt like I was good enough. I'm not a vegetarian, I don't go on all the peace marches, and there was something, I don't like anything that has a lot of dogma attached to it. And there's some aspects that I'm still uncomfortable about with things like it gets a little bit dogmatic. Like, you really ought to... not eat meat, and you know whatever.

Jen describes feeling pressure to become involved in certain activities and issues. In a similar vein, Julie pointed out that when she first attended she felt a sense of awe at the people, both for their spirituality and for the lives they had lived. She expressed an interesting observation that she had to realize that Quakers were just like other people and made mistakes just like everyone else.

> *Lisa:* And so, you went to meeting?
> *Julie:* So I went to meeting. Um, I went to meeting for a long time, about 7 years, on and off. And it took me a long time. Like I knew it was the place for me to be, but it always, I'm always fascinated by people who come to meeting and it's like 2 months later they're wanting to be members and speaking in meeting. And it took me a long time to ... um, make relationships there and become involved. And I think part of it was, at the beginning I was awed by these people. I really truly was awed. And at the time, and the funny thing is that [well-known Friend], who's a member of our meeting, who's just quite a cool guy in lots of ways, he's in his mid-70s now. But I remember him saying to me at one point, oh it takes a while to see you know, it's like anything you have the honeymoon period and it takes a while to see that. I'm still awed though by people, many people, and it really was what the society stands for. But you know, I can see the pimples now, and the you know, we all get impatient and we get hurt and all that kind of stuff.

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It was the sense of working towards something she believed in that kept her going, not

that Quakers would always act perfectly in relation to this. In this sense, finding a home

for participants meant finding acceptance and space for their own views, but also

realizing and accepting that diversity in others. Home describes a sense of honesty that is

not necessarily connected to acting perfectly or being perfect, but rather being honest

with their experience whether it is spiritually or morally derived.

In my interviews, as with the participants, I found myself using words as a

researcher which made sense to me in relation to my questions. However, I was

extremely grateful when participants interjected to take issue with my word choice, for

often this revealed interesting reflections about the way individuals understood these

terms in relation to their own experience.

> *Lisa:* Have there been really challenging issues in your life that your faith has helped you
> to resolve?
> *John:* I've a little bit of difficulty with the word faith.
> *Lisa:* Ok.
> *John:* Um... beliefs.
> *Lisa:* Beliefs, ok.
> *John:* For some reason, faith for me implies a belief in something without any kind of
> substantiation, any kind of you know, it's blind faith. In a religious context, in the
> Catholic Church, that's what we were taught. That faith was believing even though you
> have no way of knowing, you know there cannot be any kind of proof, or any kind of
> experience. Whereas for me, my quote unquote, faith or beliefs are founded in my own
> experience. It's not something I believe because I've been told to or believe because it
> provides some kind of sense of security, but it's something I believe because I've
> experienced it, because it's been, I've had it right in my face. And so, ok, I believe it.

It is because there is room for each individual to have their experience valued and that

they do not feel obligated to have *faith* in something which has no connection to this

experience that they have found a home, even though it is never perfect, with Quaker

spirituality.

> *Lisa:* What keeps you involved in Quakers?
> *Will:* Well there's no other church, there's no other religious organization that I can see
> myself with. Because of the doctrine and the creeds and all this stuff which I consider to

be real nonsense. I mean Christ was not a Christian, he was not trying to start a church, he was not trying to start a religion. He was trying to change the world. He was trying to change Jews is what he was doing. He was prophesying to the Jews. I learned to read the bible. It was the bible that I learned my letters with. We had bible reading every morning. I can remember looking at these words and recognizing the 'the' for the first time. It was in the bible.

At any rate I have some knowledge of what's in the bible. I know that a lot of it is absolute nonsense. So I'm not guilty of bibliology. Some of my fundamentalist neighbours just think this is terrible. Neither am I guilty of Jesusology. Jesus is not God. Whether Mary's birth was immaculate or not is a moot point. But it's pretty evident from reading the bible that his disciples did not consider him to be divine. He was their leader. He was a like a guru. But he wasn't God. Probably Mary knew pretty well that he wasn't divinely conceived. She treated him like he was not.

Jesus was a guy who was working with the slum people. When he did come into the temple he told them when they were doing the wrong thing. That's why he got crucified. There are several novels about the life of Jesus in the last ten years or so. I've read I think five of them. The best one is written by a Portuguese author and he got the nobel prize for Literature. His was I think the best. He pictured Jesus out in the mist in a boat with both God and the Devil. And they were both trying to persuade not to go through with this crucifixation, to give up on this. They gave him all the arguments about all the people who would be tortured and killed as a result of this. He said this is going to happen if you do this. He just said it's gotta be done. I like this guy's approach to it.

Lisa: You said you don't often talk about your spirituality with your neighbours. What do you understand as your spirituality?

Will: I think my spirituality is very real. I think that the spirituality that's based on creeds is not. And this is where it's hard to discuss with somebody that considers his spirituality as founded in the apostles creed or whatever.

Lisa: So the appeal for you with the Quakers is in the experience?

Will: Yeah it's in the experience and it's in here, it's in my own self, that's where it is.

7.3.2 Becoming a Quaker

Lisa: So the first time you attended worship what was your personal reaction to what you saw?

Gary: Well let me say I guess two things briefly. One is that the meeting house at Yonge Street at that time had not been altered since the day it had been built some 165 years previously. I seem to remember it was November and we were all bundled up like we were going outside. And we might as well have been going outside because while there was a wood stove, and you'll see that when you get there, it seemed to only throw heat from about here up. And if you were more than one row back from it you might as well have not had it either. And so my biggest sense was that I was dog gone cold after awhile.

But going into the room I sort of had this, I guess sense of uncertainty, you know what have I gotten myself into. Sit for an hour. I also had I think an expectation that I would experience some profound visitation or insight or whatever. And I think that probably that was the best antidote to prevent such an event happening. But in reality I don't know, I think that after probably about 45 minutes, I felt myself all over the map, and sort of falling asleep. And then the next thing I know the guy in the row in front of me is reaching around to shake hands. And it, all I remember is being startled. And that was basically it you know. And then so pretty much everybody went home.

So I would have to say that my experience of my Quaker friend, because we actually spent quite a bit of time doing these archeological things, we were both ultimately involved in a hiking club. My experience of Quakers was largely formed by my experience of him as a person as opposed to meetings for worship. Because after 2 or

3 of them I kind of withdrew. And I think my fried then in a relatively short period of time he moved away. So I never went back to meeting for about 25 years.
Lisa: Can you speak to why that was?
Gary: I can. I think that the underlying reason why I never went back was because I really did have a sense of myself as not ready. Not ready in one sense that I think I view myself as sort of rather temperamental. And possibly angry although I could never quite name it. Let's just say that under circumstances which I find distressing, even social justice issues, I didn't perceive the Quakers as people who were burdened or for that matter motivated very much by anger. But I think that anger is not quite the right word. But whatever it was that motivated me or that I was, my mode of response to something that I found unsatisfactory, was nowhere near consistent with the mode of response that a typical Quaker would have reacted to. And even as we sit here in this meeting now I know that I'm among the company of people for whom dealing with issues is something that happens in many cases in a much more constructive and direct and simply way. And for me they get complex and I become a little bit more overwrought about things than probably I should be.

When I first interviewed Gary, I was concerned as to whether I should include his interview in the final sample, as he identified that he was not a full member, but remained an attender. Part of this concern related to wanting to accurately represent who a Quaker is. However, the full-spectrum of Quakerism (and arguably with any religious group) is composed of a variety of individuals, some of whom identify very strongly with the conventional or "ideal-type" identity of any particular group (Beaman, 2001). Others do so only marginally and yet still compose or represent part of the whole picture. Having an alternative perspective added a richness to my sample which would have been obscured if I included only those individuals who fit the ideal notion of who a Quaker is. This emphasizes that the process of *being* a Quaker is always ongoing, and that the notion of *becoming* a Quaker is not ever a fully realized state, but something which individuals strive towards in reference to their personal experience and with reference to the wider group.

As Julie mentioned in the previous section, it took her seven years to decide to take up full membership. Similarly, Jen described a sense of confusion after attending her first Canadian Yearly Meeting as to whether she actually fit with the group. The

older Friends I interviewed were very clear about their identity as a Quaker and their position in the Quaker community. In spite of this they still described seeking to find their spiritual centre on an ongoing basis. Even at 80 years old the participants were still discovering on a daily basis what it meant to be a Quaker.

The decision to take up membership played a pivotal role in defining how individuals saw themselves in relation to the group and how they defined their own spiritual identity. For Susan, taking up membership was extremely important for her and was a way of honouring the depth of her experience.

> *Susan*: So she took me to meet this couple and their child and we just had the four of us, meeting for worship, in their living room on a ranch. And (breathing out) it was so right! And so moving, and I felt so comfortable and so at home. Like I never had in any church I had ever been in. And we'd visited churches, we had looked at churches as artifacts, as archeological wonders and artistic wonders all through Latin America. You know like I'd walk into a lot of churches and observe people worshiping in different ways but it hadn't, nothing had really resonated for me like this did.
> *Lisa*: You touched on it a bit. But what was it that pushed you to want to become a member?
> *Susan*: The sense of coming spiritually home, and wanting to make a commitment to that.

However, this was often an extremely challenging and emotional experience for individuals. As John mentioned at the outset of this section he still had a fairly strong "anti-religious" orientation. Becoming part of a religious group became something which resulted in altering not only his own identity, but also his identity is relation to family and friends.

When I interviewed Jen it was her first time attending Canadian Yearly Meeting and she expressed that she was struggling to find her own sense of spirituality at the meeting. This led her to question her identity as a Quaker. Part of this anxiety related to being away from her family and her comfort zone. Below she recounts her journey to

Yearly Meeting and the various aspects that have been challenging for her.

> *Jen:* ...the week before we came, getting nearer and nearer to coming, I began to get increasingly anxious. It wasn't about the workshop I just felt a general anxiety. And bear in mind as well that I knew today, while I'm still here, my husband and kids have gone to Malaysia. I'm not going to see them for 2 more weeks. And I've already had 3 weeks of not seeing them when I was at UVIC doing the course. So this whole summer's been you know not seeing my family.
>
> And so, it got to the point where Jason drove me to the airport and I thought I'm really really nervous. I know it sounds stupid but I really am. I got on the plane and it took off and I've never been anxious like that about being on a plane. But there were tears in my eyes and I'm like I'm going to cry. But that's how I was and I came. I need to try and ground myself. And I just found being here for a few days I wasn't I couldn't feel grounded. It was like I don't know what I'm doing here, I don't have a sense of why I'm here. And people have been lovely it's nothing about not being included or welcomed or people caring. Nothing to do with that, just you know, trying to get a sense of well what are Quakers? Still trying to figure out what are they here in Canada in this context? And am I really a Quaker? Do I belong in this? I've still not answered that question fully. I'm still not sure. I think, thinking people are wonderful. And I think the process and the way they do business is an amazing process. I'm trying to really discern.
> *Lisa:* Is there a space for you.
> *Jen:* Yeah. Is this where I belong?

In a follow-up interview I asked Jen if she had had a chance to reflect further.

> *Lisa:* I guess what I really want to get from you before you leave is your feelings about the meeting.
> *Jen:* It's been quite a journey. In worship sharing this morning it was interesting that a lot of people from different perspectives were saying they had concerns about the spiritual core. Where is that and is it healthy and how do we find it, how do we nourish that kind of thing? Nothing really specific but it was all round that. That is one of the things I've been feeling you know. Yes we've got all this business and all this history but we spend all this time talking about us and defining us but where is the spirit in this. I'm still thinking about that a bit. More now because clearly other people are feeling it too. Which is really affirming.

Jen's experience demonstrates how the process of assuming a religious identity is ongoing and builds through relationships and experiences over time. Even after one has assumed a Quaker identity, this does not mean one stops thinking about what spirituality means to them, in fact this is part of the process.

The manner in which individuals *became* a Quaker and the reasons behind this, affected the extent to which they saw their spiritual involvement affecting other aspects of their lives, such as their work for peace and social justice. Thus, despite the fact that their involvement may be rooted in their spiritual community, through their involvement

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on committees, participants did not always use spiritual language to define their involvement. Nor was their involvement always emerging from their spiritual community despite the fact that they might have drawn on the support of their spiritual community in carrying forward particular actions.

7.4 Summary

This section has explored individual's early experiences with organized religion, as well as their views on spirituality and peace and social justice. Because all of the participants expressed an ongoing sense of fascination with questions of spirituality and a desire to seek out some source of higher meaning, the term seekers was used as a unifying concept. In their early experiences with religious organizations, as well as their views on peace and social justice, participants noted struggling with the lack of convergence between the values and the behaviour of groups and individuals. In this sense, seeking is not confined to questions of spirituality and also describes the deep commitment which all participants expressed in relation to issues of peace and social justice.

Upon coming to Quakerism all participants used the word home to describe their experience. The sense of comfort and belonging participants described was usually connected to a combination of the spiritual practice of the group and also the active involvement of members in issues of peace and social justice. Notably, despite feeling a strong affinity with the group, not all participants chose to become full-members immediately. Thus, the issue of membership figured prominently not only in how individuals saw their own spirituality in relation to other Quakers, but the extent to which individuals became involved. The following chapter will explore more fully the shift in

the form and level of engagement in issues of peace and social justice which individuals

described upon joining Quakers.

CHAPTER 8: NINE LIVES LIVED IN SPIRIT: OUTWARD ACTION BLENDING WITH SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

8.1 Introduction

> *Eric*: I became involved in that [a Quaker committee dealing with Aboriginal issues] because I do in my work quite a bit of work with Aboriginal people and I think I mentioned before I'm basically trusted by them. And the issue right from my youth, I mean when I was a school kid, the friends that I used to play with in the summer time all got shipped off to boarding school, so I didn't see them for the rest of the year. So all of these issues because those people were our neighbours, half of the community is Aboriginal, it was something that was up front for me. And so I became involved very early on with those issues from the Quaker perspective as well. And the focus of course, going back to I think the philosophy that I had developed in my international work, was that we don't really need to do anything for Aboriginal people. We need to work with the non-Aboriginal people to basically allow the Aboriginal people to develop their own way of life again. To get it back and to move on with it.

As explored in the previous section for many individuals, coming to Quakerism was a

relatively easy fit between their previous views of spirituality and/or views of peace and

social justice. The views they held prior to coming to Quakerism about God, the Divine

and the sense of leading a spiritual life were held up and valued in what they experienced

in Quaker spirituality. In a similar vein, as for Eric, many individuals found congruence

between the previous values they had about peace and social justice and what they found

in Quakerism. In both cases, finding a place where people thought and acted in a way

they respected allowed them to further explore the meaning of these issues in their own

lives and bring this into action. So while it is true that Quakers have a tendency towards

involvement in peace and social justice, emphasizing pacifism and nonviolence (Byrd,

1960), how this is connected to their spiritual lives is different for each individual.

Furthermore, as exemplified by Eric, the issues he is involved in through Quakers are very strongly related to his previous interests and experiences. As explored in section 7.3.3, all of the participants identified that a concern for issues of peace and social justice had always been innate within them. In describing their involvement in particular issues, participants would refer to a particular experience which moved them or a relationship they had. Their Quaker community gave them a space to translate their concerns into action and a sense that they were not acting alone.

This chapter will begin by exploring the diverse issues and ways which Friends in this study have been working towards peace and social justice. This will be followed by a consideration of how the experience of corporate silent worship is connected to the everyday lives of the individuals in this study and thus shapes their involvement in various ways in relation to these issues. I will then consider how outward action is essential to honouring their spiritual experience. The form of action is therefore necessarily connected to the values the individual experiences within various worship and other Quaker processes. The individual's Quaker community does not dictate the action they carry out, but where called upon aids in making it possible and framing the action, or provides more intangible forms of support. In this sense, whereas previously spiritual experience individuals had in organized religious settings might have been incongruent with their interest in peace and social justice, in Quakers individuals realize a convergence between their spiritual experience and their beliefs in peace and social justice. Finally, many of the activities individuals have been involved in have involved challenging their own personal boundaries and have sometimes involved moderate to high levels of danger. In light of this, I would like to close the analysis section by

considering what motivates them to continue in the work that they do in spite of these challenges.

8.2 Outward Action Blending with Spiritual Experience

8.2.1 Finding unity in diversity

Even though they may have been previously involved in issues of peace and social justice, all of the participants noted that both the extent to which they were involved and the way they engaged shifted upon joining Quakers. Often this was described in purely practical terms; through becoming a part of Quakers individuals had an increased capacity to become aware of issues and the resources to become involved. For others, having a grounded spiritual community provided them with the necessary support to carry forward personal interests into action. This section will explore the types of issues the Friends in this study have been engaged in, as well as how and why they carried out particular actions. The emphasis will be placed on the diverse ways in which individuals are involved in issues of peace and social justice as Quakers and how this relates to their spiritual experience; this emphasizes that there is not one way of acting for peace and social justice as a Quaker. As with their experience of corporate silent worship, in peace and social justice work, Quakers emphasize a sense of unity through embracing diversity.

John noted that he had always been interested in issues of peace and social justice. For him, coming to Quakerism intensified both the form and level of his involvement in these issues. He related this interest both to his early experience in Mexico, which imparted a more general concern with issues of peace and social justice and his various spiritual experiences. Through Quakers he became involved in various nonviolence training programs, and also pursued community development work as a volunteer in

South America. The organization he chose to work for happened to be Quaker-based, but he described this as incidental, and more related to the fact that he approved of the way in which the organization went about their work.

> *John*: So, of course you know their work was not about, telling people what they need to, it wasn't just about giving them money, but it was really about working with these grassroots Nicaraguan organizations, and having some kind of exchange, where while we probably can provide certain things and you can probably provide us with certain things with knowledge, with you know, and, um, and often it wasn't just money, it was also bringing people who were connected with the organization somehow who had expertise in an area, who would come and work with these people. And they would learn from the way they do things. And the local people would learn from them, because they brought in some other kind of technical expertise or something. So there was a lot of that kind of networking and just generally you know working with this great respect and not like we have the answers. And, we know, what you need to do, but just working with them and supporting them in doing what they knew they needed to do.

When he returned to Canada he took over as coordinator of a Quaker committee and was involved in a number of projects surrounding education, advocacy and outreach. He continues to work as a facilitator and trainer in a range of settings from international human rights to local educational settings, on Aboriginal rights and justice, penal abolition, and restorative justice. His work engages Quaker committees and organizations, other faith groups, and secular settings, such as schools, prisons, and other government organizations. As John notes, throughout all his work there is a common thread in his emphasis on nonviolence and mutual respect. He seeks to shift how people see the world through providing an alternative experience.

> *John*: And it's not that different [nonviolence training in schools], it's the same, we try to, and when I say we, my co-facilitator and I. I've worked in schools on my own, but mostly I've worked with a co-facilitator. Um, in the school context, and really what we try to do is to get people to question their concept of justice. And what is just and what is right, and what is the just thing to do once there's been some harm caused.
>
> And so it's the same thing, we put people through a series of activities, experiences, simulations, games, that hopefully create um, a disorienting dilemma. Where people will start thinking their vision of justice will change. And therefore, their vision of human interaction changes. So it's really not that different from the service committee work I've been doing, and it's also not that different from the work I did in development. I think the biggest challenge in development is to change people here in the rich countries. To change our vision of the world, our vision of development, our vision of the gap between the rich and poor.

John expressed that the work he does for peace and social justice, as well as his daily relations, are very much influenced by his Quaker spirituality.

As mentioned earlier, Jean had been involved in social justice work before becoming involved with the Quakers through her local church; however, once she joined Quakers she became *very* involved in many different aspects of the organization, both as a First Day School teacher and as a member of different committees. Her work with the Quakers led her to becoming involved in numerous issues, from the civil rights movement and relief work overseas. Notably, Jean was part of relief work during the Vietnam War and post-war reconstruction. Jean described herself as a pacifist dedicated to nonviolence.

> *Lisa*: I want to go back to something you said. You said uh, not just because I'm a pacifist. I know what pacifism means, but I would like to know what you mean by pacifism.
> *Jean*: Well, what I mean by pacifism is that I believe that violence is the wrong means in any case.
> *Lisa*: Can you describe for me why?
> *Jean*: The means and the end are the same. If you use unjust means you get unjust ends. Even though the intent may have been good.

Both she and her husband were also part of the grassy narrows blockade at Kenora, Ontario.

> *Jean*: So there were four of us there. And we talked to the Native people and we talked to the local Council of Churches. And we talked to the city officials and so on. And they actually were, and the police the OPP, and they were all very supportive because they prepared to believe what the truth of the matter was, that we were trying to avoid violence. Either by native people shooting somebody else, or the OPP or some hotheads shooting the native people. So we had permission from the native people and also from the OPP to set up tents as a symbolic guardianship of the people in the park. We had no weapons, and this was a purely symbolic, putting ourselves between you and them.

As Jean emphasizes she did not see herself as seeking to intervene, but to help all parties involved work towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Julie noted being involved on a number of committees which were involved in peace issues. However, for her, one of the most significant events she was involved in

was a demonstration for the Hiroshima bombing, for which she was the primary organizer.

> *Julie*: On Hiroshima day, we went out at 2 o' clock in the morning and we painted shadows on the sidewalks in various places, which because at Hiroshima people, some people were vaporized, so all that was left was a shadow on the pavement. So we did that. It was my first act of civil disobedience (laughing), because we painted the sidewalk right and then we actually like, had letters on all the radio stations and everything in the morning about what it was. It washed off actually with the rain, we offered to wash it off actually, so it was very organized, civil disobedience. But through a series of, well not coincidences because I was there and involved, but I ended up heading up that project and kind of being the spokesperson.

As Julie's words highlight, she protested in this way because she felt people had to experience something for it be real.

> *Julie*: I think because it was, something to with your hands, in a way, you know there was an action part of it. And because I've always, I felt there was such a huge power in that, to, to um, you know to go to work in the morning and see outside your place of business a shadow painted on, like people had to ask what that was, sort of. Like people had to react and so there was a, just a wonderful opportunity for people to connect with people on sort of explaining the issues, but really, you couldn't at least I think, you couldn't not have an emotional reaction to that. To think that in some point in history, that that was actually what was left of people. And I think probably that that resonated so much with the idea that, you know you can hear about all the things, but the actual fact that there were children, and dogs, we even painted like dogs, on the dog walking path, so that people had to see that it had a connection, a personal connection to them.

In the interview she pointed out that this was her first act of civil disobedience and that she was very fearful of the consequences.

Another significant event for Julie was the time she spent overseas helping local doctors and nurses, as well as community practitioners develop better treatment practices. Aside from these experiences, Julie has been and continues to be very involved in various types of outward actions, from nuclear disarmament to fair trade practices. Further, she was very clear that the work she does on a daily basis within the communities she works in as a nurse and her close relationships are very much connected to her Quaker

spirituality.

> *Julie:* Well I think, and I think equality is a big part of it [speaking of the connection between the work she does and her Quaker spirituality]. We have a testimony of equality. Quakers have five testimonies, sort of statements about our beliefs. There is a testimony on peace, equality, simplicity, honesty and integrity... Um, I think equality has always been a huge one for me, and a sense of sharing. In terms of being a Quaker, I think that sense of being one community. I mean all being equal in that. Just because I have a good job and make more money, doesn't mean I have the right to resources that you don't have the right to I think that's a huge part of it. I think humility, I don't know if that's the right word, but I think being in Quakers and seeing the processes working and the consensus and stuff, I think that, that it's really led my intercultural work. Cause I never go in thinking I'm the authority, and someone else is not, I always go in very much open to learn, and I'm willing to wait.
>
> Some of my relationships with others are based on my spiritual practice and my ability to just be with people without having to do, I had a relationship with an elder, a First Nations elder. And he never spoke to me for the first two years (Laughing). Luckily I had to fill his insulin needles. Actually his wife spoke to me, so you know it wasn't entirely one sided, but you know by the time he died, and I think I had a relationship with him for five years we were very close. And there are a lot of people who would have said, well this man is not interested in, you know our care. He's not taking responsibility for his health. But I never felt that. I felt that, you know I just respected him for who he was. I didn't know why he didn't speak to me, whether he felt uncomfortable with me. We actually in the end became, you know, developed quite a respect for each other. And actually he was a man who had been very abusive, well very abused and then very abusive. And I was that's the other thing, and I guess that's the 'That of God in Everyone', that Quakers believe, I knew his history but I was able to see past it and accept the relationship we had in the present and believe he needed and deserved my acceptance and support.

She described herself as a practical person and often connected her involvement to her desire to give back and contribute in any way she can.

Gary is currently a member of the Peace and Social Action Committee of his Monthly Meeting, and he is particularly interested in environmental issues. He connects this concern directly to the Quaker testimonies and Quaker testimonies. At the Yearly Meeting he was particularly concerned about the endorsement by Friends of the *Earth Charter*.

> *Gary:* In the *Earth Charter* there are 3 little phrases that relate to war, and um military activity. And the inconsistency is that all 3 of those basically make the assumption that war is something that is kind of inevitable. And what the Earth Charter tries to do is to adopt a position that certain kinds of war are particularly bad for the environment for one, so they don't want people to fight wars that are bad for the environment. They don't want to see weapons in space if I remember correctly. And the other condition is that they want to see the military forces of the world adopt non-aggressive defensive posture. Which is an undefined thing that inherently Quakers could never support.

Interestingly, Gary still expressed uncertainty as to whether he fully identified as a Quaker. He noted struggling with the process of Quaker decision-making and yet he seems to be very involved in different aspects of the Quaker community.

Jen was involved in forum theatre as a means to work with issues of conflict and injustice and describes the connection between this work and her spirituality as part of the bigger picture of her life quest to make her life meaningful and worthwhile. However, in a more practical sense it is connected to her particular skills and background in theatre.

> *Lisa*: Why did this appeal to you, this technique?
> *Jen*: Because I felt my skills and experience were in the theatre. People would talk about me as an artist, as this, as that. People would put all sorts of labels on me over the years, it just amazes me. I would go like what! But I guess I feel I can to some degree, with some degree of confidence, call myself a theatre practitioner. And this was a way of using some of the ways I know of working and making it accessible to people. Really accessible and doing it in a way that will be socially empowering for them. It was like wow I'm bringing together things I'm caring about. I've always, up 'til fairly recently, loved theatre. I really care about people, I want to find ways I can empower them. And it's like there you go, in one package.

Though in a different way to Gary, Jen was also struggling with her identity as a Quaker. In particular, she felt that she was not involved as at a high level as other Quakers and expressed that she felt some pressure to become more engaged.

When Will took up full membership he became involved with the Friends Committee on National Legislation. He noted that civil rights were an important issue at that time, and he went with a group of Friends to lobby in Washington. He described that his interest in civil rights derived from a moral factor, but not necessarily a religious factor. He eventually left his job to teach at Friends World College where he began taking canoe trips with students. After going through a series of difficult life events and beginning to feel increasingly disconnected from urban life Will decided to make a significant change. After consulting with Ministry & Counsel he decided to pursue a

simple life, which would be completely self-maintained.

> *Will*: Because I didn't feel that this should be, simplicity wasn't going to be something that people were going to accept, they had to give things up. They had to be doing things they wanted to do. It had to be another dimension in their life that was opening things up. So all I was doing was find my own project, but I couldn't keep on doing what I was doing.

He emphasized that the value of his action was that it would be a representation of what he believed. Despite living in relative isolation, Will remains involved on Quaker committees and enjoys the work he does. Will expresses that his turn to living simply is deeply connected to his spirituality as a Quaker.

Arthur came to know of Quakers when he was a conscientious objector during the Second World War. He related this decision to his strong personal convictions that war and violence were an affront to Christian teachings. During his time at work camps, he came to meet a Quaker, and decided to pursue relief work overseas. After becoming a Quaker he became very involved in the society and its various projects, carrying out development and reconstruction for many years overseas. He continues to be involved on numerous Quaker communities and relates this to his personal concerns, as well as his spiritual beliefs and experience.

When Susan moved to a rural community in British Columbia, she became involved in Aboriginal issues through her work at the local Friendship Centre and her involvement with the campaign to save the Stein Valley. Through this work she came to meet Quakers and attended her first meeting. She noted being extremely moved at her first meeting and after that attended whenever she could. She also became involved in various committees, particularly those dealing with Aboriginal issues. She became a member after a couple of years.

Around this time she also returned to school, first taking correspondence courses and finally continuing on to pursue graduate studies in human rights in England. She notes that her pursuit of higher education was very much connected to the work she was doing with the Quaker committees in that it was aimed at facilitating the work she was involved in. Through the Quakers she has become very involved in facilitation work as well, such as Alternatives to Violence Project and Turning-the-Tide. She is currently coordinator of a Restorative Justice Program in her community. In the passage below, Susan explores the connection between Quaker spirituality and restorative justice processes.

> *Lisa:* I want to go back to what you said, you said that restorative justice resonates for Quakers, can you explain to me what you mean by that?
> *Susan:* Because (and I don't pretend to know a lot about restorative justice), my understanding is, again another steep learning curve, but my understanding is that restorative justice processes honour the human dignity of every person, which resonates with my human rights training and resonates with "That of God in everyone". And they are about reestablishing broken relationships and repairing harm. So they're empowering and they're respectful. And I think that resonates with principles of nonviolence and peacemaking. And right use of resources too.

Susan identified her Quaker spirituality as playing a very important role in how she is involved in these various issues.

Eric noted that upon joining Quakerism he became very involved in various Aboriginal issues. However, this was in large part because this was the work he had been involved in prior to coming to Quakerism, both through his work in the international community and in his own community, which was predominantly First Nations. In a similar fashion to Jean, Eric saw his role as one of a non-partisan bystander who was there to work towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. This passage reflects the careful consideration he engages in, as well as the Friends who stood with him, in

thinking about how to act in relation to those parties involved.

> *Eric*: Well we would do things like when there was a blockade we would be there as
> witnesses to the blockade. We would help provide food and things and support to the
> Native people. Now one of the things that was really difficult, cause you'd have these
> young university students that wanted to go and stand on the blockade with the Native
> people for instance. They didn't understand that that's not what the Native people
> wanted. That if anything it was a real problem to them because they were trying to
> illustrate that this was their land. And they wanted control over it and they wanted to
> operate things themselves. And the very wrong thing you know from that perspective,
> they needed to run their programs, and they needed to be in control of them. And when
> you have some do-gooders that want to come along, and oh yeah we don't mind getting
> arrested with them to show solidarity. It thoroughly confuses the issue, because when
> you go to court and things you don't have that clear distinction of a group of Aboriginal
> people defending their rights. Because you've got it all confused by these other people
> who are just demonstrators. And so those were some of the things that we tried to
> facilitate. We tried to get people to understand that they not only weren't needed there,
> but that in fact they weren't wanted there. Because very often it was difficult for the
> Aboriginal people to say that and try to get people to understand what kind of support
> they did need. The support they needed was for these people to go back home and
> explain to all the people in their community what was happening.

As with many of the other participants, through Quakers he became involved in

nonviolence training and facilitation and has now integrated these processes into work he

does through Quakers and in his professional life. In the passage below, Eric described

how these processes helped him to work towards resolution between groups in the work

he does between Aboriginal groups, the community and/or the government.

Eric had been a tour of Quaker projects in South East Asia and was very

impressed with the work he saw.

> *Lisa*: What kind of projects did you visit when you were in South East Asia?
> *Eric*: One of the reasons I was asked to go was there were a number of organic "natural"
> agriculture type projects they were supporting. And reforestation type projects, which
> was my area of expertise. I also visited some of the medical projects. And the amputee
> projects in Cambodia. They're closely related to the land mine program. That was an
> area I hadn't known anything about before and it was quite hard to see. To go out in the
> field with a mine clearer and see what their work is. And to meet all of these amputees
> you know. And that project was one actually where there was a training school to train
> amputees. To be able to make their own living. They trained and then it was also give
> them the capital to get started. I though it was a really great project. Because in
> countries like that there are so few jobs, and so many labourers, so many people looking
> for work. That if you have any infirmity at all nobody is going to hire you because there
> are so many good fit people that they can have at the same price. So amputees were just
> you know, as soon as something happens to you, if you lose a hand or a leg or something,
> the chances of finding employment are pretty slim. Basically nil. And that's why I
> thought it was an important project.

He saw his own involvement leaning towards QPASCC because of his background in international development and agriculture.

The participants in this study demonstrate involvement in a plethora of issues, from theatre projects in their local community to international human rights work. Some of their work is supported by and originates within committee work. For others, it arises out of personal interests and/or professional work. These diverse forms of outward action share a similar concern with bringing whatever it is they do in line with their spiritual experience. Each participant's spiritual experience was shaped by their broader understanding of spirituality as well as their particular worldview, which for most participants was very strongly connected to their spiritual experience within Quakers.

8.2.2 Corporate silent worship and everyday lived experience

In the Quaker context, the basis for outward action is best represented in the process of corporate silent worship, for how this connects the individual's spiritual experience to other aspects of their life (Coleman & Collins, 2000: 321). As McDannell (1995) emphasizes the physical experience of religion plays a pivotal role in imparting *religious* values. The specifics of corporate silent worship were outlined in Chapter three and five. For the purposes of this section I would like to emphasize the notion of each individual being equal in the group. It is for this reason that Quaker process has abolished the hierarchy traditionally associated with church services and uses silence as a unifying factor. Everyone is free to minister even though not everyone chooses to. Ministry in this context is not understood as a dialogue or just random thoughts, but is meant to be an expression of the individual's spiritual experience or communion with God.

In describing their experiences with corporate silent worship participants recounted that even though it is meant to be a personal experience the implication is an increased sense of openness and connection to others. Further, it is in the shared process that the individual is able to reach a higher sense of interconnectedness.

> *Lisa:* Can you describe for me what your experience of corporate silent worship is like?
> *John:* Well, it's not always the same. And at times, I don't really achieve what I want to because I've got too many things swirling around in my head. But when I manage to do it the way I like to do it, um, it's a calming of the body, where the body essentially practically disappears. And then a calming of the mind where the thoughts practically disappear. And there's just this being. And because of all this clearing there's this openness to the outside, and this openness is to the spirit.
> And at times, there'll be something that all of a sudden I'm almost overcome with, and sometimes it's something that I need to share, and often it's not, often it's something very personal. So I don't, there's no need to minister, there's no need to share. And there's also something about, as I mentioned before about the listening, about listening to other people's ministry. And really listening, totally with total openness and discovering that there's some message, that there's something in it for me. And it may be different from what the person next to me gets out of it. And that's ok, but there's something in it for me.
> Cause I can do the meditation on my own. I can do the you know opening up the mind and calming the body and the mind, um, on my own. But there's something about doing it as a group as a community, where I am not the only person that's open. And we don't get the same thing always, so, somebody gets something for what ever reason, that we don't understand and shares it, and there's something in that for me, and there's something in it for this other person. And then maybe I'll share something. And there's something in it for some of the other people in the room. And so there's the corporate, worship, as a body, that ... is a lot more meaningful than just individual meditation.

The value of the experience lies in how it allows individuals to transcend their own identity and connect to something greater, but at the same time remain true to their own experience.

The process requires the individual to be attuned not only to their own experience but recognize that of others. The process of Corporate Silent Worship diffuses throughout the organizational aspects of Quakerism, informing Meetings for Business for Worship and First Day School. Quaker process thus provides an experience of a spiritual belief system. By emphasizing the importance of shared religious practice, this approach does not deny the importance of shared religious beliefs in explaining Quaker social

action, as explored by Kent & Spickard (1994). Instead, I propose that shared practice is the primary source of unity, whereas shared beliefs, particularly in the contemporary context are not as central for Quakers (Dandelion, 2004; Bourke, 2003).

As John notes, his experience of corporate silent worship has helped him to listen.

Lisa: I'm just curious to know, you've spoken to this connection that exists, that you experience as a result of the corporate worship. Can you speak to how that experience extends beyond the experience of the meeting?
John: Well, there's a number of things, first of all, um, it teaches a lot about listening in the first place, and that's not just about listening to other Quakers in, in the act of worshiping. It's about listening period. To people, and to the spirit world, wherever we are, not just in periods of worship.

As Spickard (2005) found in his analysis of the Catholic Worker House Movement, the rituals the group shared were a reflection of the values they held. The shared experience of these rituals, and the values behind them, reinforced a shared orientation towards social justice.

For Quakers, this approach helps to clarify why individuals with apparently distinct views about religion and the importance of different justice issues continue to find convergence in a spiritual group. To put it simply not all Quakers are as involved and not all Quakers hold the *same* views about peace and social justice issues, therefore not all Quakers are involved in the *same* peace and social justice issues. What most Quakers do share is a respect for the values behind engagement and expressing concerns in a way that is consistent with each individual's understanding and experience of the spirit. In this context, unity derives from a sense of openness to the many forms that spirituality expresses itself through individuals. Finding themselves in others gives them an assurance that they did not previously have.

Lisa: So worship, does this help you with anything you're doing in relation to these issues?
Julie: I think it helps me in everything. Because one of the things is that they're not short-term or easy answers, a lot of the issues I deal with. Both the global and more community (local) health issues and then the individual situations. Some of the struggles

and the horrendous lives that some of the people that I work with have led. I think if I didn't have a sense that there's a bigger reason for doing all of this and also that I wasn't, (I don't know if you've come across this Quaker belief), but I actually do feel quite called in life to do this work. That this is the place that I'm supposed to be.

Cause there've been several times where I've thought, forget it, I can't do this anymore, but then something happens to let me know I can and should continue. But I do have that sense and it's that sense of service as well. That it's not just about me being comfortable in my life. It's about serving my community and my people. And that God isn't just there to make me feel good. That it's a challenge that I have some gifts and I'm expected to share them with people. And it's difficult to share them.

As Julie emphasizes, this experience is not confined to just one aspect of her life, but extends into all aspects.

Involvement in issues of peace and social justice can be understood as an outward expression of the value system they experienced. Acting in this sense becomes essential to honouring the experience. It is for this reason that almost across the board participants noted an increase in their level of engagement in issues of peace and social justice. This is related to both practical reasons, in that there is an increased capacity to become involved in issues, and social convergence, in that they find a community which validates the way they see the world.

8.2.3 Outward action blending with spiritual experience

John: Well this may come from my childhood where one of the big difficulties my parents had with religion, was that it was all, it was all talk. ... And so, for me the meaning behind it, the meaning of this spiritual connection, had to be concrete. It had to mean something in my life because otherwise it's bullshit. You know, what are we doing talking about justice, if we continue living this way while 40,000 children die of starvation and we don't do anything about it. It's bullshit. It's just pretty words.

Once individuals take up the full identity of Quakerism they almost always described an intensifying in their involvement in peace and social justice. Even for those individuals still struggling with their identity as a Quaker, Jen and Gary, they noted that they were involved in various projects both through Quakers and independently which were helped along by their being part of Quakers. It is also relevant to emphasize that for the most

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part the issues which individuals were involved in were similar to what they had been interested in before.

In describing their previous involvement in issues of peace and social justice individuals often described in a general sense that a particular issue was "morally wrong" or "not right"; however, upon joining Quakers, individuals noted increasingly drawing on their Quaker community in carrying forward actions. Part of this was practical, in that individuals had the same interests and could be used as sounding boards; however, part of it was a more intangible kind of support, spiritual support. In this sense, the form of their actions is therefore increasingly connected to their spiritual experience. As John describes, the value he placed in the actions individuals took to advance peace and social justice allowed him to resolve the incongruence he saw in his experience with organized religion and his more general concern for peace and social justice. This is because the spiritual experience itself is an expression of the value system they hold. However, the manner in which this manifests for each individual is not dictated and therefore varies.

In this sense the manner in which religion *influences* individuals to become involved in a particular issue is related to a spiritual experience, even though it may be expressed as a belief. Quakers use the word leadings to refer to the somewhat intangible sense of being pushed to take up a particular concern. As Susan describes it is the sense of having the way opened.

> *Lisa:* You used the word leadings. Can you describe for me what you mean by that?
> *Susan:* It's not so much a leading as it is a big hand between your shoulder blades, that you can't resist and it won't go away. And when you allow it, doors slam open ahead of you. Even if you didn't think they would, they do. The way opens, miraculously it opens. And you just, you have to trust it, you can't, sometimes you can plan it, but sometimes you can't. You have to trust it.

Julie relates her involvement in a particular disarmament project with both her previous interests and Quaker testimonies of equality.

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Lisa: I want to go back a little bit. You kind of talked a bit about it. But I'm curious to know how you went from, how that happened that you got involved in that original project, what was the process?

Julie: That's funny cause it's....

Lisa: I know it's hard to explain sometimes.

Julie: Yeah, and I don't have a clear sense except that I know that, even that grew out of my ....I mean interestingly the Quakers have a strong testimony about equality. And I don't know why equality is so important to me, I think that ever since I was a little kid it was very important to me that things be fair and that everyone have a chance. And I was always watching out for you know who was left out of things. Actually my dad said to me one day, when you were a kid you used to bring home stray animals. And now you bring home stray people (laughing)! Um, and that's really, you know kind of going back to what happened to me when I was young, what part of that is just personality, you know that sense of knowing that other people are in need.

As John describes his concern for issues of peace and social justice still were connected back to that first experience in Mexico. However, his involvement "started to happen in a bigger way" once he became involved in Quakers.

John: There was always a little undercurrent of activism and social justice. But it really started happening in a bigger way once I got involved with the Quakers, because through the Quakers I became involved in the alternatives to violence project and started going into the prison. And that opened up this whole question of justice and what we think of as justice in our society. The whole question of punishment, the fact that this whole machine that we think of as justice is just being focused on the poor people, and the uneducated, people who are generally considered less desirable in our society. And then, that of course, brought me to deal with issues of violence, and, where it comes from, and you know why we engage in certain types of violence. And, then from that, I had a career change because I became very dissatisfied with my career in commercial broadcasting, and knew that I needed to do something more meaningful, not knowing what. It was like the little voice in 1990, one day I just, there was this thing in the back of my head that said that I needed to go work as a volunteer in a developing project.

Both John and Julie were motivated to move overseas as volunteers. This involved drastic life changes for both of them. Similarly, Will's move to simplicity meant he gave up the comforts of his life as a professional.

For some participants they described a sense that they were not Quaker enough because they were not involved enough. However, even the smaller projects which individuals engaged in were grounded in a sense that the actions they do must be connected to their grounding value system. In this sense the spiritual experience was

carried through and reflected in each individual's work whether it is a workshop held in a local school or a development project in Africa.

For some of the participants this was expressed in language which referred to an understanding of the Divine.

> *Susan:* We brought AVP to my town to use as a tool to bring our communities together. And to address violence, discrimination, racism within our community by bringing people together to have shared experiences. Tool gathering in a safe environment. Which was my introduction to participatory methodology and education for adults. Which then informed the guided meditation. But all of this for me is an experience of how leadings work and living your faith. Seeking guidance as to what's important to do and how to use one's gifts. And how to refine those gifts in a way that makes them more useful, within the guidance of the spirit and the unity and the spirit of a larger group of people.

As Susan describes her work helps her to work through the meaning of her spirituality. However, this was usually blended with a sense that what they were doing was practical and it would help people.

> *Lisa:* What was it about the way that they were doing it that resonated for you, that made you want to get involved?
> *Julie:* I think because it was something to do with your hands. You know there was an action part of it. And because I've always, I felt there was such a huge power in that, to, to um, you know to go to work in the morning and see outside your place of business a shadow painted on, like people had to ask what that was, sort of. Like people had to react and so there was a, just a wonderful opportunity for people to connect with people on sort of explaining the issues. But really, you couldn't at least I think, you couldn't not have an emotional reaction to that. To think that in some point in history, that that was actually what was left of people. And I think probably that that resonated so much with the idea that, you know you can hear about all the things, but the actual fact that there were children, and dogs, we even painted like dogs, on the dog walking path, so that people had to see that it had a connection, a personal connection to them.

For some they described their involvement in more general moral terms. I want to be clear, that I am not implying that this makes these individuals non-religious or that their involvement is not motivated by a spiritual experience. Rather, how they experience their spirituality is not expressed in language that fits with conventional definitions of spirituality or religious experience, particularly in the Christian context. Similarly, just because individuals are involved in actions in a secular setting does not mean they leave

their spirituality behind. As Susan notes she carries her spiritual basis even in secular

settings.

> *Susan:* After which we both began to facilitate things rather than teach things or chair
> things or whatever. We applied those skills, which are all relate to Quaker clerking, even
> if you use it in a secular setting. And even if the other participants aren't thinking about
> God or spirituality. You can still be calling on those strengths in facilitation work
> without imposing them on anybody else.

It is for this reason that the form of the action, whether in a private or public setting is

convergent with the values underpinning her spiritual experience.

Quaker actions tend to be based in nonviolence because it is believed this will

foster productive rather than destructive relations. It is the experience of this openness

which has been so profound for individuals in coming to Quakerism. The sense that it is

possible to live one's life in accordance with one's values.

> *Lisa:* Why did you do it in that way?
> *Susan:* Because people need to experience it. I felt I needed to take them to that place,
> themselves. Otherwise it was too cerebral and they could deny it. Otherwise it was just
> information... it wasn't experience. So they could go get the experience even in an
> imaginary way. It would have more meaning.

It is for this reason that actions are often related to providing experiential representations

of the belief system and sharing this with others.

Rather than dictating the manner in which individuals become involved in various

issues their Quaker community facilitates their involvement. They offer practical

support, such as financial aid, but more importantly they provide emotional and mental

support in the form of discernment.

> *Lisa:* How is that process helped by your experience of your Quaker community, the
> Quaker community that you have?
> *John:* I find it helps me keep on track, it is a constant reminder, that, that this is the goal.
> The goal is to let my life speak. There are so many things pulling us in so many
> directions. We live such busy lives, that it's really easy to stay, it's really easy to lose our
> focus, and, to, and especially to revert back to the ways of the major part of my life, you
> know. Even though changes have happened. And it's like, two steps forward, one step
> back, and you keep sort of doing that back and forth lot and I find that my association
> with a community that has generally, has that kind of thinking, that kind of, of objectives,
> is very important. And I'm hoping that I contribute something to that as well for others.

The individual is able to feel that they are not acting in isolation and can share their concern with a community who they value and trust.

After approaching the clerk of Ministry and Counsel with his concern Will was able to arrange a clearness session to consider how he should act.

> *Will:* Everybody had their say and I just sat and listened. I think maybe there were a few times when I had to answer a few additional questions but mostly it was just listening to other people's thoughts about this proposal. When we finally wound it up we weren't asking them for a decision or anything, we were putting our lives in their hands. We just wanted to get input, so it was a threshing session, a clearness session.
> *Lisa:* What made you want to take the decision to M&C?
> *Will:* Because I thought we'd get some good advice. Positive or negative. These are people I respected and I wanted to hear what they were going to say.

This sense of communal support even if the individual acts alone was noted as significant for all the individuals. The sense of intangible support carries through all aspects of an individual's life.

> *Lisa:* That must have been a really hard thing for you to do.
> *Susan:* It wasn't as hard as growing up. It wasn't. In fact it was probably one of the more significant memories that I have of us both as women, talking about the history that had so destroyed relationships.
> *Lisa:* What do you think gave you the strength to do that?
> *Susan:* The desire to get well, myself. And finding some spiritual centre and spiritual grounding. And I didn't, my meeting didn't support me in that. It's not something I shared with people. But they were there, you know, Quakers were there. I had a supportive family that wasn't biological for the first time. I mean I had a supportive husband and I had this supportive spiritual family and I know that gave me a lot of grounding.

8.2.4 Source of continued motivation

> *Lisa:* Were you ever fearful? You said it was your first act of civil disobedience.
> *Julie:* I was very fearful, actually I was really fearful, yeah I was really fearful. And also, because it was my name representing the local disarmament group that was attached to the project. I was the person who was interviewed. And for me I never take things on because I want to be the center of attention, I take them on because I feel they need to be done and there doesn't seem to be someone doing it. I never take it on because I feel brave enough (Laughing).
>
> And I suspect that a lot of people feel that way. You know, like I think that that's always way outside my comfort zone and I don't really like being the centre of attention and I'd just as soon never be interviewed on the TV or anything. But, you know the job has to be done and someone has to do it.

As Julie describes, her involvement in a nuclear disarmament protest was very challenging for her. She felt pushed out of her normal comfort zone and yet continued with the action anyway because of a sense that "someone has to do it". For some of the participants their fears in relation to their involvement in particular issues was related to emotional fears, such as the sense that people would not understand, however, often there was the threat of physical harm or danger. Jean's involvement with the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War and land rights protests required her to accept a high level of personal danger. And yet, she kept going in spite of fears.

> *Lisa:* What allowed you to keep going despite those fears that you had?
> *Jean:* We believed in what we were doing. To the best of my knowledge nobody took the trouble to come had left. It didn't matter what the dangers were. You just did it because you believed in it.

In a similar way to Julie what allowed her to keep going was a very practical feeling that someone needed to do something and she could help.

As Jean expresses, what keeps her going in what she does is the sense of obligation to contribute something, but also the enjoyment she derives from being involved.

> *Lisa:* What motivates you, what keeps you going in what you're doing?
> *Jean:* Well I guess it's both an unselfish and a selfish thing. It's interesting and fun, that's the selfish part of it. But, if we want to have the kind of world we want, then we have to do our share, and our share may be different at different times but, that's kind of an obligation, I see. You take the benefits of the organization and the society and whatever, in fairness you put in also, as you're able to at any stage and age.

In a similar vein, as John describes he does the work that he does because he knows he has to.

> *Lisa:* What is it that motivates and sustains the form of these responses? It seems like there is a continuity throughout this work that you do.
> *John:* hmmm.... You know I'm not sure I can answer that. In a way it's like, this is the work that I have to do. It's like, the day after, the northern lights, this little thing that said I had to find the Quakers. It's kind of like that. I know I have to do this. And I also know that it gives me a lot of satisfaction. You know when I'm doing work with a group, and we're wrapping up an activity and we're debriefing it and I'm asking people some questions, and I see the light bulbs go on, and the person's face changes and they "uhh",

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and then you can see all this stuff going on. About, oh my god, the implications, even though, you know the young people they don't necessarily think in those words, but... that is priceless. That, is so, gratifying, and satisfying. But I shouldn't say that, I should say that I'm some kind of saint like mother Theresa, and I do it for the glory of God (laughing).

As Eric described at the opening of this section he has found a community of individuals which have made it easier for him to live his life in the way he believes to be right and true. In this sense his life project is working towards honouring what he has experienced in his relationships with others. His spirituality helps and directs this project. However, as for all of the participants the intensity of these values has become real through his experiences, both before and as part of Quakers. His involvement in various issues reinforces his belief system by demonstrating that another way is possible. All of the participants noted that they experienced this sense openness in their shared worship, whether it is a large meeting in a city centre meeting house, or a small worship group at a Friend's house. It is the sense of connecting to something bigger, an experience they have been seeking to find, which makes the realization of their vision of the world possible. Their involvement in issues of peace and social justice is not only reflective of their experience, but more importantly it is how they *live* their spirituality.

8.3 Summary

This chapter has explored the various peace and social justice issues which the Friends in this study have engaged in. Even though there is diversity amongst the issues which Friends are involved in, they reflect a unity in the values underpinning their outward actions. The participants noted that their involvement in issues of peace and social justice intensified upon joining Quakerism, in part because they had an increased capacity to become involved, but also because they had a community from which they could draw on for support. Whereas previously the connection between their views on

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issues of peace and social justice and spirituality was not fully realized in the religious groups they came across, upon joining Quakers individuals found a more complete convergence between the values of the group and their actions. The spiritual experience which individuals embrace as part of the Quaker community provided them with an experience through which to further realize their value system in action. In this sense, outward action is both guided by and sustained through their spiritual experience. Quaker involvement in peace and social justice can thus be understood as an expression of spiritual experience and a manifestation of the way in which individuals live their spirituality.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction
9.2 Summary of Main Findings
9.3 Areas for Future Research
9.4 Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

> *Lisa:* Who has been an inspiration to you in the work that you do?
>
> *John:* Maria Rifo (my Chilean friend in California who's about to turn 99; she's not a Quaker, but hangs out with many Qs in Sonoma) because Maria gives the words conviction, devotion and commitment a deeper meaning."
>
> *Julie:* People who have had terrible struggles and hurts but continue to live life fully and give to other people and the earth. Many of the elderly women I have worked with including First nations women but also women in Ghana and in Canada have suffered terribly with war, with racisim, with poverty, sexual, physical and emotional abuse but still get up every morning and try to be there for their children, their communities, and to work toward building a better future.
>
> *Gary:* There are other Friends I have come to know, or at least experience briefly at gatherings such as Friends General Conference. They include many well-known Friends and they have an inherent sense of the inner spiritual East, South, North and West, and as such they can and occasionally do serve as a means for others of us to check if our own spiritual compasses are reading true. They are sailors and captains of the spiritual winds, however, not only in the metaphorical sense but also in the real world sense. They have made real world choices, have undertaken real world work and challenges which reveal and provide models of 'love in action'. Their lives speak to a blend of moral and ethical presence in the world. Because they practice peace and pursue social justice in virtually all aspects of their lives they make it easier for others, such as myself, to have confidence that my own, similar intuitive sense of right and wrong is valid and trustworthy. That confidence helps, in turn, to more readily choose to act in the world.

In the follow-up interviews I invited participants to share who has been an inspiration for them in the work that they do for peace and social justice. Not surprisingly, many of the participants named other Quakers. However, they also named individuals from many different groups, ages, and social backgrounds. As with early religious experiences and views on peace and social justice individuals emphasized it was the way that these people lived their lives which made them a source of continuing inspiration. Similarly, it is the way the individuals I have spoken with have lived and continue to live their lives that

makes them Quakers, rather than the label itself. This captures the sense that, to live

one's life in spirit is an ongoing process, rather than a concrete state which is finally

realized. The peace and social justice work of the Friends in this study is thus one way

they move closer to realizing their spirituality.

9.2 Summary of Main Findings

> *Lisa:* Have there been stages in your journey with Quakerism when your commitment to
> your faith has changed?
> *John:* It changes all the time. I couldn't really pick a length of time where it hasn't
> changed.

When I originally asked this question I remember that what I wanted to know was if there

had been periods in John's spiritual journey when he remembered significantly altering

his commitment, and if so, why. However, after asking this question to several of the

participants and receiving a similar response from almost all of them, "Yes! Of course it

changes all the time!" I realized that perhaps the question was based on an assumption I

had about the nature of religious belief and experience. To say that one's spirituality

changes all the time seems rather obvious; yet we often assume that religious belief and

in particular religious believers have set belief systems and identities. Bourke (2003) and

Dandelion (1996; 2004) have explored the diversity in Quaker belief. Similarly, Beaman

(1997, 1999, 2001) has explored the diversity in religious identity amongst more

conservative religious groups. In a similar fashion, Peek (2005) and Kaufman (1991)

have considered the manner in which religious identity builds over time and through

experiences. In all cases, the individual's commitment to their religion and their religious

beliefs is shown to be something which changes all the time and responds to their

personal experiences, as well as social and cultural context.

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As Orsi (2003) expresses, for all religious groups, religion is something which is lived on a daily basis. However, the manner in which religion is lived takes different forms depending on the group in question, due to their particular belief system and/or form of religious practice. For the Quakers, the emphasis is on bringing one's daily life closer to one's personal spiritual experience. For this reason, the distinction between the sacred and the secular or the public and the private is for the most part indistinguishable. Everything they do is a lived expression of their spiritual experience, which some may define as connecting to the Divine, or God, or the Spirit of the group. Quakers are called to live their lives in a way which honours and is consistent with whatever their experience is. Thus, while there is diversity amongst all religious groups, the Quakers make this diversity a central aspect of all aspects of the organization, from religious practice to decision-making.

Following the work of Orsi (2003), the notion that religion is *lived* has begun to increase in popularity; however, the theoretical implications of this statement have yet to be fully realized in the many ways in which religion can be studied. Lived religion within the context of peace and social justice work assumes that neither religious experience, nor how religion informs peace and social justice work is static. Explanations of religiously-based peace and social justice work often rely on a definition of religion, which does not allow room to consider the dynamic nature of religious belief, as emphasized by Hashem (2006) in his exploration of contemporary Islamic activism. The process changes across and within groups, time, space and social context; further, it is a unique process for each spiritual seeker. This study has explored the spiritual journey of a group of Quakers for how it sheds light on the diversity in their religious identity,

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their spiritual experience and the basis for their involvement in peace and social justice issues.

The notion of seeking was used to understand both the sense of spiritual seeking, which united participants, as well as the more general desire to bring their values and actions more intensely together. They had not found what they needed in the organized religions they had come across and yet maintained a fascination with questions of spirituality. All individuals also identified an innate sense of connection to questions of peace and social justice. Most participants noted struggling with the lack of convergence between the values and the behaviour of groups and individuals, whether this was related to spirituality, peace and social justice issues, or both. In this sense their interest in questions of spirituality was often linked to their interest in issues of peace and social justice for how both reflected individuals struggling to understand the world from a broader moral perspective. Individuals were seeking to make sense of the world in spiritual terms and to find a space where they could actualize their perspective of the world. Some were actively seeking others were not.

Upon finding Quakerism all participants described the sense of coming home. The sense of comfort and belonging participants described was usually connected to a combination of the spiritual practice of the group and also the active involvement of members in issues of peace and social justice. Notably, despite feeling a strong affinity with the group, not all participants chose to become full-members immediately. Thus, the issue of membership figured prominently not only in how individuals saw their own spirituality in relation to other Quakers, but the extent to which individuals became involved.

This study has provided a consideration of the diverse involvement of Friends in issues of peace and social justice, from relief work during the Second World War to post-war reconstruction to local peace protests to community justice projects. The Friends I interviewed emphasize that there are many ways which Quakers have responded to the call for peace and social justice. Furthermore, there is continuity between their previous life experiences and the interests they become involved in as part of Quakers. In almost all cases, individuals' involvement in issues of peace and social justice intensified upon joining Quakerism. For many of the participants their experience within other religious groups was not consistent with their views on peace and social justice. What many participants found in Quakers was a convergence between the form of spiritual experience and action in the outside world. Being part of a Quaker community thus provided individuals with a space in which they could foster their spiritual experience both within the form of worship and in outward action. As each participant demonstrated, the emphasis on diversity within the group means that there is no one way which this manifests in outward action. Quaker involvement in peace and social justice thus reflects the diversity in spiritual experience. What united the participants was that they shared openness to the diverse ways that individuals seek to connect to a broader understanding of the world, whether through God, the Divine or the more general sense of a collective group of individuals. Their Quaker community provides a setting where they can foster their own spiritual experience and connect this more fully to their involvement in peace and social justice.

9.3 Areas for Future Research

This study has provided a much needed introductory sketch of a religious group which has been generally understudied and has been completely ignored in the Canadian context. From a methodological perspective it has contributed in-depth accounts of individuals' experiences which would be obscured by a mass survey which utilized pre-determined categories. The exploratory and informal interviewing style allowed for the themes to emerge through the unique stories of each individual. While the accounts cannot be taken as definitive representations, similarities do emerge which support previous literature which has explored Quaker belief and practice.

Further, the abandonment of a causal connection between religion and peace and social justice work provides a more complex account of how religion is connected to social change. An exploration of a religiously motivated activism not grounded in a theological interpretation particular to a religious group allows for a consideration of how unity can be fostered through the acceptance of diversity. The Quakers reach unity through providing space for the multiple pathways through which we reach the Divine. This problematizes the strict secularity of political spaces and promotes a view of peace and social justice as intimately connected to the core of individual experience. This suggests that spiritual experience is not always transparent in the public realm, for it takes many forms, and that spirituality is in many cases generative rather than destructive of broader moral aims.

Future research could further explore the various types of Quaker identities and how this affects individual's involvement in various Quaker processes. This would involve a more complete exploration of the organizational aspects of Quakerism, which

are particularly interesting, and have been used for some time as models of consensus-based decision making. How individuals within the organization work within these processes in a spiritual framework would be particularly interesting to sociologists of religion.

Another key site for exploration is the experience of young Friends. One of the things which struck me in my observations was the important role given to young people in the organization. They were involved in committees from a young age and treated with considerable respect. Their opinions and voices were highly valued. It would be interesting to explore how their experience of Quaker spirituality and participation in these processes shapes their lives and daily interactions.

Finally, some of the participants seemed to insinuate a slight difference amongst Quakers according to region. As this study was not comparative the full implications of this were not explored. A broader comparison between different regions and countries could explore the social and cultural forces which have impacted the growth of the organization in different places. Likely, this would reveal different experiences for Quakers in different parts of the world.

9.3 Conclusion

What I have attempted to highlight is how each person contributes--in a way that is honest--to their experience of the spirit, or the Divine or whatever they call it! Further, this is not always expressed as a direct relationship but is often explained in practical terms, which do not necessarily correspond to how we perceive individuals who work for peace and social justice from a religious basis. The role that spiritual experience plays in these individuals lives has emerged as an intensely complex and unique process. Woven

in is their own personal experience and the prominent role played by their spiritual community.

Further, I have sought to demonstrate that a straightforward account would do little to illuminate the manner in which religion translates into action for social change. This is because spirituality is connected to the core of who these people are as individuals and has grown through their experiences and relationships over time. Their Quaker community fosters their spiritual growth and provides them with a sense that they are not acting alone irregardless of the context in which they are. The abolishment of hierarchy within Quaker processes means that an individual's spiritual community does not determine one's actions, nor is one in turn, expected to determine anyone else's actions. Through living their lives in spirit these individuals seek to exemplify--in their own way--what they believe, whether in protest or celebration. It is in this manner that they envision and build an alternative to the past. Participants did not see this obligation as a burden, but rather saw it as a "gift" and a challenge.

Lisa: What is it that keeps you going in what you're doing?

Susan: I love being alive. My life is a gift and I want to in spite of all the flounderings, I've always felt that it's a privilege to be alive. And that because of that gift I want to make a difference somehow, to make things better.

Eric: Well I guess it's ... those are the right things to do. I guess that's all there is to it. I can't think of any other reason and it's very rewarding working with other people in a positive sense. You know. It gives you a lot of really rewarding feed back. I don't think I'd ever want to be the head of a big company or something like that. It would be most isolating. And I guess it's a mixed blessing to be over 60 too. Certainly looking back I can say gee it's really nice to have had the opportunity in life to learn all these things from all these different experiences. But it's a little scary that I've got far fewer years ahead of me than I have behind me. But it's also, it's also more rewarding. I'm much more confident about my ability to make the right choices. Although I still know I'll make wrong ones. And I know I'll make wrong one's and so it doesn't upset me as much. I tend to recognize its wrong sooner and correct it. So life is not frustrating as you get older actually. I think you have fewer frustrations. I mean what a great group of people to work with. I don't know, what else would I do!

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