

**Quakerly Conflict: The Cultural Logic of Conflict in  
the Religious Society of Friends**

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## Affirmation of Original Work

I, Douglas Kline, affirm that the work contained herein is original and my own.

Signed

Douglas A. Kline

To the memory  
of my father,  
Ray Kline

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## Introduction: Narratives and Themes

Positioned outside popular Quaker discourse, yet vital to their practices and identity, nestles the notion of 'conflict'. This comment does require some qualifications, and, as you will discover, nearly all statements about Friends require some recognition of their complexity. The concept of 'conflict' is not central to Quaker understanding, but it has an interesting relationship with the other concepts that inform Quaker beliefs and practices. Friends direct their attention and practice to peace, integrity, simplicity, and equality. Their organisation, practice, and cultural schema are manifestations of these ideas, establishing a context that produces a unique construction of 'conflict' and its management. Quakers are known for their stance against war, and they earn international reputation as a group who works towards peace in armed conflicts throughout the world. These are the conflicts that dominate the Quaker imagination, so how do Friends manage dispute when it occurs in their own meeting houses? This is the question I explore in this thesis. Argument is fundamental in the formulation of religious belief and practices, the problem arises for Quakers when conflicts arise. How do they contain conflicts, and implement social control? I investigate conflict as a culturally informed context where particular behaviours are promoted when divergence of interests are perceived. The Religious Society of Friends in Scotland provides the ethnographic setting and specific context for this investigation.

This chapter sets the foundation of the research, and explores issues that will assist the reader in understanding the ethnography. There are particular biases that require elaboration, so my position in the field location, and the heuristics involved

with the writing are elaborated. In this chapter, I establish my epistemological and methodological approaches in trying to answer the orienting question and I do this in three sections. I open with a statement on my location within the model by sharing my narrative, giving some intimate reasons for the fieldwork, and shedding light on my relationship to the work and with the Friends I met. Next I address the themes that this research explores as I try to understand conflict through the Quaker understanding, and its practice of management. Finally, I conclude with the methods used to obtain my information.

### **My Narrative**

Understanding this thesis involves understanding my place in the model and the ethnographic context, because my relationships with my informants are, in many ways, unique in relation to other anthropological experiences. The relationships between an ethnographer and the people he or she studies are tremendously complicated. They are a tangle of power relations, statuses, and roles that never really settle into one stereotypical position within the social group. The place that our informants have for us within their social milieu creates our understanding of the context through the forms of information that we are entitled, and privileged to witness. Likewise, the ethnographer's relationship to their interpretive model colours their approach, and understanding to what is witnessed and written (Rapport 1997). Avoiding this reality may be masked by a veil of objectivity that can assist the writer and the reader construct the other, however it does little to assist the informant and it creates frailties in the research. Our informant's voice can get lost

in the description of the ethnographer's interpretation, and the illusion of a detached analysis can create caricatures of people who are complicated and changing.

My relationship with my informants was a process of deepening involvement into each other's lives, and becoming a more integrated participant in the community. My status shifted, taking on more roles with more responsibility to both the Society and to my friends. This enriched my ethnography and my understanding. While the impact of these changing relationships provided my data, I do not wish this ethnography to be an autobiography, so I will reserve my narrative mainly to this section of the thesis to highlight my relationship to the work that goes beyond the typical setting of epistemological girders. I will unveil this involvement, because it informs my understanding of the fieldwork, and the models I selected to interpret my experience.

#### *Why Quakers? Why Conflict?*

Prior to my entering the field, Professor Cohen, my primary supervisor, repeatedly asked two deceptively simple questions: 'Why Quakers? Why conflict?' My responses focused on the need for understanding conflict as a human phenomenon, and the enjoyable incongruity of focusing this research on Pacifists. I acknowledged that there were personal reasons for my interest, but I never elaborated, mainly because I could not yet articulate them. The rest of the thesis unfolds why studying conflict in the Religious Society of Friends is important, but I want to provide a personal answer to these questions so the reader can understand one source of my writing and a dimension to my fieldwork.

Only during writing the thesis did I come to discover the more intimate reasons for my topic. This awareness was dredged from past experiences, going back to my childhood. When I was young, I had recurring physical pains, which were diagnosed as psychosomatic. Later complaints of pain received a bemused reaction from my doctors and from my family, giving the appearance that I was merely seeking attention. I eventually quieted the complaints, and questioned my reasons seeking attention in this manner. These pains occurred yearly until well into adulthood. Occasionally, I would go to doctors to be re-examined, but their diagnoses were all similar, and they would prescribe muscle relaxants or anti-acids that either did not work or coincidentally corresponded with the diminution of the pain. My doctor's continual refusal of the pain's physical basis, I later learned, denied me of my sense of a very intimate reality. The dilemma that brought about my silence was the irreconcilable messages of the real pain, and the medical and social denial of its reality. This eventually manifested into a personal need to seek validation for my experience – a validation I did not actually trust. A proper diagnosis eventually occurred when other physiological problems became manifest, confirming, finally, that the pains were indeed real.

As I was writing the results of the research, I came to understand a connection between my habit of seeking external confirmation of my experience, and the manner in which Friends make decisions. The Quaker system of decision-making and seeking truth appeared to relate to my own need to seek substantiation of the world. Quakers employ a method of understanding spiritual reality by group discernment. Using a disciplined form of silence they seek communal decisions by discerning truth that is accepted by everyone in the discussion. Friends also present

individual religious understanding for collective discernment, particularly when this has consequences on practicing belief. In this particular setting, I found a group that deliberately institutionalised a practice that I employed habitually from my childhood experiences.

When I came to these realisations, I wondered if this topic on which I consciously chose to write a thesis was from a rational process of intellectual enquiry, or a topic that arose out of a lifetime of seeking external validation. I accept it as both. This groping for understanding has informed my intellectual and emotional development. The internal conflict coming from my need to affirm a reality that countered my perception has produced an interesting pursuit toward a degree in psychology, and to graduate work amongst 'betwixt and between' anthropologists, where the compulsion to question reality is rationalised. It has attracted me towards understanding 'conflict', and towards understanding Friends, and provides me with a sensitivity to the issues in this intellectual enquiry and its consequences.

It is arguable that there are comparably deep influences that explain other anthropologist's personal involvement with their topic. Such awareness informs personal bias, and it can aid our personal understanding of our personal interpretations in our work. While the contexts we encounter are metaphorically layered, so are we. The professional layers are what typically get presented in our ethnographies, as our deeper layers go unquestioned. The carpenter's skill lies not only in understanding the type and quality of wood they craft; their skill also lies in knowing the capability of their tools. As anthropologists our bodies act as the tool,

and words serve as our medium. Knowledge of the tool, in this instance, suggests the quality of the medium.

While this self-awareness is important for my own understanding of the field and my position in it, I do not desire the reader to miscalculate this experience in relation to the rest of the thesis. This declaration reveals my association with the models used to interpret the cultural context, and one method through which I came to understand the people I am writing about. Ideally, this thesis is about the people that I met during fieldwork, and I aim to privilege their voice, when trying to understand the way they construct and manage an important aspect of their social reality. My location in the writing of this ethnography is intentionally muted for reasons that I will elaborate when I discuss my methodology. My perception of events in the field are explicitly stated in the writing, when it helps the reader understand the perspective of a newcomer to Quaker meetings, the experience of participating in worship, and becoming a part of a community.

### *Entry into the Field*

On 12 November 1997, I sat in the library of a Quaker meeting house with twenty people, who gathered to consider the monthly issues for the meeting. The meeting began, and, as we sat in silence, I remember deliberately trying not to shift in my seat. The situation was awkward for me. This reaction was not due to novelty; I was familiar with the Quaker business meeting, since I had already seen the process in the United States, while researching Friends in Indiana. My self-perceived inelegance of the situation had more to do with my position in the proceedings. At that moment I was under the spotlight on the stage that I hoped to analyse, as I brought my request

to conduct research in the meeting. I was at once the researcher, and the research subject, as Friends considered my request. After I was introduced by the meeting Clerk, I stood to outline my intentions, and I addressed any concerns they had about the project. When I sat down, other people stood gave their opinions about my proposal. Both concerns and affirmations were voiced: ‘Will you record the ministries during Meeting for Worship?’; ‘Will you keep it anonymous?’; and ‘This could help the meeting and the Society’. Their conclusion was ‘minuted’ by the Clerk:

Doug Kline, an anthropology researcher with a history of work in conflict resolution, has asked us if he can be a participant observer in our meeting for a year. This would involve him participating unobtrusively in our activities, including consent to attend Preparative Meeting. He undertakes to submit draft chapters to us, and he agrees that all anecdotes should be anonymous.

We agree to his participant observation and consent to his attending Meeting for Worship and this Preparative Meeting in this capacity. We ask the clerk to provide Doug and the newsletter with a copy of this minute, and to announce the start of Doug’s year of study this Sunday.

The tension that placed me as the subject appeared to pass with my acceptance as a researcher with some interesting conditions placed on my participation.

In the fieldwork’s early days, I fell easily into the roles of Attender and researcher. Attenders are participants in the Religious Society of Friends, who have not chosen to be formal Members. This distinction is elaborated further in Chapter 1. The role allowed me access to Meeting for Worship and business meetings. On the Sunday following my acceptance as a researcher, I stood at the end of Meeting for Worship to introduce myself and announce the project, so it was clear that I was participating as an anthropologist. During the Sunday and Wednesday worship meetings I enjoyed the opportunity to sit in silence without taking notes. I did not

take notes during these occasions, because I did not want to inhibit people who wanted to speak in their open ministry. This contrasted my participation in business meetings, where my constant note taking easily marked my status as a researcher.

The role of the Attender also suggests a potential Member. Friends view membership in the Society as a personal choice, or an internal process of becoming 'convinced' that the truths cherished by Friends are the correct way to guide one's life. In this respect, my participation and interest in the Society was not simply a personal opportunity for academic knowledge; I was a potential Member. I was compelled to keep a separation between myself and my object of study, thinking that this would give me an analytical edge in the writing. Much of the academic writing on Friends in Britain is written by Friends, and to my thinking this has influenced their understanding of the Society, particularly when it comes to acknowledging the Attender's role. Quite often in social scientific accounts of the Society, Attenders are written out of the description. My remedy for this apparent instance of home-blindness was to write out my process of 'convincement' in the thesis. Professor Cohen would laughingly say, 'They'll get you in the end'. While writing the thesis, I was in a conversation with Tony and I repeatedly said 'we' when talking about Friends. When I caught myself at this, he simply grinned and nodded. I could only concede his prediction.

Many of the participants in the primary field location were familiar with the researcher role, since many of these people were themselves researchers in the academe or civil service. My identification as an anthropologist researching conflict usually brought humorous remarks. A 'friend' and 'Friend' would laughingly quote Robert Burns, saying 'Someone among us is taking notes, and, be warned, he'll print

them'. While in other fieldwork contexts this could indicate a marker for exclusion, in this setting it was not. This same friend later urged me to apply for a post as a residential warden at a nearby meeting house. Showing the level of acceptance for the work and my deepening position in the social milieu.

For the remaining four months of fieldwork, and throughout my writing the thesis, I worked as a residential warden at a busy meeting house. This new role suggested an acceptance that I had not anticipated when initiating the fieldwork. The position provided greater understanding of the social network in the Society, and the importance of the warden's role in that network. My responsibilities in this position included maintaining and supervising the building while it was used by other non-Quaker organisations; negotiating contracts for room hire; and being a source of information about the Quakers for people who inquired about the Society. I also came to realise through participation that the warden's informal function was as a focal point for information regarding meeting events, and as a vector for information for the meeting. I cannot stress enough the impact this participation had on my understanding of the Religious Society of Friends.

### *Prior Research*

Before embarking on a doctorate, I wrote a masters thesis on conflict management among Friends in the Indiana Yearly Meeting (Kline 1996). These Friends were from the Wilburite tradition of the Society, using a combination of silence, and structured vocal, or 'programmed', service in their weekly Meetings for Worship. The tradition also employs pastors to serve the meeting, who are responsible for pastoral duties and some of the ministerial duties such as organising the weekly

sermon and structuring the worship service. These duties are shared with the Ministry and Oversight committee, which advises the pastor and the meeting on spiritual and practical matters. These roles and practices contrast the British forms of Quaker worship, which are detailed in Chapter 1.

The research in the Indiana Yearly Meeting focused on the structural, cultural and individual influences in conflict situations reminiscent of Geertz's description of the Javanese *slametan* ritual where these factors created a tense and disturbing situation for its participants (1973). Looking at a conflict within this meeting from this perspective, highlighted several interesting characteristics about the manner in which Friends understand conflict. The belief in the Inner Light, and its equal existence in every human is a central tenet for all strands of the Religious Society of Friends. Arising from the construction of the Inner Light, Friends have a tendency to distrust individually held religious and political authority. Within this meeting the structural tension between the Ministry and Oversight Committee, and the pastor arose from the expectations from the pastor's role and the refusal to relinquish authority to the person holding post. The tension became manifest when the Ministry and Oversight Committee gathered to discuss the Pastor's pay review, throwing into question the pastor's role, and his success in performing his responsibilities.

Several discrepancies in the construction conflict and conflict management appeared from my observation among Friends in Indiana. I distinguished several subcategories forming their construction of conflict. These Friends, when directly asked, 'What is Conflict?', would respond with a definition quite similar to an operationalised definition found in social psychology. 'Conflict is a divergence of

interests', was a common response. In conversations the use of 'conflict' became more metaphorical, and the concept acquired more dimensions. An idealised construction of conflict was conveyed through sermons and in Quaker publications, which constricted the meaning of conflict to a religious understanding. A practiced form of 'conflict', where Quaker symbols are employed to manage conflicts, lies particularly in the business meetings.

The present study of Friends in Scotland is informed by my time in Indiana, but I always imagined the two projects to be discrete pieces of fieldwork, so no attempt is made to compare and contrast. Only passing reference is made to my master's thesis. The understanding I developed from this previous work led to a greater sensitivity to Society's channels of communication and decision-making. This made my entry into Scottish meetings much easier, and conveyed to my informants my earnestness for the research. An informant later told me that had I not shown this sensitivity the meeting would have had a longer debate over my involvement.

Apart from my research with Friends in the Indiana, the Society, in the United States and Britain, has gained increasing attention from social scientists. However, the primary treatment of Quakerism in the sociology has been historical (Vann 1969, Isichei 1964, 1967a, 1967b, 1970, Wilson 1971, Niebuhr 1975, Holden 1983). Vann, Isichei, and Niebuhr focused their attention on the development of the Society from religious and social movement, to sect, then denomination. Focusing specifically on conflict in the Society, sociologist David Holden wrote a social history of schisms within the Religious Society of Friends (1983). John Wilson looked at the American Hicksite separation as an exemplar of the nature of schism

(1970), and Doherty analysed the Hicksite separation, showing the split formed along urban and rural lines (1967). Other historical aspects of the Society informed the theories of other social scientists. Max Weber provided an interpretation of Friends, finding them to be excellent examples of ascetic Christianity with a strong work ethic (1930). Richard Bauman wrote on the seventeenth century use of ministry (1974) and silence creating an ethnography of silence from a linguistic perspective (1983). Michel Foucault made observations about the Society and their internalisation of the panopticon (1977), which I will discuss in Chapter 4.

Many other works were produced within the Society by social scientists that also happen to be Quaker, published by Quaker publishing houses, intended for Quaker readers. Many of these works have been attempts to understand the reasons behind the Societies falling membership (Slack 1967, Heron 1992). Heron used interviews and questionnaires to understand the continuing phenomenon of falling numbers of Members in the Society while the numbers of Attenders grows.

Consideration of contemporary Quakers from outside the Society has been more scarce. Michael Sheeran conducted two years of fieldwork with Friends in Philadelphia, studying their decision-making process (1983). In his book, Sheeran discusses the historical context for Quaker vote-less decisions, and he illustrates the difficulties that Quakers face in achieving the ideals they set for themselves (1983). Another study involving American Quakers looked at the propensity for domestic violence among orthodox conservative Quakers in Illinois (Brutz and Ingoldsby 1982) and conflict resolution styles among regular and semi-regular attending Members of this same group (Brutz and Allen 1986, and Brutz 1990). The first of these studies is noteworthy due to its surprising conclusions. The questionnaire

analysis showed that domestic violence in Quaker homes was higher than the national average and in comparison to other Christian denominations, showing that Quakers were more likely to slap, push, or shove their family members. The study also revealed that Quakers were less likely to take domestic violence to the extreme of causing serious physical harm requiring medical attention (Brutz and Ingoldsby 1982).

Marian Howard studied a small group of expatriate American Quakers living in Costa Rica, looking at the manner in which the group constructed meaning amongst themselves regarding community (1992) and a communal voice (1994). The most recent sociological publication on Quakers concerns the nature of Quaker liberal belief and conservative behavioural rules that promote conformity to practice and resistance to change (Dandelion 1996). This study considers the manner in which the Religious Society of Friends cloaks and follows its leadership and manages the behaviour of its Members outside of the meeting. Those people, who are in leadership positions, are considered to be the regulators of behavioural practices in the Meeting; whereas, Friends of long standing are exemplars of Quaker belief and action (Dandelion 1996).

Finally, the anthropological consideration of Quakers is even more limited than that found in sociology. Peter Collins (1994) discusses the meeting life of one Preparative Meeting and its Members. In this work, he distinguishes between Canonical, Vernacular, and Prototypical Quakerism. Canonical Quakerism is that which is written and published, carrying the weight of how Quaker life should be practised. This form of Quakerism is achieved communally. Vernacular Quakerism,

also communal, is the practised Quakerism within the Meeting. Prototypical Quakerism is the individual interpretation and expression of Quaker belief.

In his analysis, Collins suggests that there are dialectical tensions where Quaker praxis is played. These tensions include: inward-outward, inclusive-exclusive, sacred-profane, faith-practice, unity-diversity, individuality-corporate, tradition-change, equality-hierarchy, unity-diversity. These tensions set the context in which Quakers elaborate the narratives of their spiritual experience. Collins establishes his autobiographical account of the meeting, giving a narrative of the self, his own, in Quaker life. He asserts that this process of constructing the self, for himself and other Quakers, constitutes the life of the Quaker meeting. Quakers attempt to negotiate the prototypical Quakerism in this process.

Bradney and Cownie (2000) use a legal pluralist interpretation of the Quaker decision-making process, from an 'academic' legal perspective. I will detail the relationship of this research to my project below in my discussion of the Conflict theme that runs through the thesis.

## **The Research Themes**

The primary concerns in my investigation is how people construct the category of conflict, and explore the relationship that this construct has on the practices of conflict management. The Religious Society of Friends was chosen because of their public stance as conscientious objectors during wartime, and their involvement in non-violence movements. This pacifism provides an interesting context for observing conflict management and collective understanding of conflict, giving a coherent ideological centre to perceptions and practices. The topic, group, and

context suggest theoretical themes needing elaboration in relation to the anthropological discourse.

This section outlines the epistemological tool kit that I used when participating with Friends and when analysing my experience. It outlines the concepts that I found useful while interpreting my experience with Friends. The section is not a tracing of the theoretical lineage to the ideas presented, but an outline of the themes relevant to the ethnographic description and analysis. Six theoretical themes run through the thesis: 1) Community, 2) Conflict, 3) Tropes and Cognition, 4) Power, Hegemony, Agency and Resistance, 5) Religion and Ritualisation, and 6) Identity.

### *Community*

‘Community’ impacts to this study in three ways. The first motivation for a clear understanding of the concept was due to its dominance in the Quaker imagination. The Friends that I was with constantly nurtured a ‘sense of community’. Secondly, the concept has theoretical entailments within anthropology that require clarification. Finally, there is a relationship with community and conflict. The impact of ‘community’ on the research was readily apparent. Their ambition to welcome everyone was regularly discussed. In anthropology the notion of ‘community’ minimally is a statement on a group’s relations, amongst themselves and in relation to others. The people that are considered similar to each other and dislike others are attributed a common culture with common beliefs and actions. Community is also, potentially, a statement on social evolution, hierarchy, meaning, or consciousness. Stretching back to Maine’s blood-based community to relations of legal agreement,

reminiscent of Rousseau, we see an interpretation attempting to place community into an evolutionary scheme. While this interpretation is not helpful in this context, the legal agreement, or contractual aspects, of these early constructions of community do provide a powerful heuristic for understanding Quaker relations. This will be explored in Chapter 4, where Rousseau's social contract is used to interpret the enactment of community in the Quaker business meeting.

Friends do not overtly proselytise new converts into the community. The movement from not belonging to belonging is a matter of personal choice, and some people participate and never decided to become formal Members. This suggests a boundary is maintained and only some participants choose to cross it. Boundaries suggest meaning, where particular differences are highlighted as relevant to each distinctive category. Focusing on these segregations and the corresponding meaning, is the most useful heuristic when interpreting Quaker community. Friends are theologically tolerant, permitting a myriad of theological views to co-exist within the community. Given this absence of common religious statement, and the de-emphasis on overt symbolism in Quaker meetings, the meanings that are shared and represent the community are continually negotiated and 'discerned'. The emphasis on equality and the aversion to hierarchy found in the Society creates an interesting context for looking at how Friends engage in the construction of this meaning to represent themselves to each other and the world. Within the Society, as a participant becomes more involved in the community, a boundary is crossed where the person is viewed as a legitimate participant, and when the participant applies for membership the boundary is deliberately crossed. The boundary is the location where the figure and ground of the in-group, and all others outside, yet actively participating, is discerned.

This process is described throughout the thesis, but it is given greatest attention in Chapter 2.

Creating a sense of belonging in old and new participants was an ongoing activity and many of the issues that Friends sought to manage hinged on their understanding of ‘community’, and the symbols that represented this relationship. Elements of the thesis stress the forms of bringing people into the community through my own participation, as an Attender and a Warden. The meanings that inform Quaker community suggest they construct a social contract reminiscent of Rousseau’s theoretical ideal.

Finally, ‘community’ also has a relationship with the notion of ‘conflict’. As Simmel recognises, ‘Conflict is thus designed to resolve divergent dualisms; it is a way of achieving some kind of unity, even if it be through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties’ (1955: 13). Conflict suggests a divergence, or a division, but it also suggests a relationship. It helps to define the boundary of a community as a contrast is formed through which the members can identify each other. Conflicts create internal relationships as its tensions establish factions, requiring management and propelling a trajectory for the common discourse. Community is an idea, a relationship, and a statement that indicates a commonality, loosely binding people together around symbols that are communally perceived as meaningful (Cohen 1985). The boundaries within a community imply a contrast between groups can also be perception of competition over a material or symbolic resource. The symbols that are the touchstones for a community need not be vessels of the same meaning for every participant, and the discrepancy in meaning allows internal conflict as the differing interpretations vie for control of the symbol. According to Simmel,

Contradiction and conflict not only precede this unity but are operative in it at every moment of its existence. Just so, there probably exists no social unit in which convergent and divergent currents among its members are not inseparably interwoven. An absolutely centripetal and harmonious group, a pure “unification”, not only is empirically unreal, it could show no real life process.

1955: 15

This feature of community is explored in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 7.

Peter Stromberg (1986) explored community among a Swedish Pietist church. He argues that two believers may hold common symbols as dear, but their understanding of these symbols varies as he notes that there was very little consensus within the community on the shared fundamental symbols within the community. The important task then is to investigate the processes through which meaning is found. ‘Symbols are subsequently found by believers, usually in moments of profound insight, to express certain important truths about the self and its integration into the social world’ (Stromberg 1986: 12). Among Friends these moments are typically communal situations called ‘gathered meetings’, or when difficult decisions are made using the unique form of Quaker business meetings. The diversity found in belief systems requires the anthropologist to investigate the commitment to the common symbol by the believers. My description follows Stromberg’s argument that the commitment to the symbol and the community physically manifests itself in the ‘characteristic dispositions, postures, habits’ of the adherents (1986:13). Stromberg uses ‘commitment’ as the analytical construct to describe a believer’s attempt to reconcile belief and action into a sense of coherence or integrity which is used to contrast the suggestion that the adherents conform to rules. Coincidentally, Friends use a similar language to describe their understanding. My description does acknowledge the agent in the Meeting for Worship, but I am not able to discontinue

the rule-like attributes to community. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 7, there are sanctions with religious behaviour, which are enforced when one internal group attempts to appropriate the key symbols in the community. Power and conformity are still necessary in a description and explanation of religious behaviour.

### *Conflict*

‘Conflict’ is the central concept for this thesis, and I aim to develop an understanding of how Friends construct this category through analysis of their social organisation, cultural cognitive models, and unique practices. While I sought their understanding, I also entered the field with my own conclusions about dispute, which require elaboration. This prior knowledge comes from social psychology and cognitive anthropology. Anthropological investigation of conflict is linked to dispute, law, violence, and war, restricting the investigation to the sub-disciplines, anthropology of war or legal anthropology. However, I imagine this thesis as a slight departure from this trend, since I view the models in the sub-discipline of cognitive anthropology as a better heuristic for understanding conflict among Friends. This ethnography approaches conflict without the legal-centred analogy, because I agree with Carol Greenhouse that, ‘abandoning law-centredness enables us finally to *study* conflict, without being circular and to study the relationship of conflict to order without being formulaic’ (1982: 59). I use the concept ‘conflict’ instead of ‘dispute’ to make this departure evident from the legal-centred literature.

The definition of conflict, from sociology and social psychology, usually refers to a physical confrontation between parties (Mish, et al. 1990). Various operational definitions, used in the social sciences, focus on the behavioral aspects of conflict

(Mack and Snyder 1957; Deutsch 1973), while others focus their examination on the goals (Bernard 1953) and perceptions (Kriesberg 1987) of the parties involved. Pruitt and Rubin, who define conflict as, 'perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously' (1986: 4); consider both goals and perceptions of the parties in their investigation. These conceptions of 'conflict' were created from controlled studies of conflict in experimentally manipulated situations, creating valuable but limited tools for understanding conflict. The limits to these tools lie in the arena where they were created.

The operational definitions of conflict provide very basic models of conflict behavior in controlled settings and they provide a good starting point for an anthropological understanding of conflict; however, these definitions are from a western scientific point of view that may not be easily translated to other cultural groups, western or otherwise. The controlled setting is also a context manifesting particular power relations between the experimenter and the subject, which add to distorting our understanding of the phenomenon. My approach to these definitions accepts their initial value, but I am critical of the distortion the setting brings to our understanding of conflict dynamics.

Jean Lave (1988) provides an argument that I would like to parallel in this study. In her investigation of mathematic ability in practice, Lave reveals the problems found in studies that maintain a strict formalist research strategy, which is traditionally considered a contrast from the qualitative techniques. Lave places her research in the areas where mathematics are employed in the grocery, showing that the context is crucial for developing greater understanding of cognition. My understanding of Lave's study provided a justification for taking a study of conflict out of the laboratory, and

into areas where they are managed. The combination of formalist technique and qualitative data collection was not possible for ethical and practical reasons, so the conclusions in the study were fed by content analysis, participant observation, and semi-structured interview. I will discuss Lave's relevance to this work in greater detail in the Cognition and Tropes theme and Methodology sections below.

While Lave helps to develop the importance of context when studying cognition, the political scientist Marc Ross (1986, 1993) brings the importance of the cultural context into the formalist definitions of conflict. Ross investigates the variation of conflict resolution styles using the Human Relations Area Files. His refined definition of conflict states that 'conflict occurs when parties disagree about the distribution of material and symbolic resources and act because of the incompatibility of goals or a perceived divergence of interests' (1993: 16). He recognizes the constructed nature of conflict, and asserts that culture determines 'what people in a society fight about, whom they fight with, and how they go about it' (1993: 11). I take from this, then that conflict is a context that is culturally constructed, but the limits from using the Human Relations Area Files requires taking the investigation to the field. Conflicts are managed and enacted, where the objective structures and the dispositions of the disputing agents encourage particular performances of strategy and tactic in the conflict context.

Social science, particularly anthropology, uses a contrast between conflict and peace. Within the peace/conflict dichotomy, anthropologists have given conflict the greatest attention. A bibliography on the anthropology of conflict contained 366 pages of references (Ferguson and Farragher 1988). Anthropological interest in law has focused on dispute since Maine, but Margaret Mead (1935) was among the first to

explore aggression as a deliberate motivation for ethnography. Interest in the belligerent dimensions to conflict continued to dominate attention in anthropology. The occasional focus on peace tended to coincide with developments in political anthropology in the late 1950s and early 1960s beginning with Ashley Montague's investigation of cooperation (1952). Peace as a central focus to anthropological discussion began in the 1980s and 1990s, becoming more focused with Sponsel and Gregor (1994), providing an argument for 'peace' as the research centre. They point out that the traditional treatment of peace by anthropologists has been in a negative sense, as the absence of war. Barash asserts a positive definition of peace as, 'a condition of a society in which exploitation is minimized or eliminated all together, and in which there is neither overt violence nor the more subtle phenomenon of structural violence' (1991: 8). 'Peace' is not given prominence as the research focus beyond what my informants attribute to the category. Friends use a negotiated understanding of 'peace' that has a direct relationship with discerned 'truth'. The thesis describes this category, but not as a primary theme in its own right. The relationship between these ideas is considered in Chapter 6 and practices in Chapter 7.

The dimensions of conflict and peace guided my investigation into the conflicts of a peace-oriented organisation to see how the participants enact belief in apparently irreconcilable circumstances. This kept my attention on the internal events of the Quaker organisation, that are referred to as intra-denominational conflicts (Kniss 1997). The internal/external conflict distinction is an artificial one, since extraneous events will prompt internal disputes, but the distinction was analytically necessary. This type of conflict provides an opportunity to witness the interpretation of common symbols and varying understandings within a community.

The accepted procedures and expectations on behaviour for managing these situations will also illustrate how they construct the tense and harmonic dynamics of community. The primary case study used in the latter half of the dissertation is a conflict that arose from an external situation, and it serves as an interesting entry into these observations and dynamics.

The external conflicts that Friends confront are important, and Michael Sheeran touches on issues that Friends confront in the practice of their belief as he describes their decision-making (1983). However, the greatest source of information on the Quaker approach to issues external to the Society comes from Quaker presses in the United Kingdom, with Quaker Peace and Service and Quaker Home Service, and the United States, with Pendle Hill Publications. There are several smaller publishers that also provide Friends the opportunity to share their experiences of the beliefs in Quaker and non-Quaker settings. This pool of information is vast and an adequate content analysis of this source of information would be a rewarding venture, but it is well beyond the scope of this dissertation.

There are two ethnographies that assisted my approach in this investigation. Greenhouse, in her ethnography of Baptists in small Georgian town, argues that her informants were not confined by the law, or rules alone (1986). In this Baptist community, interactions were ordered by normative formulations, as opposed to law-oriented formulations, which assisted in managing conflicts (Greenhouse 1982, 1985). Greenhouse's observation informs this ethnographic investigation of conflict, directing the description toward understanding the language and meaning of conflict.

Similar to the Baptist context, 'conflict' and its management have a relationship with a religious or spiritual understanding. Quakers focus their practice

on their understanding of God, and they will act on this understanding before they would use legal interpretations to direct their behaviour. Weber's use of 'value-rational conduct' is helpful when describing Quaker ideas and actions relating to conflict. Their practices are deemed appropriate and sociable from a faith in its correctness, not from an enforcement of 'Quaker Law'. (These issues are explored in Chapter 4.) Therefore, the ideas that frame Quaker understanding of 'community', 'conflict', and social control are more relevant than their understanding of 'law'. I will return to this dimension of my argument when discussing the Religion and Ritualisation theme below.

In developing an understanding of the Quaker construction of conflict I aim to unfold the contextual layers of the field location, and piece together the generative tropes that Friends associate with the phenomenon to establish the cultural logic in conflict praxis. My ambition to develop the cultural logic of Quakerly conflict was motivated by the Comaroff and Roberts, who urge anthropologists to discover the cultural logic of dispute by looking at the rules and processes of dispute within the broader cultural context (1981). I will explore some of the events that occurred outside of the Quaker context to establish the broader setting and the reactions that Friends gave to these events in Chapter 1, but the dimensions of the Quaker context is of primary importance. The study is seeking Quaker conflict logic, and focusing on the intra-denominational conflicts to gain this understanding. Comaroff and Roberts assert that value and meaning are negotiations within society, and they are is 'predicated on shared symbolic categories and ideological assumptions' (1981:20). The shared symbolic categories are explored and the context will reveal a complicated variety of interpretations of these categories. The hub of my argument

will centre on my observation of an event that was initiated by a request from an outside organisation which challenged communal identity, and the interpretations of these common symbols. The incident provided an example of Friends not following their conflict protocol, and its successful reassertion, highlighting the their logic for managing dispute.

I argue that the Quaker context allows the anthropologists to go beyond using the legal system as a heuristic for conflict management and social control. While this setting will aid our understanding of conflict, or dispute phenomenon, notions of legal pluralism can confine, or even mislead, this understanding. The ambition here is to provide a rendering of my informants' construction, and their cultural logic for managing conflicts. In this ethnographic example I describe the contextual layers of the Society, and I will illustrate the 'conflicts' they encountered. Added to the social, political, and economic setting, I will include a cognitive context, and juxtapose the notion of conflict within this multi-layered setting.

I also need to position this ethnography in relation a recent book on Quakers and conflict. A recent ethnography, written by Anthony Bradney and Fiona Cownie (2000), uses 'law' and legal pluralism as a higher order schema for 'dispute' and social control. Using a legal pluralist perspective, they aim to compare Quaker decision-making and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to discover ways in which Quaker methods may inform methods of ADR. Their investigation applies a 'hierarchies of law' model, which describes the varieties of legal systems in multi-cultural societies (e.g. Islamic Law, Jewish Law, Association of British Travel Agents Tour Operators Code, etc.). These laws are practiced in tandem within the overarching British state. According to Bradney and Cownie, these various systems

hold varying degrees of relevance in citizens' lives suggesting different perceptions of power and reality. Their ethnography uses the Religious Society of Friends to challenge the notion that centralised power frames and coordinates social control (2000: 18).

Bradney and Cownie's notion of 'hierarchies of law' and the Quaker location in this hierarchy assumes a centrality of law in Quaker conflict logic. This is manifest in their notion of 'Quaker Law'. By placing Quaker practices into a broad context with other forms of social control, they illustrate these practice within the hierarchies from a Quaker perspective. They conclude that Friends' practices are not a form of dispute resolution, but a form of dispute avoidance that focuses on the maintenance of relationships and intimacy. While the Quaker context, for Bradney and Cownie, does not support new models for ADR, they do conclude that the context is a good illustration for legal pluralism. They also conclude Friends view themselves as above the law, especially when it contradicts Quaker understanding of God's intentions for humanity, supporting their conceptualisation of state power.

My ethnographic work supports the observation that Friends do not conform to notions of state legal power, but this conclusion comes from a different perspective. Firstly, Friends do adhere to the laws to which they find sociable; they conflict with the law, when their spiritual, or religious understanding is at odds with policy. They are not necessarily without law; they simply do not place the law at the centre of their motivation for behaviour, or social control.

My second challenge to their conclusion rests with their use of the phrase 'Quaker Law', which they place 'above' the British legal systems in the minds of Quakers. The problem here lies with their use of the notion of 'Quaker Law', which

does not exist in the same respects as Islamic law, Canonical law, or Judaic law. Friends do not have such a category for regulating their behaviour. The nearest analogy to law in the Religious Society of Friends are their *Advices and Queries*, which are sets of statements and questions that encourage a Quaker perspective. These passages promote a mental set which allows the participant to develop 'a model of and for the world' and their interactions within it. These quotations are not always used by Friends in their construction of reality, nor are the rule-like in their character. They do not necessarily regulate behaviour; they encourage a means of perception.

Quakers are notorious for their non-conformism both in wider society and within the religious organisation; therefore, applying the notion of 'law', or a rule-centred paradigm, to indigenous practice stretches the 'law' metaphor to a point where it speaks less of Quaker practice and more of the legal orientation of the researchers. This argument, I realise, returns us to the Bohannon-Gluckman cul-de-sac. That is a trip that I do not wish to embark upon, but I will continue by suggesting that to understand 'conflict', or dispute, among Friends, we must first place the concept within their cultural model.

This ethnography is written with the assumption that conflict is a context nested within broader contexts, involving historical references, social structures, cognitive schemas, and modes of practice. Each of these dimensions informs the others, and by investigating them, the cultural logic of conflict management can be elicited. The focused context of conflict facilitates particular perceptions that go on to inform the lived situation. My approach to conflict is, therefore, less an analytical construct in the formalist or operationally defined sense, and more a prompting

concept for my informants, on which they can project their own understanding. I approach 'conflict' as a broad and vague category that I want Friends to define. This directed my investigation as I allowed Friends to describe their understanding of conflict, and provide their case studies of the phenomenon. Through their representation of conflict and their narrated examples, I develop a construction of their conflict schema.

'Conflict', like any other context in anthropological ethnography, is presumed to be a layered context where actors perceive and behave according to dispositions that inform strategies and tactics in the setting. This approach to studying conflict will develop a cultural logic not only for the Quaker legal schema for conflict management, but it will also produce the cultural logic for numerous conflict practices utilised throughout the Quaker social milieu. There is a 'Quakerly' way to be contentious without inserting the law into our understanding.

### *Cognition and Tropes*

The community and conflict themes discussed above both emphasised the shared meanings of the indigenous categories of 'community' and 'conflict'. The literature in anthropology on cognition and tropes assisted in reaching some understanding of how Friends develop these categories, and how they enacted them. I assume 'community' and 'conflict' are 'multi-vocal symbols' (Turner 1966) and cultural practices which are negotiated using cultural assumptions, creating a range of unique cultural understandings, or 'cultural models' (Quinn 1991, and Strauss and Quinn 1994: 285), and a range of unique 'practices' (Bourdieu 1977, Lave 1988, and Strauss and Quinn 1994) within the social and cultural milieu.

Using a connectionist perspective I seek to understand how Quaker behaviour, motivation and internalised concepts can be understood as 'schema' (Strauss and Quinn 1994). Schema, being mental patterns of distinct and interconnected interpretive elements (D'Andrade 1992), help to explain the flexible rigidity found in human behaviour, which I aim to bring into my interpretation of the Scottish Quaker context. Connectionist interpretations enable ethnographic description to acknowledge both the 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' tendencies of culture (Bakhtin 1981, Strauss and Quinn 1994). Since schema are interpretations that retain the qualities of durability, historical stability, thematic stability, and social commonality, they retain vague conceptual boundaries that an anthropologist can identify and describe. At the same time, schema are particular to the individual and to the context; they are subject to personal experience, and are subject to the deliberate effort of the agent. These characteristics can facilitate social change when more agents utilise new interpretations of the schema.

The key schemas Friends share have waxed and waned in popularity in their discourses, but they are durable focal points for discussion and contemplation. I presume that no one participant understands these symbols in the same manner. My evidence will show that the interpretation of the key symbols in the Society are now understood using a wide variety of models that were not traditionally available to the participant. Making an effort to describe a single Quaker cultural schema is challenged by this reality. Not all cultural schema are endorsed or encouraged by the power structures, so the context and the individual are regularly negotiating the appropriateness of the working schema in their understanding. In the Quaker setting, interpreting the silence is a personal endeavour, but Quaker silence is unique from

separate from other silences and the delicate distinction is maintained by people in the meeting who demonstrate experience or are assigned the task. The ability of the individual to accomplish this sensitivity in any cultural setting is important to acknowledge. I am suggesting that the ability to grasp cultural schema in the discursive interaction between agents is a common human faculty. Stated simply, people are able to discern differences, and they are able to think about this differences.

Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994) recognise the diversity that underlies the distinctions that individuals appreciate, and Gatewood (1985) describes the diversity in personal understanding of cultural models. These phenomenon are echoed in this description. I use the phrase 'cognitive schema' to represent the personal cognitive organisation of phenomenon, distinguishing this from the shared meaning found in 'cultural schema', or collective representations (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994: 140). The objective structures informing practice require interpretation prior to sublimation, and this interpretation falls upon the individual.

To discriminate a Quaker wider cultural schema from other possible schemas, I analyse the idiom and tropes Friends used in the various areas of Quaker activity to discover common themes. I imagine this as a cognitive context, or an identifiable domain of Quaker knowledge that is informed by their generative tropes and other cultural schema. While there are numerous functions for tropes, I aim to focus attention on those tropes that inform a common language in the multi-vocal context. Tropes themselves are subject to contextual variation, so the shared generative tropes in the Society are highlighted in various stages of performances.

The tropes and the contexts are nested, so this description and analysis relies on the thick description advocated by Geertz (1973). Generative tropes, or key metaphors provide a means through which to develop meaning where understanding is more obscure. For Friends understanding the concept of God is developed through the Inner Light trope, from which an entire system of understanding is derived. The metaphor is embedded into other systems of understanding and into 'Quakerly' behaviour. There are two schemas that are described in this ethnography. The wider, higher order, schema, that provides the central heuristic for Friends when they engage the world, originates from the Inner Light trope. This higher order schema is reminiscent of Geertz's 'models of and models for' in his definition of religion (1973). The participation in worship prioritises the Quaker schema's use in the life of a Friend. Even though there are numerous higher order schemas available to interpret the world, the Quaker context reinforces the use of their unique understanding for the participant. I aim to establish the means by which this prioritisation occurs while participating in Meeting for Worship through ritualisation.

The notion of conflict is the second schema explored. Above I address the motivation for exploring conflict, and the aim to discover its cultural logic. Investigating the cognitive attributes is one method at achieving this aim. Conflict is a schema imbued with cultural understanding, and this understanding is approached through highlighting the various Quaker contexts where conflicts are discussed, and the tropes that are associated with the notion. In exceptional cases the tropes and their entailments are a direct reflection of the cultural logic (Johnson 1987), but Quinn (1991) suggests a constellation of metaphors reflect this logic. This analysis adds to Quinn's argument, by showing how the tropes associated with conflict and

the generative tropes are all needed to understand Quaker conflicts. I would add that the metaphors are informed by the context where they are most deeply embedded and enacted. Tropes are themselves subject to contextual variation (Fernandez 1986, and Ohnuki-Tierney 1991), so the generative tropes and those associated with conflict are highlighted in various stages of Quaker performance. By using Goffman's (1959) stage metaphor, I will demonstrate the effectiveness of context on the expression of conflict and the impact the varying internal contexts has on conflict practices through the enactment of the Inner Light trope.

### *Power, Hegemony, Agency and Resistance*

Above I mentioned that Peter Collins (1994) recognised numerous tensions being negotiated among Friends. The management of these tensions suggested an enactment of power relations as Friends established and resisted the constraints on their religious understanding, both within the Religious Society of Friends and from the outside. The ongoing conversation in the Society, regarding their common belief, and constitutional structures, suggests a struggle over interpreting the common symbols and the intention that the Inner Light has for the Society. The struggle therefore is one over appropriating the meaning of the key symbols, and ultimately the meanings that the participants embody. This religious setting works to minimise power concentrations, preferring power to be held collectively. This fact gives the appearance that the Society is acephalous, especially when comparing the Society of Friends to the Church of England, or even the Church of Scotland. The Society does not appear on the surface to have individually held power. This ethnography considers how power relations are constructed among Friends. In this section I want

to highlight the issues of power in both anthropological discourses and how these inform my understanding of Quaker power relations.

The language that I use to describe the Society reflects the tensions I found in the Society, where hegemony and agency are both apt concepts portraying Quaker organisational structures and behaviours. The ideas suggest a philosophical struggle in my writing and in what I witnessed in the field. To be clear about my meaning, I will define my terms and establish the foundation for my usage.

Power is a fiercely contested term. I entered the field with an understanding of power from the writing of Asad (1983, 1993), Foucault (1977), and Bourdieu (1977, 1984, and 1991). I left the field with an interest in the notion of communicative power advocated by Arendt (1986). Asad's plea to look at power relations when attempting to understand religion supplied my interest in understanding power manifestation in the Society, and how these relations create religion (1983). Friends avoid overt demonstrations of individually held power, preferring communal action through consensual decisions.

My tendency to allow the field experience dictate my use of particular concepts, like community, and conflict partly continues with my use of 'power', as I try to describe the forms of power relations in the Society. My understanding of power was clearly at odds with my informants, so what I describe is not their explicit understanding. Friends associate power with domination, and what Voltaire described as, 'Making others act as I choose'. Using this absolutist construction, Friends view themselves as powerless in the wider society. They act to, 'speak truth to power', hoping to persuade and bring about God's intentions for humanity. In

this ethnography, I am privileging my etic understanding, which reflects the myriad of power relations employed by Friends implicitly.

In my description, I could easily make a cogent argument that privileges one of the notions of power mentioned above. The Foucaudian notion of power that recognises the adept manipulation of a discourse of knowledge (Foucault 1977), or an internalisation of utilitarian domination, is apparent from my experience. Friends recognise a notion of ‘weight’, who is a person whose words carry weight in the Quaker discourse. A communal recognition of a person’s experiences enacting Quaker belief provides the ‘weighty’ Friend with as degree of influence on the various stages of Quaker performance. Also, the form of worship, which implicitly employs Quaker symbols, is open to a variety of interpretations. The management of these symbols suggests a control over the trajectory of the Quaker discourse.

My participation within the field supported a notion of power that is expounded by Bourdieu (1977), where entrusting property to me as a Warden for the Meeting House, was part of the process of instilling in me the values of the Society. I was not fully aware of this process as it occurred, but in my analysis of my fieldnotes I was struck by my recollection of my interview for the Warden’s post:

The closing question in the interview was, ‘Do you have any closing comments?’ I shared with them my first formal encounter with Friends when I was conducting fieldwork in Indiana. I went to the Indiana Yearly Meeting office to introduce myself and request permission to do fieldwork. When I entered the IYM office, the secretary, who sat behind a desk, greeted me. Unexpectedly, her greeting included standing and shaking my hand. This unconventional welcome immediately melted away the prescribed roles of a secretary and a visitor. She became a person, and I felt welcome. After I described the encounter, I said, ‘I want to be a part of that kind of welcome’.

I became a participant in the power relations of the Society, by enacting the values in the Deputy Warden position and subtly being a persuader of these values as I greeted

people who came to the building. As I placed glass in the recycle container, arranged chairs in a circle for worship, and hung posters about peace, I was persuading others in a very 'Quakerly' way.

Yet another understanding of power was employed in the Quaker business meeting. The 'Quakerly' form of integrated decisions was reminiscent of the Rousseauian social contract, and Hannah Arendt's communicative power that states, 'Power corresponds to the human ability to act in concert. Power is never the property of the individual; it belongs to a group, and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together' (1986: 64). This system suggests the participants freely empower the authority figure. The deliberate decision to participate in the contract provides the authority figure its legitimacy. In the Society, this authority is the communally discerned truth from God, or the Inner Light. Power becomes communal action from the ultimate moral force. When individual participant disagree with the group, they may freely leave the contract, and re-enter it if they later change their mind.

By supporting one definition of power, I would, in a Foucaudian sense, be promoting a solitary discourse over others within anthropology, and I would incur an injustice on my experience. The ethnography interweaves the theories of power in the description, showing how Friends employ their social contract, and how the contract informs the Quaker discourse, and establishes dispositions in the participants that go on to inform the cultural logic of conflict behaviour. Ultimately, this supports a Bourdieuan use of power.

The assertion of the individual was difficult to ignore particularly in the interviews when the unique approaches to worship emerged from a variety of

theological understandings. Quakers are also keenly aware of the debates within the Society, and some even acknowledge the power structures I sought to investigate. After my first official Meeting for Worship two participants in the meeting came to me, and asked my opinion of Pierre Bourdieu's writing. Reflexive awareness of structures and belief was readily noticeable in at least a few participants. I seldom encountered people who did not critically think about their belief; indeed, some would refuse to describe their practice as a belief system.

As I encountered particular constraints in the context, I found the concept of hegemony increasingly helpful. The hegemony that I describe is much more subtle than crass totalitarian domination associated with Marxist interpretations. My use of the term reflects a symbolic, or ideological domination that structures the organisation and increases the likelihood of particular practices and decreases the chances of others. I am not necessarily describing an oppression. As you will discover participants are encouraged to build their own understanding, which is subtly, even sublimely tested in worship and in casual discourse. It disinclines some practices, disguises internal power hierarchies, and establishes a rigid form of conflict management. The hegemony that I describe is not one that necessarily harms those involved, there is a sense of benevolence and affinity with the systems that Friends share as they are incorporated into the participant's practices. This should be reminiscent of Bourdieu (1977) and Bell's (1992) redemptive hegemony, where there are constraints on the agent, who is still offered considerable choice in their actions. While the hegemony does prevent certain solutions to conflicts, and disguises some problems for Friends, they prefer their system because of its pragmatic utility for getting decisions made so Friends can act according to their

belief. Pragmatics alone are not the only reasons, because Friends attach religious significance to their decisions. Adhering to the system is an expression of faith.

With the hegemonic impetus comes acts of resistance. The term resistance comes with complaints that it is over used to the point of meaninglessness in anthropological discourse (Stoler 1986, Cooper 1992, Brown 1996). The nonconformity and conformity found amongst Friends requires a term that can explain their attempts at self-expression in reaction to other redemptive hegemonies. In spite of the troubled baggage that comes with the term, I found it a helpful concept when describing participants that did not accept the communal decisions, or the trajectory of increasing theological diversity. Resistance is not only telling the persecutor 'no' on the torture table. 'Resistance' in this description is action that counters the authority structures and authorised sanctions on behaviour. In this context it is manifested in weapons of the middle class, by people who perceive injustice and act to quietly impose a new order. These behaviours are typically directed towards the governmental structures outside of the Society of Friends, but they can also occur inside the Society in local, regional and national spheres, as I will demonstrate in the later half of the thesis.

The theoretical tensions between hegemony and agency are also found within the practices and discourses within the Society. Rather than seeking to resolve the theoretical issues, I aim to describe the manner in which they enacted hegemonic and resistant opportunities.

*Religion to Ritualization*

The experiences from this fieldwork reveal the troubles related to definitions of religion. The manifestation of individualism within this Quaker context contributes to the challenges to the earlier anthropological postulation that there is a single system of shared meanings or assumptions within a religion. As I entered the field I was armed with Geertz's definition of religion, and Asad's warning about attending to power. When I sat in Meeting for Worship for the first time, the definition crumbled. The silence veiled the multiplicity of Quaker understandings, and I realised that there was not simply, 'a system of symbols' (Geertz 1973: 90). Each participant brought their own symbols to be understood within the broader Quaker symbol of silence. Within each person resided private symbols, which informed the public symbol of silence as Friends negotiate the meaning of their experience in a deeply stylised manner. Quaker emphasis on practice establishes a context where we can view the creation of belief into behaviour, particularly as it relates to conflict situations.

'Ritual' soon became the primary concept for my understanding Friends, and my participation with them. This interest is less oriented toward the traditional descriptions of expressing religious ideas of sacred beings. My description uses the heuristic of performance associated with Goffman (1967), Geertz (1980), and Tambiah (1979). The presentation of contemplative and controlled silence and speaking amongst participants models the proper form for worship in the Quaker setting. Friends are reluctant to describe their activities as driven that disguises the importance of conformity to a decorum or set of expectations regulating their worship. In the Quaker business meeting is a setting where self-imposed regulation

is the most crucial, since it is where the realities of diversity can be the most apparent. Bell (1992) criticises the performative approach for not delving into the personal meaning of the event for its participants, which is also a concern for this analysis. My use of the performance heuristic is therefore a device to introduce the form of Quaker meetings and decision-making to then elaborate the diverse interpretations of the meanings and symbols utilised by participants in the Society.

The association made between ritual and social conflict is common amongst theorists like Durkheim (1965), Levi-Strauss, Geertz (1983), and especially Gluckman (1962) and V. Turner (1969). Rituals are viewed as events that reconcile fundamental tensions society. The focus in this study lies less with these wider theoretical features of ritual, than with the ritualised treatment of conflict. I make an analytical distinction between these generalised theories of ritual and ritualised decision-making. The above authors describe the essence of ritual as a reconciliation of core conflicts in society. The tension and outcome played out in the ritual may not be in the participant's awareness as they act in the distinctive setting. My distinction, ritualised decision-making, includes the unconscious function involved in creating a generalised harmony, but it also has the added dimension of being an event that has the deliberate function of maintaining or restoring social unity in the minds of the participants. The accepted decorum and protocol of ritualised decision making maintain the location of power within the community. Also, the various issues for consideration maintain the doxic features of the discourse, maintaining the authorised trajectory of the communal conversation. These features go largely unquestioned and permit cohesion even where disputing parties are unable to reconcile their needs. In law, the plaintiff and the defendant may leave the courtroom without a desire to

maintain a relationship, but the relationship of the disputants to the power structures of the courtroom are maintained and the law is upheld. Wider society manages the minor conflict. Among Friends the ritualised theatre for managing conflicts, the business meeting, similarly upholds the power structures that are closely tied to the identity of Friends. Bell (1992) however asserts that rituals do not necessarily reconcile social tensions, but provide only temporary solutions to the broader problems that can actually be replicated in the ritual. This criticism is acknowledged in the final chapter, where I illustrate the hegemonic aspects of Quaker decision making which limit choice and ensure a 'Quakerly' quality to the management of conflicts.

The Quaker context also challenges the notions of ritual as they are described by van Gennep (1960), and Turner (1969). The stages of separation, liminality, and re-incorporation are not easily translated into describing Quaker gatherings for decision-making, marriage, or worship. Quaker Meeting for Worship is a distinct separation from everyday life, and the goal of creating community through the creation of egalitarian structures does describe the event. Turner describes Friends as a group that lives in a liminal state, where they are separated from mainstream society and do not re-incorporate (1969). This may have described Friends in the seventeenth century, but Friends are no longer as rigid with their boundaries that separate them with the wider British society. They are engaged with the world, while they aim to enact their beliefs which are reinforced when they gather. The Quaker ritual today can be described as a time of liminality, where the participant is separated from the wider society, and, after the worship, the person re-incorporates into society as a reinforced Friend. This description, however, leaves what happens

within the ritual itself unexplained. The three phases of a ritual are not a successful description within the crucial location of where Friends gather and find meaning. The phases illustrate catholicity, where in Roman Catholic Mass the laity undergoes a transformation within the ceremony, but the transformation is more veiled and oblique in all Quaker ceremonies. So what happens within their hour of worship?

My observations and description emphasise the diversity and fluidity found in the Quaker silence. The form of Meeting for Worship follows a decorum, but the regulations that establish the silent moment as a Quaker activity are negotiated and disputed. Power relations become relevant considerations when attempting to understand Quaker rituals and ritualised decision-making. Even though the traditional terms that are normally appropriate for describing what Quakers do lose their explanatory power, the Society does provide a context that supports the notion of ritualisation (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994, and Bell 1992, 1997). The theory of ritualisation proposes that rituals produce agents who embody the values promoted in the occasion. Ritualised agents are capable of reproducing cultural schemes reinforced in the unique objectified realities in this special context. Humphrey and Laidlaw describe the Jains and ritual action in a manner that assists our understanding of the Quaker context:

This intrinsic 'directedness' does not give ritual actions discursive meaning. It is a separate response which does this: the archetypal acts-to-be-performed are felt by those who perform them to be 'apprehensible', or recoverable. By 'meaning to mean' the ritual actor can reappropriate the ritual act and realign it with his or her intentions. We argued that scripture and commentaries of religious authorities cannot alone account for this. Although they provide a pool of available material they cannot define how ritual actions are to be performed nor can they assign unique meanings to them. This work remains to be done by the actor.

1994: 260

Friends gather and worship, seeking to reinforce their practices through a gathered silence which allows private meanings to be projected from the 'pool of available material' to which the actor regards as helpful in their spiritual development. The practice directs a participant's attention toward private understanding, and, because of the context, toward Quaker meanings, specifically the key testimonies of simplicity, integrity, peace and equality. These meanings are internalised through processes of conformity, and a systems of self-discipline that are identified as 'Quakerly'. Internalisation is recognisable through regular participation, and use of Quaker idiom in a process that indigenously is termed, 'being convinced'. The common behaviours that are associated with communal and private understanding of Quaker belief become the nearest this to a creed in the Society today (Dandelion 1996).

Once I establish the contexts, the ritualisation, and practices of the field, I turn attention toward the manner in which the Quaker disposition responds to the conflict context. Ritualisation, according to Bell (1997), de-emphasises the notions of control, preferring to investigate relationships of power. While this was useful for understanding Quaker Meeting for Worship, the ritualised decision-making clearly established an environment where social controls were deliberately implemented. Gluckman (1963) and Turner (1969) both described the repression and sublimation that occur in rituals. The partaker in ritual is viewed as suppressing emotion and reaping the society's virtues. I found this helpful when understanding Quaker decision-making, where the ritualised process requires considerable concentration, and personal editing to achieve a unified decision. Friends refer to these attributes as 'discipline' and a 'sense of the meeting'. The ritualised participant in this setting is

someone acting Quakerly. This distinction will be illustrated in Chapter 7 where an implementation of a simple door-keeping policy resulted in the meeting's elders emphasising the Quaker meaning of silence by dissuading tardiness to worship.

### *Identity*

Friends today are increasingly aware of their lack of theological commonality. I stress repeatedly the challenges that this presents to anyone who tries to represent Quakers as a coherent group. In spite of all the dogged individuality, Friends repeatedly use the notion of 'Quakerly' behaviour, suggesting that there is merit in exploring their sense of commonality that is articulated. To help me with understanding Quaker identity, I return to community and how it is experienced.

Community was a preoccupation and a comfort for the people that I describe. Friends worked weekly to establish a time when they could enact their common symbols and emphasise the practices that made them unique in relation to the rest of the world. For the regular participant and the Member of the Society, the sense of community also involved a sense of self, as becoming a Quaker also becomes a reference for how to act. Many participants viewed the Society and their participation in worship as 'coming home' where they met like-minded people who were able to reinforce their understanding of the world. In some instances the participants surmised they were 'Friends' before encountering the Society, and their involvement resulted from their relief and appreciation for the common community they discovered with Friends. When they discovered the Society, they discovered a place where they could explore their theological understanding and invest action into this understanding. The setting was simply a place of acceptance for them to enact

and reinforce their understanding, and be their identity. As regular participation in the community continued, other Quaker related attributes are internalised as the context promotes a disposition based on Quakerism.

Quaker identity contains an aspect of nonconformism – a paradoxical aspect of their identity that challenges community. The agents involved in the community are in a constant negotiation over the appropriation of common symbols, and ultimately over the '*right* to define the individual's identity' (Cohen 1994: 178), at least the communal, Quaker identity. The nonconformist tradition portrays the personal right to resist the prevailing interpretation of the symbol within this setting. The rules or expectations that inform the negotiation of the symbols in the Quaker context provide the commonality and a sense community. The symbols are common, yet what gets represented is too multi-vocal.

The notion of 'Quakerly' is associated to what Dandelion calls the 'Behavioural Creed' (1996). For many faiths the sense of commonality and community arises from a public pronouncement of common belief; whereas, Friends use common behaviour to establish a common identity. The participants that demonstrate the behavioural creed adeptly, are demonstrating what Bourdieu calls a knowledge of the game (1977). A Quakerly person demonstrates aspects of a common identity that are the internalised values of the Society. I am suggesting, based on the following ethnographic case, that a communal identity is a contextually based essentializing process whereby participants can recognise the internalised values enacted by themselves and other participants in the community. It is unnecessary to determine if a person enters a community with the common attributes already internalised, or if the ritualised context instils the attributes to identity. The

important factor is that the group is able to recognise the valued features, and that they reward these attributes with increases in status, and an accumulation of roles within the community.

Conversion into a community suggests that a person's consciousness is transfigured by a social process. The initiate may recognise an already existing aspect of his or herself in the community, and the similarity creates an affinity with the group. As the initiate increases participation, he or she recognises more similarities, but these similarities may be the products of the ritualisation process where the values and idiom are becoming a part of the person's identity, inclining the person to interpret the world in similar ways as the community.

With respect to a conflict context, the identity that incorporates more Quakerly behaviours, will act in particular ways that include the non-conformism and the more deliberate values rehearsed in the Meeting House. The Quakerly forms of strategy and tactic are incorporated into the behavioural repertoire of the participant as the person acts with the assumptions and values of the community. The behaviours are generalised and carried into new contexts where the Friend aims to enact their belief, or identity, where the community's support system for the behaviours and motivation are not readily available.

Once affiliation with Quakers is known to others not in the Society, the person becomes identified by others in a stereotyped manner. Interestingly, my own behaviour became associated as Quakerly by friends and colleagues. On one occasion a friend and colleague continuously used the word 'fuck' in a conversation with me and his female partner. When I left the couple, she turned to him and said, 'You can't talk that way in front of him. He's a Quaker'. Later my friend confided

this to me, and we laughed uproariously. Then we had another Guinness. My friends' perceptions and actions hinted at three issues. I wondered, how much of the Quaker identity have I internalised to lead to the presumption that I was a Friend. I am aware that I interact with others in a manner different than before fieldwork, and I am aware that the Quaker context was the influence on this behaviour. I also mused at the expectations non-Friends place on their understanding of 'Quakerly' behaviour, even though they may not be aware of the term 'Quakerly'. Finally, this expectation instilled a discipline that one friend applied to her language, and the other did not, based on his knowledge that I was not a Member. Labelling an identity to another person presumes attributes to that person, and particular behaviours for oneself. While I do not explore the impact of the Friend/Non-Friend boundary extensively, I do explore the boundaries that are internal to the Society, and how they contribute to behaviours and expectations on both sides of the internal boundary.

## **Methodology**

### *Data Collection*

Fieldwork consisted of thirteen months of participant-observation among Friends in Scotland. Participant-observation occurred in numerous locations in Scotland, but the primary source of information came from a local meeting, and their weekly gatherings for worship. Meeting for Worship was held twice weekly for the entire term of observation. Occasionally Friends would gather for worship at semi-regular intervals. The local meeting also held regular events throughout the month. People involved in the running of a meeting get little rest, visiting the meeting house

regularly during the week to perform their duties. Committee meetings, meetings for learning and social events fill the diaries of Friends, and I soon found that the majority of my data would arise from these events. No field-jottings were written during Meeting for Worship at the request of Friends. During worship I would make use of mnemonics to remember the content of ministry, then scribble these on paper after worship, typing the fuller description later that evening. Observation of the business method that Friends employ occurred at local, district and regional levels throughout Scotland. I was also given the privilege to observe the local level Elder's committee meetings where decisions about the 'spiritual life' of the meeting were considered. In the last six months of fieldwork, I worked at the Meeting as an Assistant Warden, where I supervised the use of the building when it was let for non-Quaker events.

Quakers are reported to distrust questionnaires (Dandelion 1996). This is attributed to their literate belief culture, their diffused authority, enduring peculiarities, and the insistence on individuality (Dandelion 1996). This finding provides a good rationale for using qualitative techniques, particularly participant-observation and semi-structured interviews. I conducted 28 semi-structured interviews (21 Members and 7 Attenders). The interviews were intended to be an hour long, but the average interview was just over an hour and a half, with the briefest being 30 minutes and the longest being 3 hours. To promote an atmosphere conducive to conversation, I allowed the informant to choose where the meeting would occur. Fourteen interviews were conducted in the informant's home; seven were conducted in my home. Two people chose to hold the interview at the Meeting House, three at work and one in a café. All of the interviews were recorded, and

later transcribed for analysis. In the semi-structured interviews I sought to cover particular topics: their personal introduction to the Society, their experience with conflict in the Society, the meaning of Meeting for Worship, the place of children in the meeting, and expressing their faith away from the Meeting House. In a few interviews I also took an opportunity to obtain historical information about Friends in Scotland. I concluded the interviews by asking if my informant had any questions for me. This usually prompted a conversation about my involvement in the Society, and if I was considering membership. This was the nearest to overt proselytising that I encountered.

In the early days of fieldwork, some Friends directed my attention to books about decision-making in the Society, and conflict among Friends. This provided focused attention to the literature review that I had already initiated before fieldwork. I read Quaker literature and business meeting minutes to develop the historical context, and 'canon' (Collins 1994) of the particular meeting I studied. My informant's suggestions were helpful because they aided my understanding in what informed their thinking about particular issues and practices.

Finally, I conducted three focus groups where Friends were provided with an opportunity to read a draft of the thesis and provide comment. This opportunity informed my writing a final draft of the thesis, which I detail below.

### *Writing*

I have already mentioned my continuing participation with Friends after the fieldwork officially ended. This made writing the thesis a challenge. Often I would write paragraphs that would be contradicted in conversation, or discover more

evidence to illustrate my argument. I came to envy my colleagues that had relatively finite sets of fieldnotes on their return from fieldwork. They were forced to write based on these recollections, and only a few were able to take return trips to obtain more elaboration for their deeper understanding. A return trip to my field site only took a trip to work, a visit to the Meeting for Worship, or going to dinner with a Friend. My promise to stop note taking was not an easy promise to fulfil. While my fieldnotes did end after the official observation period mentioned in the minute that gave me permission, my relationships continued to influence the writing by providing greater support for my argument.

The writing style in the thesis had several constraints placed upon it from my continuing participation. I have already mentioned my own distancing from the subject to maintain an analytical boundary. This comes across in the writing as me being artificially removed from the model. I hope that this introduction dispels the artificiality of the writing device. Another motivation for the writing style arose from the requirement of protecting the individual identities of my informants. Early in the fieldwork two Friends, one of whom voiced concern about anonymity in the business meeting where I asked for permission to conduct the study, mentioned a concern about the upset an anthropologist caused a meeting in England, when short biographies about individual participants were included in the writing. I understood their concerns as a caution, so I convey their words using the conventions that tend to distance their individual character from what was spoken.

Along with the challenges to the writing, my proximity to my informants and writing in 'their' language provided terrific opportunities. My agreement with the local meeting to allow access to an early draft of the thesis was originally established

to assure Friends that I earnestly sought to protect their anonymity, but this became an opportunity to assay their opinion of the thesis. Once a draft was ready for their perusal, I conducted three focus groups designed to elicit this opinion in a setting where I could record the interaction. On 30 June 2002 the local meeting was invited to read a draft of Chapters 1 through 7, and participate in one or more focus groups to be conducted at their Meeting House on 8, 10, and 11 July 2002. Five copies of the draft were left in the Meeting House's library where anyone interested could borrow a copy, and read it at home. I also left five copies on floppy disk with the Warden so anyone with a computer could take a copy (see Appendix A - 'Introduction to the Focus Group Draft'). Four people received a copy through an email attachment. The first week after supplying the draft, there were only four people who had checked out a copy. I worried that there would not be much information gleaned from the exercise until the following Sunday when a Friend in worship ministered on what he read in the draft. After the Meeting several people came to me requesting a copy. Fifteen people checked out a copy from the library; seven people received a copy on floppy disk; and another four people received a copy using email.<sup>1</sup> I was able to trace twenty-four people having access to a copy of the thesis. Others may have had access without my awareness through informal lending of the materials.

The quantity of responses was better than expected. Nine people responded in writing through the post or via email, and four of the printed copies of the thesis were returned with editorial comments. The written responses ranged from editorial comment, correcting syntax, grammar, and spelling and factual information, to critical analysis of my conclusions. Informal comments outside the focus groups

were supportive. People casually reported their interest, and appreciation for having access to the draft.

The focus groups were conducted over three nights with each session scheduled to be an hour and a half. Each session was recorded using an audiocassette recorder, and a video recorder. I established a protocol for the focus groups setting a procedure, participant's roles and the goals for the occasion, but to quote an informant 'organising Quakers is like herding cats'. The requirements to establish rapport, and develop the issues, outlined in handbooks on focus groups (Fern 2001, and Kruger and Casey 2000) and in anthropological research (Agar and MacDonald 1995), were not conducive to this setting. In fact, the relationships already established with the focus group participants barely allowed an introduction. The deliberate structuring of the sessions quickly shifted into semi-structured group interviews, and the last session became a 'Quaker viva', where I defended particular interpretations that I took from the field. In spite of the shift from formality to informality in the sessions, the topics I had aimed to cover from the formal protocol were covered. These efforts were richly rewarded by the interesting comments that the sessions elicited. My temptation is to completely relinquish editorial control of the focus group material and simply provide the transcriptions, however constraints on the thesis length and the reader's attention would limit the value of this strategy. Therefore, the data from these sessions are used throughout the thesis to enrich or qualify my interpretation.

## Thesis Organisation

My heuristic for writing the thesis was an overlapping crescendo and diminuendo, where the latter is the voice of my informants and the crescendo is my anthropological interpretation of their words. Early in the writing I aim to turn the description over to their emic understanding of Meeting for Worship and the experience of community. The issues of conflict within the Society are minimised in the early contextualisation of the field site. As the thesis progresses my interpretation informs the writing and casts their statements into particular patterns that are external to the ethos of the Society. The writing uses this heuristic as a rough guide, so the actual thesis oscillates between their words and my understanding of them; however, the early chapters are devoted mostly to their understanding, and the final chapters are mostly my understanding of their words.

The structure of this thesis is also inspired by the activity of going to Meeting for Worship as I witnessed it during observation. When approaching the meeting room where worship occurs, one nears the room quietly. When the first person enters a meeting room, the worship has started. Silence begins. Initially one is left with thoughts about the earlier conversations in the lobby perhaps, or the trouble encountered in finding a parking place on arrival. Many people at this time have initiated their 'centring down', or the process of being open to the spirit. Thoughts of a secular nature are typically laid aside, or their spiritual significance is contemplated. Basically, at the beginning of worship, the person is left with their own thoughts and letting these thoughts go as one seeks 'Truth' in the silence. A person may stand in this time to share a ministry, or the Truth that has come to their awareness. As you listen to ministry, your inner voice converses with what was said.

The meeting where I participated had ministry regularly, so as the next person stands to share their experience, more voices are added to the internal conversation. The voices are considered, synthesised, refuted, manipulated, ignored, or appreciated. Participants are encouraged to, 'Reach for the meaning deep within it [ministry], recognising that even if it is not God's word for you, it may be so for others' (Quaker Faith and Practice 1995: 1.02.12). Ministry is made personally meaningful by making connections from one ministry to the next and from personal experience. At the end participants shake hands and converse.

Meeting for Worship will guide the flow of this document by using the order of the worship. Initially, in this Introduction, my voice has taken prominence in the discussion of the theoretical issues within the discipline, like the internal voice approaching the meeting room that considers earlier comments. Here I have established the structures through which I make their ministries personally meaningful as an anthropologist. In Chapter 1, the important contextual information is provided, setting the scene where Friends explore their faith, and internalise the ramifications of their religious understanding. Chapter 2 explores Meeting for Worship as Friends describe it to me, so my informants will emerge providing their insight on Religious Society of Friends and the Meeting for Worship. Like their worship, I wanted to allow voices to emerge, like ministry, as they were discerning the truth of their experience of community and worship. Chapter 3 is in many ways the central focus of the thesis, where I narrate an event that occurred in the field that helped my understanding of conflict in the Society. This chapter is where I imagine their voice beginning to diminuendo, as I begin to privilege my understanding of their behaviour in the interpretation. The organisational structures are given a deeper

consideration in this chapter as they relate to a particular conflict that occurred during fieldwork. The heuristic of Meeting for Worship continues, as after a ministry the participant is encouraged to make the message meaningful from their own experience. I begin to analyse what my participation, and what my informants shared in relation to my anthropological understanding. Chapter 4 is a continuation from Chapter 3 in that I discuss the issues of power relations in the Society. Next, through explicating the generative tropes that Friends use in their practice, and interpreting their behaviours, I set the cognitive context in Chapter 5. A construction of 'conflict' is finally discussed in Chapter 6

Throughout these chapters conflicts are considered, and used as an introduction to each chapter's relevant theme. In Chapter 1, I highlight particular conflicts in Quaker history and in the world, suggesting the impact these moments had on Quaker identity, and practices. The discussion in this chapter also reveals the tensions between two roles, of Member and Attender, within the Society. Chapter 2, as it focuses on 'community', contrasts 'conflict' implicitly in Quaker activities. The tensions that arise from the ambitions of Quaker ideals and the implementation of these ideals are revealed in Chapter 3, where the discussion of conflict becomes more explicit. Chapter 4 details the tensions between the communal testing of experience and the inclination toward allowing freedom among the agents in Quaker meetings in the building of a social contract. The importance of tropes in maintaining relationships in the midst of theological complexity is described in Chapter 5. Chapters 6 and 7 are the clearest and most explicit statements on conflict as these chapters account for the location for conflicts, the cognitive forms that are used in

understanding 'conflict', and the conflict practices that emerge from the Quaker disposition.

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### Notes

<sup>i</sup> Unfortunately one person only received Chapter 5 of the thesis due to memory limits on the email account.

## Chapter 1 - The General Context

The Religious Society of Friends is rooted in Christianity and has always found inspiration in the life and teachings of Jesus. How do you interpret your faith in light of this heritage? How does Jesus speak to you today? Are you following Jesus' example of love in action? Are you learning from his life the reality and cost of obedience to God? How does his relationship with God challenge and inspire you?

*Advices and Queries*

1995: 1.02.04

The Religious Society of Friends originates from Protestant Christianity, and the Christian dimension to the Society is repeatedly stressed in the passage above. Friends believe in a continuing revelation of God's truth, and they aspire to seek this truth and use it to guide their lives. The above *Advices and Queries*, and others like them, help to discipline Friends and focus their interpretations of truth and their behaviour. Sometimes the passages are read within worship to suggest the means by which to interpret the experience, emphasising the event as one that is Quaker. Some Friends memorise the passages and use them in Quaker discourse or contemplate them privately in worship. They also act as a guide to private reflection at home and at work. I consider these passages to be important elements in the process of becoming a Friend. *Advices and Queries* inform the "regulated improvisation" (Bourdieu 1977: 11) of a Friend's behaviour as they encounter life's situations both within the Society and away from the meeting house. The ideology that these passages contain are internalised through the ritualisation. Throughout the dissertation I aim to illustrate these processes, then direct our attention to how the Quaker understanding is used to interpret 'conflict' and practice 'conflict management'. For our purposes in this dissertation the *Advices and Queries* are used

to illustrate Quaker understanding as an opening to each chapter to highlight the relevant analytical issues.

Christianity is the root of the organisation, and Jesus is the inspiration for action. Both 'Christianity' and 'Jesus' are problematised by Friends, and they are constantly critically examined ideas. The Society today is not exclusively Christian, and Friends utilise a plethora of syncretic theologies. The origins of this diversity arises from past negotiations concerning the authoritative relevance of the Inner Light and the Bible.

To develop an understanding of these complicated issues within the Quaker discourse, this chapter provides basic ethnographic information, establishing the historical and contemporary context. After a more elaborate description of this theological complexity, I will provide a brief description of the Quaker organisation, showing how Friends organise themselves and what formal statuses and roles are recognised in the organisation. Next, I will share the important distinction Friends use between the status of Member and Attender, illustrating how Friends maintain a one-way, mirrored boundary between these two distinctions. Once this contemporary setting is established, I will relate some of the important historical antecedents to this current condition of the Society and how Friends use this past to inform their current identity. Finally, I will show how Friends employ these contextual conditions in their engagement with the world, and conclude with how the general context will impact on how Friends engage in conflict.

## Theological Diversity in the Society

Friends practice their worship in silence. Participants gather in 'Meeting for Worship' where they sit in silence to explore their religious understanding in an atmosphere of supportive encouragement. Occasionally a person is inspired to speak to the gathering, sharing their spiritual awareness to the others. This is a careful description of their communal act, because any discussion covering the generalities of the people within the Society is an exercise in listing caveats. Friends value their individuality and the uniqueness of their personal spiritual experience, making theological generalisations a near impossibility. Indeed, the very word 'theology' is problematic when describing Quaker belief as some Friends describe themselves as atheist.

Often, when Friends are asked, 'Who are Quakers?' a list emerges covering what Friends do not do and what they do not believe. There are no creeds in British Quakerism to which one can refer as a statement of common belief. 'The word killeth', or 'The letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life' is an often-cited Quaker expression, referring to how the written and spoken word are too constraining for the dynamic, living spirit of Christ, in their rendering. One Friend in an interview said, 'this is why we are viewed as being so woolly'. The difficulty in answering the question is compounded by the experiential nature of Quaker faith. Friends practise their faith, as they understand it, and they continually develop this understanding both individually and corporately. One member described the Society in similar terms by contrasting Quakers with other Christian denominations, and listing the contrasts.

They're [other Christian denominations] all in common in that they have a set service. You go to church, and you go sit in a pew, and you sing hymns. Now I know there is a huge difference between Baptists and Catholics, but their actual services are along the same line, although their content is different; whereas, Quakers are completely different. We don't have ministers. We don't have any formal service. We sit in a circle; they sit in pews. We don't have an altar. We don't have any of the trappings of other churches...you know, the sort of pictures, images, and symbols. Friends [Here the informant is referring to personal relationships outside of the Society] 'Well, what do you do then?' (laughs) So I can see how others perceive us as different and apart. I've had other people say then, 'Oh well, you cannot possibly be Christian then. You don't have communion. You don't have a set service'.

The description of the Society by addressing what it does not observe, or what it is in opposition with draws a distinct boundary between Quakers and other faiths, particularly Anglicanism (Collins 1996).

Generally within the Society, agreement is found in the primary Quaker tenet that there is 'that of God in everyone', and Friends aim to address this part of everyone in their interactions. From this understanding arises the Quaker idiom and the heuristic that informs their other practices. The resulting ethical and aesthetic system is applicable in every human relation, requiring the Friend to act lovingly even in situations where the other individual may make this difficult. This aspect of the person is a source of spiritual truth that requires careful attention in all activities. From this primary tenet, and its source of truth, the Quaker testimonies arise.

The testimonies are truths that Friends consider enduring, and perhaps eternal, withstanding temporal fashion and social or cultural boundaries. Friends aim to enact these testimonies in their daily lives, and do so to differing degrees of success. Today these testimonies include: peace, truth, equality, and simplicity. These Quaker truths are embedded in the social structures and practices among Friends. Describing the expression of each of these testimonies would be rich

material for separate theses, and this thesis will touch on how they are expressed within the context of community (Chapter 2) and conflict (Chapter 6 and 7). Here, I will simply introduce each testimony to establish a foundation.

The Peace testimony establishes the Quaker understanding of pacifism, and infuses their attempts to create internal community, and to encourage non-violent interactions throughout the world. Since God is in everyone, violence to a person is also a violent act on God. The impact on behaviour is not only a restriction on anti-social behaviour; it also encourages social behaviour with a Quaker refinement. Acting lovingly by bringing relief to those who suffer, enables the actor to live the testimony and the recipient of the kindness to know this truth. This description could suggest a trite compulsion to be nice to others, but the Quaker peace demonstrator can be a bristly person to be with. One informant, a retired woman and steady campaigner for peace, whose generosity and genuine concern for people was indubitable, did not suffer fools lightly. Nor would she forfeit the opportunity 'to speak truth to power', a favourite Quaker saying. She once described a social event where she was introduced to a military officer. In her description of the encounter, she said laughing, 'The poor guy didn't know what hit him. Here was this mad, old, Quaker lady telling him why nuclear weapons were wrong'.

The testimony to truth came from the belief that God was continually accessible, so the careful listener could reach appropriate ethical decisions based on this truth. The directness that my informant demonstrated in the above example was one expression of this. Her insistence to make her point heard was a faith driven statement based on religious understanding of God's truth. Quaker commitment to truth and integrity has gained recognition in business and law. Quaker Oats, with the

smiling Friend on the box, are a symbol of quality and reliability. And both English and Scots law allow Friends to affirm the truth in courts rather than swear an oath. Friends do not swear oaths, because, by doing so, a person is suggesting a lack of commitment to the truth on other occasions.

Belief in the Inner Light in each person also leads to an enduring belief in equality. For Friends this trait of the person applies to everyone - military officers and mad, old Quaker ladies alike. The only differences rest in the person's experience of the Light and the willingness to abide by this deeper understanding. In worship each person is able to speak from the silence, each participant in a business meeting can contribute to a decision.

Simplicity is also conveyed in the directness that my informant delivered to the unsuspecting military officer. While most of the Friends I encountered were rather jocular, some could be viewed as being abrupt with the simplicity of their idiom which was sometimes stripped of social niceties. Typically, no malice is intended when the Quaker idiom is used, but for someone unfamiliar with 'plain speaking' there is a sense of being verbally assaulted. Simplicity also manifests itself in Quaker lifestyle, compelling the Friend to spend frugally, and not represent their social or financial status through extravagances.

These testimonies are not chiselled onto stone tablets even though there is a sense of permanence and universality to them. Instead, they are centres for discourse within the Society, and these conversations directly influence the committed participant's behaviour. A visitor to the Meeting House who was sympathetic to the Society stated that he admired Quakers because, 'They do not pretend to know the answers to world problems, but they ask the right questions'. The focus placed on

the testimonies do, however, provide the Quaker with ready made answers, that are taken for granted. They are the presumed ends. The means to these ends provide the discussion and the debate. Sociologist Pink Dandelion refers to the disciplined application of the testimonies as a 'behavioural creed' to which Friends abide (1995). This creed is not written; it is negotiated and interpreted in what anthropologist Peter Collins calls vernacular Quakerism and canonical Quakerism (1996).<sup>i</sup> The tendency to use plainness as a symbolic expression of Quaker values is what Peter Collins has called 'plaining' (1996: 281). He asserts, 'Canonic Quakerism, along with vernacular Quakerism, provides the *habitus* in which these processes are learned in a more or less conscious way' (1996: 285). This process also internalises other Quaker symbols, and tropes, as I will suggest in Chapter 5, particularly as it relates to the 'Inner Light', which is the trait, in Quaker belief, that unifies all humanity. There is a sense to what is and is not 'Quakerly' behaviour, or the behaviours that are viewed as arising from Quaker understanding, even though there is no list of appropriate behaviours, and there are no overt sanctions for not behaving in a Quakerly manner (discussed in Chapter 7).

This chapter opened with an extract from *Advices and Queries*. These passages and the interpretations of the testimonies are contained in the book *Quaker Faith and Practice: The Book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain*. The book reflects both the individual and communal aspects of the Society through its passages of communally accepted, individual interpretations. The primary sections of the book are the *Advices and Queries*, church government, and interpretations of spiritual understanding. Recently in Quaker history, the book has been revised roughly every

thirty years as Friends recognise different issues which need clarification or omission, such as gender-biased language. Revisions reflect another Quaker understanding: that religious truth is a continuing revelation. *Quaker Faith and Practice* acts as a guidebook for Friends in their interpretation of the world. In Meeting for Worship the book is placed prominently next to the Bible, and it is cited just as often as the scriptures in worship.

The diversity among Quakers produces countless challenges for anyone attempting to describe the Society. For example, although *Quaker Faith and Practice* is placed in a central location during worship, not every participant places the same significance on the book. In interviews several participants admitted to giving little attention to its content. The propensity of Friends to read their way through their spiritual life is restricted to neither the Bible nor *Quaker Faith and Practice*. Many participants are equally likely to gain this understanding from the writings of other faiths and from sources that may be considered secular. This diversity is simplistically referred to as the Universalist/Christocentric divide. Universalist are participants that view a universal truth that can be found in many religions; whereas, Christocentered participants tend to focus on Christian understanding for their sense of truth. The opposition does not accurately convey the overlap among the participants on this range of possibility. My conversations with informants, and the ministries they shared suggests each person in a Quaker meeting sits silently with a unique theology. This is to the extent that 'theology' becomes an inappropriate representation. Quaker meetings are multi-vocal. (The impact of this trend in the Society will be discussed in Chapter 5.) To understand the origins of this trend, we need to delve quickly into Quaker organisation and history.

## **The Society's Organisation**

The Religious Society of Friends is organised in local, district, regional and national spheres. The local level of the organisation is referred to as the Preparative Meeting (PM). There are thirty-one recognised local meetings in Scotland, the two largest being in Edinburgh (163 members) and in Glasgow (99 members) (Britain Yearly Meeting 1997). The PM is recognised as a decision-making and worshipping body by the Society. The local group conforms to the structure and procedures of the Society and it holds monthly business meetings to prepare and bring forward issues that are relevant to the regional level. This is the primary worshipping unit for most participants in the Society. It is also the regular arena for social interaction.

The regional level of the Society is known as the Monthly Meeting (MM). There are seventy-three MMs in Britain. Four of these are in Scotland. This level of the Society consists of the district's Preparative Meetings, and it gathers to consider issues from the local and national levels to determine what actions should be taken. This sphere of the Society also considers issues regarding membership. People are members of this regional level, not the local level, establishing homogeneity in membership and practice for the region.

The next realm is the General Meeting (GM). There are nineteen GMs in Britain. Generally GMs serve as regional social gatherings and opportunities for learning. The General Meeting for Scotland also performs some duties normally taken on by the national level due to differing legal systems and to logistical practicalities with regard to outreach.

The national level of the Society is the Yearly Meeting (YM). This body involves the greatest number of Friends in a yearly deliberative body. Yearly meetings are held in London three consecutive years. On the fourth year it is held elsewhere in Britain. This level is the final constitutional group in the Society where MMs ensure their representation. It is also the voice of the Society to the wider public. The regularly meeting deliberative body is known as the Meeting for Sufferings (MfS). Monthly Meeting representatives constitute this group, convening monthly. Central standing committees that endeavour to perform the Society's work address themselves to MfS and ultimately to the YM. These committees are: Quaker Home Service, Quaker Peace and Service, Quaker Social Responsibility and Education, and the Administrative Committee. Quaker Home Service (QHS) committees work to support the local level of the Society by facilitating outreach, providing training and supporting the Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM). The JYM is a segment of the Society involving 'Young Friends', who are people between 17 to 30 years old. They organise national events for this age set, teaching the Society's young people the Quaker decision-making process and fostering their religious development. Quaker Peace and Service (QPS) looks to international affairs, promoting peace and non-violence. Quaker Social Responsibility and Education promote individual and corporate concerns regarding the expression of Quaker spiritual understanding in the society at large. Finally, the Administrative Committee addresses the running of the financial and logistical aspects of the Society.<sup>ii</sup>

Upon commencement of fieldwork, there were 705 recognised Members (289 male and 416 female) in Scotland, all a part of the General Meeting for Scotland, and they are served by four Monthly Meetings: North of Scotland (118 members), East of

Scotland (110 members), South-East Scotland (251 members), and West Scotland (226 members) (Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends [Quakers] in Britain 1997a). These statistics do not reflect the number of recognised Attenders, or non-members that regularly participate in the Meetings for Worship. Tourists, students, and interested city residents regularly contribute to Meetings for Worship. There were 567 regular attenders in all of Scotland (Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends [Quakers] in Britain 1997b). Previous social scientific investigations gloss the importance of this distinction between Members and Attenders, privileging the activities and opinions of the Members in their account (Dandelion 1995, and Collins 1994). Clearly the proportion of Members to Attenders in Scotland justifies including the legitimate yet peripheral status in an analysis of the Society.

There are several important roles that help maintain the Society: Elders, Overseers, Clerks, Treasurers, and Wardens. The Elders are charged with the duty to maintain the spiritual well-being of the Monthly Meeting. They maintain proper form at Meeting for Worship, and plan Meetings for Learning to educate participants on the Quaker experience. Overseers are responsible for the pastoral care of the participants within the meeting, supporting participants in times of difficulty by visiting them when in hospital, providing economic support, or offering informal counselling in times of crisis. A Friend of long standing said, 'The best Overseers are the ones that aren't in office', suggesting that the meeting is a assembly of friends that support each other. Clerks act as secretaries for the business meetings, and share information with the business meeting participants and the representatives to the PM and MM. They serve as points of contact between the tiers of the Society.

Treasurers from PM, MM and GM, maintain the finances at these levels. It is important to stress that the people in these positions must be formal Members of the Society. The posts are normally held in triennial terms, so it is possible for Members to experience several of the key roles that sustain the organisation. These positions are not remunerated, indicating the sense of commitment that Members have to their faith and the organisation where it is expressed.

Wardens or caretakers maintain the property and act as a public face for the Society to the non-Quaker guests that use Quaker premises. These posts can be held by either Society Members or non-members. At a conference for Wardens held in Manchester, I got a sense that being a Warden was nearly a monastic activity for some. A Warden from a Meeting House in England complained that, 'The Society is among the worst employers in the UK'. He added that Friends expect a Warden to be a casual position similar to a volunteer, or a choice to live an extremely simple lifestyle. As I mentioned in the introduction, I worked as a warden while conducting fieldwork and through writing the thesis. His situation was far from my comfortable experience. In the case of the local meeting where the fieldwork was conducted, there was a team of Wardens. The Warden's post was a paid position that also came with a residence on the premises. The Meeting House was so heavily used that there were three part-time Wardens in residence with an informal staff involving meeting participants who worked as assistant Wardens.

When visitors came to the Meeting House, I would answer their questions about the Society. My background knowledge was helpful on these occasions, leading the visitor to ask, 'How long have you been a Quaker?' The question led to a complicated answer describing the distinction between Members and Attenders.

## **Members and Attenders**

Two important structural features within the worshipping community are actually disguised in worship. The Society recognises two statuses amongst all participants in worship: Members and Attenders. In the interactions on Sunday there is little to distinguish between the two. The emphasis on equality in Quaker meetings subdues their distinguishing features, but their importance is manifest in other arenas of Quaker activity, particularly in the development of community.

Officially, being a Friend means being a Member of the Religious Society of Friends, and making a commitment to the disciplined Quaker lifestyle and accepting the responsibility of the spiritual life of the organisation. Their commitment arises from their 'convincement', or their conclusion that the practices conveyed in Quaker worship are the pathway to truth. The Member concludes that a person's actions should abide by a disciplined acknowledgement of traditionally Christian values and to the appropriateness of Quaker divine guidance from corporate discernment (Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends [Quakers] in Britain 1995). Friends emphasise the sense of joy and comfort that this commitment entails by stressing that membership is a statement, saying 'I am at home'. Since there are no creeds, membership does not rely on a person to make a public statement agreeing with the communal beliefs. It requires a letter of intent, stating to other Members that the applicant wishes to be granted membership. This membership is usually granted after discussion with two other Members, who visit and discuss the spiritual understanding of the applicant. The visiting members also assay the applicant's

understanding of the consequences of membership. The person is acknowledged as a Member upon approval from the Monthly Meeting.

The structural fact that there are no clergy or formalised religious specialists in the Society creates many demands on those who participate. Members committed to the Society take up the duties that pastors and priests normally perform. Rather than suggesting that there is no head to the organisation, Quaker understanding suggests that there is no laity. Every participant is responsible for the maintenance of the meeting and the other levels of the Society. Members, however, are those people that are willing to take formal responsibility for these activities. Members choose to support all the meeting's participants in need, and nurture the spiritual life of the meeting. Only Members fill the formal posts in the Society, and they are also free to participate in the business meetings at all levels of the Society, without permission or acknowledgement from the Clerk.

As was stated above, there is a little distinction between Members and Attenders in Meeting for Worship. Members and Attenders together are the worshipping body of the meeting, and on Sunday morning worship the distinction is veiled. Attenders are regular participants in the Society who have not become Members or those who have resigned their membership, yet continue to participate in worship. Most Attenders do consider themselves Quakers through the act of participating at this level, and there is little open debate whether this assertion is incorrect. It is difficult to identify where the separation exists between Members and Attenders, particularly for the Attender. If an Attender worships regularly, and contributes to the workings of the Sunday meeting, it is easy to identify that person as a Quaker, and it is easy for that individual to get a personal sense of belonging to the

meeting. Indeed my participation in meeting life gave me a great sense of belonging. I felt as though I could be a Quaker even though I was an Attender. There is a genuine welcome that regular visitors to meeting receive. If the Attender demonstrates a willingness to contribute to the local community's maintenance, they gain access to economic, emotional, and spiritual support resources from the meeting. Members and Attenders are equally welcomed to participate in the worship and social activities of the meeting. Anyone that feels moved to contribute a ministry in the worship may do so. Attenders also participate in other activities that are needed in the functioning of the meeting. Worship, door-keeping, preparing and serving meals and coffee are all activities shared by Attenders and Members.

There is little pressure for Attenders to actually become Members. Overt proselytising is seldom seen in the Society. Heavy-handed conversion is viewed as inappropriate since membership is a personal, deliberate, and sometimes long process of developing a personal understanding of spiritual matters. The aversion to proselytising persists even though there are concerns about the increasing proportion of inexperienced attenders to 'Seasoned' Members in the Society and particularly in this meeting.

Although Attenders are not easily identified in activities at the local level, they are generally absent from business meetings. This provides an observer with one of the few distinguishing features of Attenders. The boundary between Members and Attenders is established by the manner in which Attenders can participate in Quaker business meetings. When an Attender does want to attend a business meeting, they must request permission from the Clerk, who will identify them at the beginning of the meeting and note their presence in the meeting's minutes. At the regional

meeting, Attenders are also asked to leave when issues about membership are discussed. The most dramatic assertion of the boundary between Members and Attenders occurred when a Member said, 'Attenders are parasites on the Society'. The comment reflected the drain that too many Attenders can have on the emotional, economic, labour resources in the Society. Since Attenders are not able to become a part of the supporting structures in the Society, there is a sense that they take more resources than they give. The comment upset many of the Attenders that heard it, and the Member regretted the simile, but he stood by the idea Attenders gain in the interaction.

Business meetings are conducted as Meetings for Worship, using a process of discerning truth for the determination of corporate action. Only once during observation did an Attender contribute to a decision in a business meeting. Although Attenders are in theory welcomed to attend business meetings, they are not specifically or regularly invited. Being at a business meeting does provide anyone in Attendance with the opportunity to participate in business decisions, since everyone is a channel for the Inner Light. Using the logic that meetings present (but Friends may dispute), the challenge of having Attenders present lies in their inexperience of the process and the form. Meetings are regularly described as fragile, and susceptible to abuse by people who have a set agenda, or who are not sensitive to the procedure. Attenders are in some sense a threat to this delicate event. Although, Members can equally jeopardise the business meeting with a forceful will. Based on my observation I would speculate that, the inexperienced Attender can challenge the quality of a decision, and its nearness to divinely inspired truth, or at the very least, they could contribute statements that may be viewed as 'un-Quakerly'.

Members are the core, and often the sole participants, in the business meetings and the formal decision-making bodies. Attenders either do not care to participate in these activities, or find such formal occasions too arduous or time consuming. The issues of membership are discussed openly in the business meetings, therefore Attenders, because of their exclusion from these discussions, are not aware of the issues of their status. When Attenders decide not to participate, they exclude themselves from the most powerful forms of community building available to Friends. As will be shown at length in Chapter 3, the business meeting is an opportunity for participants to develop their common identity through a unique method of decision-making. Many people participating in the Society state that they became 'convinced', and sought membership after they participated in a business meeting.

A key form in which community is built comes through the unity found in drafting of minutes in business meetings. A Friend described to me a business meeting that convinced him into membership.

The group tried to reach a decision, but the Clerk could not find a way to reconcile the ministries. We broke for lunch without agreeing on a minute. When we returned, we all just sat in silence, and you could really feel the Presence. This went on for some time, and the Clerk finally stood to read a draft minute. It captured it all, and I really felt the Inner Light was there with us.

The intent in the Quaker business meeting is to find a course of action or opinion that is a unified statement. The end result of the process is the formation of a course of action that has unified support. Historically this was viewed as divinely inspired truth discovered with group discernment. The process requires considerable discipline from the participant through focused listening, editing personal

participation, and commitment to the group. In situations where the decision requires thorough consideration the outcome can foster a strong sense of communal identity when a unified decision is reached.

In Meeting for Worship Friends attempt the elimination of the hierarchy found in the other parts of the organisation, veiling of the Member/Attender distinction. Only with regular participation will an Attender become aware of the differences.

### **The Historical Context**

Friends use their history in the formation of their identity. It provides grounding and depth to their spiritual understanding by demonstrating the timelessness of the truths that they hold dear. Many in the Society consider the practices meaningless without consideration of their origins. History is a conservative force for Friends, linking current practices to what is imagined about the past. It provides a pool of meaning from which interpretation is possible, and it provides the structures that sustain the organisation. The past is an inkblot upon which Friends are able to project their current needs and notions of reality. It justifies current practices and embeds itself in the structures that inform communal behaviour. As Peter Stromberg recognises:

For a custom by itself has no existence apart from a community that lives by its dictates. And the process we call history is nothing but a relentless and ongoing transformation of customs; some traditions are indeed preserved through countless generations, but they are not therefore impervious to change. It is not customs and tradition that order social life; rather, social life is ordered by an enormously complex interaction between custom and the exigencies of historical situations. That interaction occurs in the medium of human activity, and therefore such activity must find a place in any analysis of social life.

1986: 9

The relevance of Quaker history is also a contested issue within the Quaker discourse. Some participants in Quaker meetings minimise the significance of these origins. The importance of current practices lies in the doing of those activities. Still, many historical events establish the characteristics to which Friends identify, and it roots the origins of their practice. Quaker history is a path well-trodden by numerous authors (see Braithwaite 1912, Barbour 1964, Vann 1969, Isichei 1970, Punshon 1984, Reay 1985, and Heron 1995 for writing on Quaker history), so this section will focus on a basic outline of Quaker history to establish the context for this study while linking the past to present Quaker identity, structure and practice.

### *Millennial Beginnings*

The *Advices and Queries* presented at the beginning of the chapter establish that the Society is historically a Christian organisation. The Religious Society of Friends originated in northern England in 1652 as the Civil War was ending. The turbulent times created by advances in printing technology and increasing literacy, and religious and political upheaval, also created discontent in the Church of England. 'Friends in the Truth' at this time were a 'millennial movement' (Wallace 1972, Burrige 1969) that viewed the Church as a defilement of the teachings of Christ, and they sought to return to the primitivist church of the apostles (Ross 1991, Underwood 1997), and bring about heaven on earth through direct revelation from God. George Fox is popularly regarded as the founder (King 1940, Isichei 1970, and Shaman 1991), but some historians identify the Quaker movement as a regional response to religious turmoil in England after the civil war (Hill 1962, 1992, Reay 1985, and Vann 1969). George Fox began his millennial message in 1647, preaching that God speaks to every

human through the present Jesus Christ, known as the 'Christ within,' or the 'Inward Light'. Friends believed that people were separated from God and the Light due to sin. Redemption occurs if the sinner turns to the Light. Their beliefs and emphasis on the inward experience led them to refuse outward sacraments and excessive speaking (Bauman 1983). Quakers also refused to pay tithes, take oaths, and use titles. Since everyone equally carried this Inward Light, both men and women were capable of speaking with religious authority. Their 'meetings' practiced silent worship as a means of accessing this internal inspiration without the use of intermediating religious ritual, overt symbolism, or spiritual authority. When Friends spoke in their 'Meetings for Worship', they spoke a message of Truth from this source. These messages, or ministries, were even accompanied by physical trembling by the speaker, and thus the popular designation 'Quaker'.

George Fox and other influential Friends began evangelising their message and the movement quickly gained new converts. John Stephen Rowntree, an influential Quaker, and early historian of the Society, estimated that within ten years of Fox's formulation of the code there were 35,000 to 60,000 Quakers (1859). The early Quaker evangelists were referred to as the 'Valiant Sixty' as they moved through out Britain 'Publishing Truth'. Centres of Quaker conversion followed trade routes, particularly that of the cloth trade, as many early evangelists were textile merchants (Underwood 1997). In Scotland early mission attempts were met with curiosity, but soon the reaction to this evangelism was hostile and violent. The Church of Scotland was well regarded by its adherents in comparison to the troubles and discontent found in the Church of England. The occasional sympathetic ear found in England was even more negligible in Scotland. The limited spread of

Quakerism in Scotland moved primarily with Cromwell's army. After some persistence the Quaker movement did gain Scottish adherents, and Quaker meetings began in Aberdeen and eventually in Glasgow and Edinburgh (Marwick 1948).

Early Friends called themselves 'Children in the Light,' 'Friends in the Light,' or 'Friends in Truth'. The term 'Quaker' was a derisive term first used by Justice Bennett of Derby who mocked the shaking, bodily movements Friends displayed when they ministered (Brathwaite 1912). This disparaging epithet was not resisted and continues to serve as the popular referent for Friends. Some informants dislike the term, because of its early use as a deriding label, but most enjoy the historical origins of the title, viewing it as a demonstration of the resistance that Friends endured in the face of such mockery and suffering.

#### *The Restoration, Structural Development, and the Peace Testimony*

For their beliefs and practices, early Quakers suffered hardships from a distrusting government and competing sects. Many Quakers were jailed and killed for their faith, suffering from the Blasphemy Act of 1650, and during the Restoration the Quaker Act of 1662, the Conventicle Act of 1664, and the second Conventicle Act of 1670. From these laws Friends' political structures developed. Fox organised the loose groups of Quakers throughout England into local, regional, and central meetings where worship and discussion of issues occurred. The developments in the Society's political structure, like Meeting for Sufferings, were spurred by these threats from the government and developments within the Society. As Friends were arrested for their gatherings and demonstrations, Quakers established regular meetings in London to maintain a list of those Quakers suffering in prison, ensuring that they and their

families were supported. This structure formed a lobbying group to solicit leniency from Parliament. The Meeting for Sufferings brought a structure that was more central than the local and regional meetings that the Quakers had until that time. The name 'Meeting for Sufferings' is still used, but Friends at the time of fieldwork were considering a revision to something less esoteric. Objections were raised in the Quaker weekly magazine *The Friend*, so the title remains.

Organisational structures were also developing in reaction to some of the extreme practitioners within the Society. Some participants took the ideas of Quakerism to an extreme, placing their personal leadings above the leadings of other Friends and creating charismatic followings. The most graphic and notable example was the charismatic James Nayler. Nayler in 1656 rode on a mule into Bristol with several followers, waving palms, and singing 'Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Israel'. As punishment, Nayler was imprisoned and tortured (Drayton 1994). His interpretation of Jesus residing in everyone was taken to another level by symbolically asserting that he was Christ, bringing unwanted attention to Friends who were accused of harbouring Ranters and Levellers.

Another extreme interpretation of Quaker belief was practiced by John Perrot. The incident known as the 'hat controversy' was another important episode in the communal testing of personal discernment. Perrot threatened the Society by refusing to abide by the Quaker convention of removing hats in Meeting for Worship as a sign of respect to the presence of God. This refusal challenged the presence of God in others and the communal event. His objection was divinely inspired in his rendering, because he, 'received by express commandment from the Lord God of heaven' (Braithwaite 1909: 233). This was an act of the Ranters, and an expression of the

personal relationship with God taking precedence over the communal discernment of God. Perrot said, 'The Lord in me is more worthy of audience than the voice of any messenger to me' (Carroll 1971: 78). Richard Farnsworth responded to Perrot and his sympathisers, while George Fox was in prison, by drafting a letter to other meetings that asserted the authority of the Church over the individual's discernment, which was signed by other elders supporting the statement. George Fox responded by establishing the Yearly Meeting in 1668 to increase central influence over the local and regional meetings, and to emphasise communal influence rather than the individual (Sheeran 1983).

Another blow to local superiority in the Society came with the management of the Story-Wilkinson dispute. John Story and John Wilkinson published a pamphlet opposing the institutionalisation implemented by George Fox. The pamphlet urged the return to individual authority and local control. They disapproved of the structural homogenising of the spirit, and the decreasing opportunity for people to minister if they felt so moved. These issues continue to surface in today's business meetings and amongst elders and their implementing policies (as will be illustrated in chapter 7).

When monarchy was restored with King Charles II, the Quaker millennial message continued to bring suspicion on the Society. Friends were also equated with the revolutionary Fifth Monarchists. Elders in the Society sent the King a declaration that Friends were no threat to the monarchy, and that they were fundamentally a pacifist group. The letter initiated the peace testimony which was formally established in 1660 by London Elders, providing the Society with what has been an enduring source of identity. The Meeting House where I conducted fieldwork

regularly portrayed the peace testimony to the public through window displays and foyer adornment. Posters showing swords being beaten into ploughshares, images of Gandhi, the victims of Hiroshima, and passages regarding peace from *Quaker Faith and Practice* all conveyed the peace testimony to visitors to the building and passers-by.

Toward the later part of the seventeenth century many changes were emerging as the millennial movement rationalised into a Protestant denomination. Quaker theology was systematised by Scottish Friend, Robert Barclay, in 1676. His theology emphasised self-discipline that avoided carnal, earthly pleasures. Quakers of this time also developed a dualism between the natural and the supernatural. This period also saw the enforcement of endogamy and a reduction in the amount of ministry. In 1689, during the reign of William and Mary, the Toleration Act allowed free public worship for Friends, and the 1696 Affirmation Act allowed Friends to affirm the truth rather than swear an oath. While things improved for Friends legally, they continued to suffer abuses from others. In 1691 Fox died, leaving the Society well established among the middle classes in British society, and an organisational structure that is still recognisable today. These developments introduced what is now recognised as the Quietist period.

### *The Quietist Period*

As the founders of the Society died, Friends became less evangelical and more introverted. Their practices became more regimented and strict. Ministries in Meeting for Worship became less common as the importance of the silence received greater emphasis (Bauman 1983). The focus of the Society concentrated on the spiritual and

heavenly not the carnal and physical world (Bauman 1983, Punshon 1984, Beamish 1967). According to Robert Barclay's theology a person had only one opportunity to access the Inner Light in a lifetime (Freiday 1967), so Friends were vigilant and quietly waiting for this moment.

Friends continued their practice of 'peculiarities' – plain speech, common plain dress, and endogamy. These practices maintained a rigid boundary between Friends and non-Friends. Friends that did not abide by the discipline were disowned. In this phase of Quaker history, membership declined to 13,859. In Scotland the Society nearly disappeared at this time.

The status of Recorded Ministers was introduced in 1722 (Bauman 1983), making a speaker/listener, superior/subordinate relationship. Recorded Ministers were people recognised as having a particular 'gift', and their message and speaking were given greater authority when they spoke from their experience with this perceived faculty. These ministers were expected to minister in meeting when they were so led by the Inner Light. If they had no message, the meeting remained silent. Elders were given the authority to police the Friends in their practice of the Quaker lifestyle. Friends that were viewed as going astray were warned about their practice, and those who continued to misbehave were expelled from the Society.

English Quakers moved from the rural areas to the cities as industrialism grew. During this period Friends were involved in many advances in banking, industry and science. Their commitment to honest trade made Quakers successful entrepreneurs. Since their practices focused on integrity and truth, Quaker products earned a reputation for quality. This tradition was established in the early days of the Society, and created considerable fortunes for several Quaker families: Clarks, Lloyds, Barclays, Carr, Fry.

Rowntree, and Cadbury are all recognized today even though the current businesses may not maintain association with the Society. These business families held considerable influence in city planning at the time (Walvin 1977). Quaker integrity paired with their emphasis on a simple lifestyle also made Friends relatively affluent. This new affluence brought people to the Society, looking to the gains of membership while not believing in the Quaker practices. The result was a formal definition of being a Friend in 1737. From this came the terms 'Convinced' and 'Birthright' Quakers. Convinced Friends are Members who are persuaded that Quaker practices are the methods to Truth, and they affirm this belief to others. Birthright Quakers, a status no longer formally recognized, are members automatically accepted into the Society based on their parents' membership.

### *Victorian Quakers*

The Great Awakening influenced the Quaker theology and practice as evangelical Quakerism emerged as a voice in the Quaker discourse. This period marked a time when Friends expressed salvation arising from good works, and that inspiration should come from the Bible and not the Inner Light. This new evangelical phase did not correlate with an increase in membership, indeed the Society in Britain offered little difference from other denominations on theological matters. The insular tendencies continued with the stern discipline of quiet decorum, so the Society's membership continued its decline. In the United States the theological shift brought about the Hicksite separation in 1827. American Hicksite Friends aimed to maintain the authority of the Inward Light separated from those Orthodox Friends who wanted to emphasise biblical authority and coherent doctrine of Quaker belief.

A critical essay written by John Stephenson Rowntree in 1860, which noted this decline was due to the strict practices, marks the end of the Quietist period. The essay highlighted the reasons for decline in membership and critiqued the insular tendencies embodied in Quaker dress, speech, and endogamy. The Yearly Meeting in 1860 quickly eliminated many these peculiarities. While many agreed to this response, in 1870 the Fritchley Meeting separated from the Yearly Meeting wanting to keep the peculiarities that marked the separation from secular society and the theological attributes of the Society that were growing into disfavour (Lowndes 1986). This meeting did not rejoin the Yearly Meeting until the twentieth-century. Even today there are Friends who prefer the traditional discipline. Participants in the Quaker fellowship called the New Foundation Fellowship still advocate that the Society continue to be a strictly Christian organisation, following the discipline of the traditional peculiarities. During fieldwork, the New Foundation Fellowship held a meeting at the local meeting house to share their understanding of their faith and its practice. Ironically another, Universalist group of Quakers had an invited speaker, presenting current understanding of the paranormal.

In 1884 the publication of the anonymous book *A Reasonable Faith* containing the argument that ‘the Bible was not essentially different from any other book but for its degree of inspiration’, bringing with it an era of liberal theology stressing the Inner Light’s continuing revelation. The book received considerable attention in the Society and the issues raised soon became the primary topics in Quaker discourse. At this period there was an adherence to liberal theology, Bible scholarship, and a return to the teachings of early Friends. The notion of the Inward

Light was re-emphasised, and its related religious authority of personal experience was given greater significance.

In 1895 Friends gathered for a meeting in Manchester that aimed to acknowledge and discuss the changing mores of the day and their impact on the Society. The Manchester Conference established modern Quakerism as Friends discussed the issues of: Adult education, social welfare, the message of Quakerism, the relationship between Quakerism and current thinking. The discussions focused primarily on Christian interpretation and the message that Friends could contribute to this understanding. Some of the participants were threatened by the discussions that followed from these topics, but laid aside their objections for the group (Heron 1995: 28). The conclusions of those participating established the liberal thinking that Friends still employ when approaching theology and practice. Heron suggests that this thinking was not liberal, but a reaffirmation of the mystical practices of seventeenth-century Friends (1995: 33). I would suggest that this period brought the doxa of the Society into the broadening and novel discourse of the larger society. Seventeenth-century Friends remained within the Christian discourse that focused on the Bible as the primary heuristic; however, Friends of the later part of the nineteenth-century were challenging this exclusive spiritual domain by extending the discourse beyond the Bible. Hence in comparison to early Friends, this can be viewed as the beginning of the liberalisation of the Society. Truth was arising from other sources than the infusion of biblical passages with understanding arising from the Inner Light. The Inner Light was guiding the investigation of Truth in the fossil record, business practice and among other cultures.<sup>iii</sup> Truth for nineteenth-century Quakers would have carried a different set of meanings that included a middle-class

British society seeking to discover the laws that regulated the universe. The re-emphasis of continuing revelation of God's truth was coupled with a surge of contact with other interpretations, ideas, and cultures. The Inner Light itself would change with this new context and zeitgeist. It was no longer confined to a Christian interpretation. Although, it did continue to be interpreted from the Christian model into the twentieth-century. The Society still emphasised bible scholarship, but the interpretation was liberal. In the future Society, the exclusivity of the Christian discourse waned facilitating the syncretism of other religious symbolic systems.

Conflicts continued to inform Quaker identity at this time of convoluting theology among American Friends. As was mentioned above, Friends in the United States were dividing into separate groups along theological lines based on their emphasis on where religious authority was imagined. Hicksite Friends split from Orthodox Friends preferring to maintain the authority of the Inner Light. These Hicksite Friends continue to maintain silent meetings like those found in the United Kingdom. Not mentioned above was another conflict that brought a British evangelical Friend Joseph John Gurney against an American Friend John Wilbur. Gurney taught, 'Christ's death frees you, but the Holy Spirit sanctifies you' (Punshon 1984: 197), emphasising the importance of atonement. He viewed the truth that Friends endeavoured to seek in their meetings as a Christian truth that was common to other Christian groups. Wilbur opposed this development, viewing it as antithetical to the uniqueness of the Quaker movement, so he sought to oppose Gurney's message when he came to minister to Orthodox Friends in the US. During the Gurneyite-Wilburite schism of 1845, Orthodox Friends divided forming the Conservative, or Wilburite branch and the Gurneyite branch. Wilburite Friends

maintained the silent meetings. In the 1870s the Gurneyite youth enjoyed the emotive and exuberant revivalism occurring in the US, and they brought it to their Meetings for Worship. Shortly thereafter Gurneyite meetings began to employ pastors to help guide the meeting's spiritual development. The revivalist meetings needed a person to lead the gathering, and to assist in the pastoral oversight of the growing meetings (Marietta 1984).

Conflicts were also common in British meetings, but they did not create the differing factions like those seen in the United States. Three schisms occurred; each predating the theological changes in the Society by twenty years (Isichei 1970, Dandelion 1996). The Beaconite schism in 1836 was a separation that asserted greater authority to the Bible, stressing that the notion of the Light was a delusion. They also disliked the lack of outward baptism and communion. A group of Friends led by Isaac Crewdson left the Society, calling themselves 'Evangelical Friends' (Punshon 1984). The group lost their enthusiasm, and participants joined other churches, like the Plymouth Brethren. In 1870 the Fritchley Meeting separated from the Yearly Meeting, wanting to keep the peculiarities distinguishing Members of the Society from the rest of the population and rejecting the evangelical bent of the time. This separation lasted until 1967. David Duncan led the other conflict in the London Yearly Meeting, again in 1870. Duncan participated in the growing Bible criticism, viewing the Bible as fallible, which did not agree with the evangelical ethos of the time. Duncan was disowned by the Society and died before he could complete his appeal. The group that formed from this split was not viable, with many of their participants joining the Unitarian Church (Punshon 1984).

British involvement in armed conflicts also informed the identity of Friends. Reacting to the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, Friends established a tradition of assisting the victims of war by creating the Friends War Victims Relief Committee. Friends were also developing their identity through the peace testimony with their objections to the Boer War. During the Boer War, Friends who spoke against the conflict were the focus of abuse for their views against violence. These conflicts provided the Society with formal and informal structures that would allow a response to war, which would be tested regularly throughout the twentieth century.

### *Twentieth Century and Continuing Change*

The impact of *A Reasonable Faith* and the Manchester Conference continued into the new century. After the conference the Society sought to continue learning about the implications of their theological understanding, implementing summer schools for further spiritual development. The popularity of this practice and the perceived inadequacies of some ministry led John Wilhelm Rowntree to urge a permanent 'Quaker settlement' for study. In 1902 Woodbrooke College, attached to the ecumenical Selly Oak colleges within the University of Birmingham, opened fulfilling this vision. Today this college continues to be a focus for Quaker study providing instruction on the exploration and implementation of Quaker belief. At the turn of the century, Friends continued exploring their heritage under the new lens of bible criticism, scientific understanding, and continuing contact with different interpretations of the world.

The emphasis on personal revelation of the Inner Light gained popularity through the writings of Rufus Jones, who established Quakerism as a mystical

religion where the individual sought an experience of direct revelation with God (Hamm 1988). 'That of God in everyone' was viewed as universal, increasing the responsibility of the individual when participating in Quaker meetings and developing their understanding. Young people after World War I, rejected the authority expressed in the position of Recorded Minister, who provided the meeting a message that was sanctioned by the Elders and Overseers. Taken together, these phenomena were structurally expressed with the abolition of the role and status of Recorded Ministers. Interpretation of the Inner Light became the responsibility of everyone participating in Meeting for Worship. With this change came the loss of control over the Recorded Minister's endorsed message for the local group, allowing individuals to endorse the message based on personal understanding.

In 1908 Woodbrooke College established an annual lecture delivered at the Yearly Meeting. These Swarthmore Lectures are personal interpretations of the message and activities of the Society delivered by invited lecturers from within the Society. These lectures reflect and contribute to the discourse within the Society. The lectures are published and read with enthusiasm, and the debate that they generate spreads throughout the Quaker world. Another event in London occurred in 1908 that demonstrated the increasing tolerance in the Society. London Yearly meeting accepted the Hicksite Yearly meetings in the United States.

The peace testimony had its greatest test with the onset of World War I. Friends spoke against the Boer War and the Crimean War, bringing unwanted derision from people outside the Society, but World War I required each Friend to determine their own response to the conflict. The implementation of conscription required male Friends to interpret their practice of the peace testimony. Many

Friends refused to participate in any preparation for war, the Absolutist position. Others refused to take up arms yet were willing to participate as non-combatants. Conscientious objectors were acknowledged by military tribunals, but they were dealt with harshly. Two hundred and seventy-nine Friends were imprisoned for their refusal to fight, and thirty-four were imprisoned for desertion after being forced into enlistment and sent into action where they continued their refusal. While many were directly enacting their belief in peace, other Friends were applying the peace testimony by participating in supportive yet non-combative roles. Many Friends and non-Friend pacifists informally established a non-combative ambulance service, which later became the Friends Ambulance Unit. Other non-combatants worked in the civilian service on farms and in hospitals, and others were active in relief efforts, supporting refugees and interned aliens with the reactivated Friends War Victims Relief Committee.

After World War I, Friends showed even greater involvement in the world, engaging in social concerns, and becoming increasingly involved in British and world politics. Their activities and writing took a socialist view. Friends formed a committee to consider the difficulties with the mining industry during the economic troubles between the wars. They welcomed the League of Nations, and Quaker MPs were elected to parliament. Activities within the Society were also gaining a global quality. In 1920 one thousand Friends from America and Britain gathered for the World Conference of Friends. The aim of this gathering was to consider the implications of the peace testimony, and to bring together Friends from differing backgrounds.

The liberal theology continued to flourish, influencing a revision to *Christian Practice* in 1911 and again in 1921. The revisions reflected the change in theological understanding eliminating the evangelical language from the 1860, and it also stressed the importance of social responsibility. Equality was stressed in the structure of the Society in 1924 as Recorded Ministers were no longer recognised, urging the ministry of all participants in Meetings for Worship, and the 1928 revision to *Christian Practice* gave particular advice on how to minister.

Conscientious objection was an easier affair during World War II. The tribunals were fairer and there were more options for alternative service. The Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) and the Friends Relief Service provided pacifists, Quaker and non-Quaker, the opportunity to live their non-violent beliefs. The Friends Relief Service and the American Friends' Service Committee were awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 for their efforts, showing 'Victory of spirit over force' (von Borries 2000). While I was in the field, local Friends commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. The regional Monthly Meeting held a small, yet well attended, conference where Friends celebrated the award by looking at the history of peace work from World War II to present. Speakers shared their personal experiences as peace workers: a relief worker in post-war Germany spoke on the challenges of getting food to the hungry and the activities of the FAU; a World War II conscientious objector told how he was able to live underground in Britain during the war and how he found employment after the war; the challenges of imprisonment and its impact on the family for an anti-nuclear protestor was shared by a man who lived the experience in the 1950s; and a relief-worker spoke on community building

amongst refugees in Nicaragua. The conference showed to Friends that the work for peace is still being enacted and a living part of Quaker identity.

The Society after the war continued on the path of theological diversity. Birthright membership was abandoned in 1959 (Dandelion 1996) with another revision of *Christian Faith and Practice*. The terms 'Convinced' and 'Birthright' are still informally recognised in the Society as the terms pertain to many Friends born before 1959.

The spirit of inclusiveness continued in the Society with the publication of *Towards a Quaker View of Sex* in 1963. The publication caused an uproar in the Society due to its assertion that homosexuality in a loving relationship was not immoral. Threats of resignation ensued, and the pamphlet was nearly disowned by the Yearly Meeting. The pamphlet is still published by the Society, and shortly before the commencement of fieldwork a Scottish Monthly Meeting held a Meeting of Commitment for a gay couple within their membership. While there was a controversy with this decision in the region, people were allowed to voice their concerns during Meetings for Clearness convened to address the issue, and the Monthly Meeting was able to unify with the couple's public statement of commitment and the ceremony to recognise it.

The later part of the twentieth-century was a continuation of the changes regarding membership and theological diversity. The 1980 Swarthmore lecture *What Canst Thou Say?: Towards a Quaker Theology* (Scott 1980) illustrated how Friends hold multiple models of God, and highlighted the Universalist-Christian continuum characterising contemporary theology. This spurred further debates on the relationship of between the Society and its Christianity. Many assert the Christian

heritage while others stress the theological freedom and the personal 'journey'. Still participants in Quaker meetings ignore the debate, confident with their practice of their faith whatever its theological underpinning may be. In the 1990s, the issues was taken outside the Society as Friends considered their place within the ecumenical work in the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (CCBI). The Society was offered full membership by the council of CCBI, which challenged many Friends' integrity when it came to signing CCBI documents, which used doctrine and Christian-centred language. Some felt by refusing to become full members Friends would also be betraying their sense of toleration of other faiths. Friends did decide to become members of the organisation, but with many feeling uneasy about the decision.

Just prior to fieldwork, Friends had revised *Quaker Faith and Practice*. The previous books *Church Government* and *Christian Faith and Practice* were replaced with this one book. The book reflects the changing emphasis on the personal understanding, and the testing of the understanding through participation in the Society. There is a terrific sense of change occurring in the Society today. This is met by Friends as a challenge, and with a sense of frustration. In the focus groups conducted after I completed the initial draft of this thesis, one Friend, who is a Birthright Quaker, admitted his feelings about this change as it related to the organisational changes being considered in the Society, and the means of doing business:

The Birthright person is brought up in that form of doing business, or at least that's the way I look at it. So it's with them all the time, and they see things which are coming in. It's a conflict which is mine and I've got to work through it, but you look at the way things are changing. I would say that in some ways I am a conservative Friend, by being a Birthright Friend,

because most members are now convinced. The committee I'm on is looking at the ways the Society needs to update itself, business-wise, to the modern day, which is against the conservatism I feel within myself. That friction is often there, and pushed down, because it's not politic to raise it.

I think this Friend is expressing a common tension in the Society where new interpretations of Quaker symbols and the Quaker heritage establish a sense of uncertainty. This experience is a recurrent theme throughout this analysis, informing interpretation of conflict, tropes, and the Quaker habitus.

### **Contemporary Connections between the Local and the Global**

Connections with national and global events cannot be overestimated, so it is important to acknowledge the numerous world events that captured the attention of Friends during fieldwork. One Friend commented, 'It's difficult to be a responsible activist in a troubled world with instant communication'. While in the field, world events elicited joy, hope, excitement, sadness, concern, and frustration for those that took personal responsibility for what they witnessed. The election of a Labour government ended the rule of Conservative government, and quickly brought devolution for the United Kingdom. The Scottish Parliament brought promises of equal representation and greater government accountability. Diana Princess of Wales died tragically, sparking effusive demonstrations, moving the monarchy away from traditional observances, and reinventing royal, public mourning. The western economy flourished, and a strong pound allowed people to travel cheaply away from Britain, challenging the tourist trade. Internationally, war dominated newspaper headlines. American and British military might enforced no-fly zones above Iraq and ensuring the effectiveness of a trade embargo. American presidential scandal and

impeachment coincided with frequent cruise missile attacks on terrorists. Ethnic cleansing stained the Balkans. The Good Friday Agreement fuelled hopes for peace in Northern Ireland. Crippling third world debt, troubling environmental changes, increasing amounts of small arms, worries about food safety, and the plight of the homeless brought constant concern.

This wider context informed my experiences in the field by the manner in which Friends engaged it. While Friends continued their daily existence in the face of these events, they did so with considerable deliberation. The reminders of world concerns constantly entered consciousness and were held, not just released due to the discomfort they cause. The linkages to distant people were made constant through the popular media and through the relationships that were maintained by this well travelled group. These connections to distant locations provided a reality to world events. Many Friends in this meeting also had family abroad. Their names still appeared in the list of meeting participants, and their concerns were topics of ministry in Meeting for Worship.

Friends also reacted to world events in worship during ministry. Ministry responded to NATO air strikes and considered the need for religious toleration and developing a world ethic. A ministry during the Christmas season provided an opportunity to understand joy and loneliness experienced by a Friend in Papua New Guinea. At one meeting several participants responded to the Starr Report on President Clinton's indiscretions and the allegations against him. After these ministries, a woman stood crying to minister that Friends needed to pray for flood victims in Bangladesh that inappropriately received little coverage by the world

media. These expressions of concern and support were regular features of the Meeting for Worship, although this was not the sole purpose of the activity.

These Friends also developed links to the world through their work abroad as ambulance drivers, teachers, non-governmental officers, doctors, and volunteers. While they were typically quiet about their activities, their experience informs their practice of spirituality and awareness of the world's needs. To understand this understated approach we need only look to ministry where a meeting participant likened good food to good acts by noting that describing a good dish just eaten will diminish the enjoyment of the food. On occasion their stories about their work were shared, but again using an understated manner. Only during in-depth interviews, or at times of heightened communal awareness was I and other participants in the meeting alerted to many of these activities. Upon the fiftieth anniversary of the Society receiving the 1947 Nobel Peace prize, Friends within the region were encouraged to participate in displaying their own current and past peace work. Many Friends were surprised by the range of experiences that otherwise went unknown to the meeting. Personal histories illustrating acts that exemplified the testimonies were on view. Under normal circumstances the people who enacted them quietly accepted these histories, and they did not trumpet their achievements.

Their engagement with the world is also informed by their travels abroad as they bring back with them a sense of the people they visited and sharing as ministry those events that touch them spiritually. A Friend returning from Germany ministered on the post World War II reconciliation work she witnessed visiting a Lutheran church. Another, after visiting South Africa, urged Friends to fill jam jars

with all of the change in their pockets at each meal as a donation to peace and reconciliation projects there.

Outside the meeting Friends live their faith by engaging in other organisations that reflect their spiritual understanding. Friends are well represented in organisations such as, local mediation schemes, Campaign Against the Arms Trade, Amnesty International, Scotland China Association, Trident/Ploughshares 2000, Jubilee 2000, and Alternatives to Violence Project. They participate on conscience, and as an expression of the religious understanding.

Finally these local friends engaged the global context in their consumption. Goods produced and traded unfairly are avoided when awareness of the injustice is realised. For Friends consumption is a moral decision where testimonies are applied. Mass marketing and large corporations are approached with suspicion. Friends give preference to goods that are produced locally, or when they are assured the goods are fairly traded from abroad. A Friend sold locally grown organic produce after Sunday Meeting for Worship for a charity that helps the homeless. Some Friends also grow their own vegetables in allotments. This practice challenges the smooth running of the Meeting House, where expedience and affordability become priorities for supplying the building with cleaning supplies and toilet rolls.

There is also an emphasis on avoiding over consumption. 'Live simply, so others may simply live', the simplicity testimony states. A ministry illustrated both the aversion for over-consumption and the distrust of corporate business interests. One dull, winter morning the Warden did not turn on the lights to the Meeting Room, which inspired a male university researcher into ministry. He said that it was nice to sit in meeting during twilight, and it occurred to him that we use too much electricity

in our lives. He recalled American power companies placing representatives on policy-making boards when determining the appropriate amount of light for classrooms. The company's interests set a higher standard than what was actually necessary, and we are now accustomed to have a lot of lighting at home or the office.

Since most of my interaction with the participants in the Society was when they were at 'onstage' events, my understanding of their aesthetic in association with their economic habits is limited in this realm of self-presentation. It is reasonable to speculate that their mode of dress does not change dramatically away from the meeting house, given their emphasis on integrity. From this observation, I noted that Friends do not typically follow popular fashion trends, and they are frugal when purchasing new items of clothing. Among young Friends this is a fashion in itself. Some Friends refuse to purchase new clothing, preferring to use charity shops. The automobiles used by Friends are typically economical, and many prefer public transport or bicycling.

## **Conclusion**

Historically the Quaker discourse was nested in a Christian idiom. Meeting for Worship today is increasingly a process permitting theological ambiguity, while many participants continue to find Christian understanding as their primary source of inspiration. The ethos of Meeting for Worship edits dissent from being expressed blatantly. This provides the appearance of freedom and a lack of structure. While the stress is on the personal aspects of spiritual understanding, the testing of this understanding and its practice is communal. Friends view practicing religious beliefs in a secular world requires considerable support. Participants in the Religious

Society of Friends provide this to each other through the organisational structures, ideals, and practice.

Friends are not typically associated with conflict and in many circumstances of violence throughout the world Quakers are known as peacemakers. This reputation has interesting consequences within the Society regarding the manner in which Friends imagine conflict and the how it is managed. Where does the system break down, and what is available to Friends in this lapse? How does conflict relate to other ideas Friends share? And, what behaviours are demonstrated when conflicts occur as Friends try to maintain the ethos of harmony? The following chapters will address these questions, and the issues that arise from practicing testimonies, worshipping in the unique organisational structure, with negotiating the relevance of Quaker history.

Specifically, this chapter highlights the contested meaning of Quaker identity in the veiled tension between Members and Attenders. This chapter established a few of the sources available to construct a sense of being Quaker. Participation in worship and business meetings, internalisation of Quaker testimonies, a sense of Quaker history are all viewed as relevant facets to being Quaker by Friends. Chapter 2 will continue with the issues of identity by describing the construction of community through the shared meaning and experience of Quaker activities. Chapter 3 will show the relevance decisions-making has when trying to understand Quaker identity, and conflict management.

The theological diversity mentioned above will be elaborated in Chapter 4 as it relates to the common tropes that establish a common 'spiritual' language for Friends. The spectrum of theological interpretation in the Society rests on the fact

that Quakers resist creedal statements. Since there is no single statement of common belief or Recorded Ministers with an authorised message, participants are able to construct their own belief system based on experience and contact with other religious ideologies. I will show how the metaphors and metonyms Friends use work to maintain this diversity, yet allow some coherence for the participants.

This chapter also establishes the negotiated nature of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour occurring in the context of Quaker life. The testimonies are the focus of Quaker discourse where Friends establish appropriate behaviour. The aversion to written statements of ‘appropriate’ belief, and the doxic quality of the testimonies establishes the fluid, yet enduring, quality to what is and is not ‘Quakerly’. Chapter 7 will elaborate the impact these features have on the creation and implementation of policy, and on the Quaker disposition in conflict situations.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Vernacular Quakerism is the discussed and interpreted aspect of belief as it is explored in ministry and conversation amongst Friends. Canonical Quakerism is that aspect of Quaker belief as it is written in Quaker publications. Collins stresses these analytical forms of Quaker discourse inform each other continually and they are separated for analytical purposes only. The discourse creates the third form, prototypical Quakerism, or the common archetype for Quakers (Collins 1994).

<sup>ii</sup> During the writing of the thesis, these committees changed. Today QPS and QSRE merged into Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW). The ethnography refers to the organisation at the time of observation.

<sup>iii</sup> It is worth stressing that E.B. Tylor and many founders of what would become the Royal Anthropological Institute were Friends.

## Chapter 2 – Worship and Community

Worship is our response to an awareness of God. We can worship alone, but when we join others in expectant waiting we may discover a deeper sense of God's presence. We seek a gathered stillness in our meetings for worship so that all may feel the power of God's love drawing us together and leading us.

*Advices and Queries*  
1995: 1.02.08

How can we make the meeting a community in which each person is accepted and nurtured, and strangers are welcome? Seek to know one another in the things which are eternal, bear the burden of each other's failings and pray for one another. As we enter with tender sympathy into the joys and sorrows of each other's lives, ready to give help and to receive it, our meeting can be a channel for God's love and forgiveness.

*Advices and Queries*  
1995: 1.02.1

These passages illustrate the Quaker understanding of worship and community. The first of the *Advices and Queries* suggests worship leads participants to a 'deeper sense of God's presence', drawing them together – emotionally, intellectually, and in their rendering, spiritually. The second passage highlights the emphasis they place on community, indicating how their relationships should be managed in pursuit of community. Friends gather to feel the presence of God, and they recognise this presence in each other. This thesis focuses on conflict among Friends – a pursuit that risks distorting the group's activities and motivation. Friends seek harmony in their worship, and eschew the internal tensions that can disrupt this pursuit. While the remainder of the dissertation will focus on the tensions in the Society and how they are managed, this chapter will focus on the ethos of Meeting for Worship. I aim to show the emphasis on their sense of community found in Quaker meetings, where Friends place their attention and direct their efforts. I will focus on how Friends I

observed interpreted their *Advices and Queries*, and how they constructed their community through their experience.

In the course of focusing on the local level centripetal efforts, the discussion provides information on the physical and theological setting, and the emic understanding of community. After the physical setting is described, the discussion focuses on the efforts Friends deliberately and indirectly employ when maintaining their boundaries both within the community and in relation to others outside the Society. Finally I analyse the structural and symbolic features marking Friends as a worshipping community.

## **The Setting**

### *The Meeting House*

The notion of a 'Meeting House' contrasts to the notion of a church, reflecting the ethos of equality in Quaker worship and disregarding the need of the specialist intermediary of the clergy between God and laity. This is an early contrast marking the Quaker community from other Christian groups, and one which is still maintained. If you call the Meeting House a church, you are quickly corrected. The Meeting House where the majority of participant observation occurred is an impressive structure. The three-storey, nineteenth-century building was originally constructed as a Free Presbyterian church, although its original purpose is not obvious from its design. There are no striking architectural features to set the building apart from the neighbouring tenements and businesses, so even the building's original sacred function is obscure. The aesthetic suits the Quaker sensibility of blurring or disregarding the religious/secular dichotomy. The words

'Quaker Meeting House' printed above the entrance, and a board stating the days and times of worship are the only external features that indicate the building's purpose.

The ground floor consists of two offices and a reception area. The Wardens use one office to take bookings for the rental of the building's rooms, and to supervise those who enter the building. The other office is permanently let to a not-for-profit organisation. There are countless signs, giving instructions for access to the other rooms, or illustrating Quaker ideology, while others highlight local and regional events that Friends and visitors may find interesting. Of particular interest are two displays of literature: the one a poster board and the other a desk of pamphlets. The poster board shows several fliers on different activities in the local area. Many political movements and campaigns are represented in the Meeting House by the pamphlets on display. These items indicate that the building is not a typical church. Like the exterior, no crosses or obvious signs of religious symbolism adorn the building's interior.

Upon entering the Meeting House, one can see that Friends are a highly literate group. Aside from the numerous pamphlets and posters advertising non-Quaker events, there are countless things to read relating to the Society. A display in the foyer introduces some of the basic assumptions Friends hold, and the method of worship that Friends employ, accompanied by leaflets about these assumptions. Numerous books on the Religious Society of Friends are on display for sale. The titles indicate books about current and past contributions to Quaker spirituality and practice: *The Journal of George Fox*; *The Amazing Fact of Quaker Worship*; *Quaker Faith and Practice: The Book of Christian Discipline in the Religious Society of Friends*; *The Quaker Tapestry*; *Paths to the Spirit*; *Quakers in Britain: A Century of*

*Change, 1895-1995*; and *Of One Heart, Diverse Mind: The Quaker Universalist Way*. Book titles replace the standard symbols that adorn churches, indicating the complexity that is found in the Society. While symbols are complex, books are especially so. Like the Bible, where particular passages can serve to justify numerous often discordant practices, these books establish common practice, community, identity, and current discourses found among Friends. The building's exterior and interior exemplify their appreciation of being contemplative and nondescript, suggesting their tradition of action rather than words. There are no elaborate displays illustrating piety or the glory of God – no reliquary, candles, crosses, or items for ritual.

Other foyer displays illustrate issues that require action, or the assumptions upon which Friends are unified. Rarely will an explicitly Christian message be portrayed in these displays, while the issues they convey will have a religious or 'spiritual' orientation. The effect places the emphasis on the simple and direct message rather than the theological form. Large display windows face the street presenting the many concerns Friends share, and the nature of Quaker worship. These displays are changed regularly, and the themes they illustrate are the testimonies the Friends witness to the world in their actions: simplicity, equality, peace, and truth. Simplicity displays convey the moral implications of production and consumption, suggesting a simple life-style acknowledges this reality. The equality testimony is illustrated by showing the value of others and the underlying assumption that Quakers assume that there is 'that of God in everyone'. The testimony to peace was a recurrent display that sometimes graphically displayed the realities of violence and war. During fieldwork, military operations in Iraq and

Bosnia were a constant concern and displays aimed to keep peace in the consciousness of all passers-by. Simplicity is demonstrated throughout the building through the pragmatic placement of signs and minimal decoration.

The first floor has a kitchen, a library/ fellowship room, and a large hall for various activities. Most of the social events other than Sunday Meeting for Worship are held on this floor. The second floor consists of the meeting room, which seats approximately 120 people. At Sunday worship this room is organised with chairs forming a roughly oval appearance, or several sets of nesting parentheses and benches at the walls. In the centre of the seating arrangement there is a table and on it is vase with flowers, three copies of *Quaker Faith and Practice*, four copies of *Advices and Queries* and two Bibles. These books are used for personal reading during worship, and for reference during vocal contribution. There is also a bowl on the table for collecting donations for Quaker works, both local and worldwide. A hearing loop system is used for people with hearing difficulties, helping them hear the contributions to the worship. The Friends and visitors who use the meeting room regularly describe it as peaceful, light and airy.

To help maintain the building, Friends let the rooms to other groups for a modest fee. These non-Quaker groups are continually exposed to these subtle messages or symbols of the Quaker community. Their most salient feature is how covertly Quaker these symbols are. The aesthetic of simplicity suggests little to the outsider, directly. However, this is a testimony – a key statement of truth – for Friends, suggesting a one-sided nature to this symbolic form and a boundary highlighting the community. The Quaker dove is the only symbol that could identify the uniqueness of the setting.<sup>i</sup> The building could easily be confused as a public

community centre was it not for the few splashes of Quaker identity. Certainly, when comparing the Quaker Meeting House to a cathedral or a parish church, Quaker symbolic representation of the community is considerably subdued.

Meeting Houses are not the only places where Quakers worship. Friends object to the separation of sacred and secular, preferring to act as though all of creation is sacred. It follows then, that worship need not be conducted in consecrated buildings and worship is not solely an activity reserved for those special occasions. Many Friends participate in Meeting for Worship in each other's homes, an activity practised in the Scottish Borders, Highlands, and Grampians. Other groups of Friends rent accommodation in commercial space for Sunday morning worship. This practice certainly reflects logistical and economical practicalities. Often Friends are so sparse and dispersed that it is impractical to try to maintain a Meeting House, and many meetings prefer a small number of participants to ensure quiet worship. The value being expressed, however, is that worship is practised everywhere.

### *Meeting for Worship*

The primary source of communal spirituality for participants comes from their silent Meeting for Worship. These occasions are tranquil, meaningful, and apparently without structure. At this particular Meeting House Friends meet for an hour in worship every Sunday morning. As they enter the building, they are greeted with a handshake and a warm welcome, and they then congregate in the ground floor foyer to converse briefly, check the internal post, and arrange to fulfil their duties to the meeting.

Worship begins as the first person enters the room. In worship Friends face the centre of the room, silently worshipping and awaiting the presence of the Inner Light, or the Holy Spirit to guide the meeting and ministry. From any position in the room a participant can see at least half of the others present. The lack of ornamentation in the room focuses the attention on the people present, and the lack of talking focuses attention to internal voices and eventually to the silence. As people settle a hush comes over the room as people become comfortable. At this point the meeting has 'centred down'.

There is no formally stated manner in which to present the body, but the standard practice is to indicate calmness and concentration. Many 'seasoned' Friends will sit with an erect posture with their gently clasped or opened hands in their lap. Others slouch a little with their arms folded, and on occasion with their head in their hands. Their faces express serenity or contemplation usually with eyes closed, or with their gaze directed away from other faces. Eye contact occurs when people enter the room, but it is generally avoided during worship. Newer participants usually watch others in the room, watching how worship is performed, or preparing to calm themselves for worship. Occasionally these newcomers are familiar enough with the practice of Quaker worship, and they join in the same self-presentation as the seasoned Friends. The room remains quiet apart from the occasional cough, shifting seat, snore, or noise outside the building until a person rises to speak.

Ideally, a person is inspired to speak, or minister, from the Inner Light. Ministry is a recognition of truth that arises from the Inner Light that compels the person to share the message to those present. On occasions when no one senses this

inspiration the meeting is content to be silent, and this silence is viewed as meaningful as vocal ministry. Since this was a large meeting, ministry was regular. There were no completely silent meetings on Sunday Meeting for Worship during fieldwork, and there were typically one to four ministries during a meeting. The greatest amount of ministries observed on a single Sunday was fourteen, when British and American forces were enforcing the no-fly zone over Iraq. This particular meeting was a disappointment for many seasoned Friends, because ministry should not be used as an opportunity to convey a political message on a soapbox or conduct a debate. Some people assert that the best ministry is the silence. Because they are relatively rare in this meeting, fully silent meetings are particularly enjoyed. Ministries are intended to be short statements on eternal truth, so people should not repeat themselves or minister on the same subject more than once in a meeting. Ministry is presented while standing and ideally with a clear voice for all to hear. Most people open their eyes while giving ministry, but some keep their eyes closed. Some participants will open their eyes while listening to ministry, while others continue their concentration with their eyes closed. There are people who minister several times a month, or even weekly. Many Members have never ministered vocally.

Speaking within the context of the Meeting for Worship may not have rigid limits on the religious source domain used, but the form of the speaking and the content does have important conventions. There are places where speech and silence are appropriate. The linguist Alan Davies suggests that speaking in Meeting for Worship is analogous to performance rather than other forms of communication, linking the action to oral narrative (1988). Speaking in worship should not involve

insults, preparations for other activities, proposals of marriage, or references to information without overt general significance to be considered appropriate. People should briefly speak one at a time, and their ministry should not address rhetorical questions, or ask questions that require a direct answer. The silence between these performances is the central feature to the event. It is the communion for Friends.

According to Davis showing competence in silence and speaking demonstrates:

Conformity to the constraints of the *mentionable* (what is legitimate for members to talk about to one another, assuming a shared background and an agreement as to present context); *members* (members possess 'knowledge in recognising the activities that participants to interaction are engaged in,' [Turner 1970]); *topic* (Given what gets talked about; i.e. mentionables, their sequency is relevant, and in particular the position of the first topic in a single conversation); *placement* (crucial for certain sequences, possibly less so for the non-conversation of ministry).

Davies 1988: 131-2

As we will see this competence is learned, and nurtured by the meeting as they react to flawed performances with a unique form of sensitivity and teaching, which is a sublime form known as 'Eldering'. Eldering is usually a correction or teaching form that correctly demonstrates the Quaker form and stresses the conventions of performance and Quaker sociability. This act of teaching will be described in greater detail in Chapter 7.

Friends avoid open display of emotion in ministry. Direct displays of anger or frustration place risks on the meeting's sense of unity. In the business meetings these reactions to a topic could be sensed though the tone of voice or when a person voiced a 'concern'. Based on field observation, emotions like anger, fear, apprehension and frustration may be expressed, but ideally they are coded and restrained. Words like 'challenge,' 'concern' or 'worry' safely convey the internal state. In an interview an informant confided that contributions that are emotionally

subdued are more persuasive. Even excitement and enthusiasm are controlled. In a conversation after Meeting for Worship, a Friend said that Quakers do not have a language for joy, as he contrasted Friends with Pentecostal or evangelically oriented Christians. Some Friends referred to this form of Christianity as 'happy-clappy,' reflecting the expression of elation in religious life as a boundary between the two groups. When displays of anger, fear, apprehension, and frustration did occur in Meeting for Worship they were usually expressed with tears.

The topics in ministry usually follow themes initiated by the first ministry. A participant will stand, speak, and a few minutes later another person will contribute. The theme is created when a following speaker focuses on an element from the first that was personally meaningful. There are no set conventions that dictate ministers must follow the theme. This type of rule, indeed any overt rule, would be viewed as inhibiting the Spirit. Often there is no overt Christian content in ministries, allowing others to apply their theology. On one occasion a visitor stood and admitted it was his first Quaker meeting, and he felt a sense of acceptance and being at home. The rest of his message was rather incoherent, but he mentioned the life giving nature of Gaia, and the interconnected essence of life. The next person spoke on this interconnectedness with more coherence, supporting what was decipherable from the first person's message. The second person made no mention of Gaia, nor was there any other clear religious statement however she emphasised the theme of interconnectedness. The third person continued the theme, speaking on the spirit of God within us all, illustrating the source of our interconnectedness. The final speaker then cited a relevant passage from scripture. The contributions illustrated the theological diversity that is found in Quaker meetings, ranging from New Age to

Christian interpretation. No debate was established; rather participants took the truths from the previous speaker and added what gave the truth its authority for them.

Since many people do not minister, just what they gain from Meeting for Worship is hidden to the observer. In interviews and in conversation people are willing to discuss the topic. A female Member and retired teacher views Meeting for Worship as a quiet time that allows her to ‘recharge.’

A deep meeting holds you. You’re used to being disturbed, as a mother and teacher. I look round to see who is there. You know who is there and who is missing. The group and the extended family, and that we’re doing something together. There’s something about being together, in the quiet together, searching together, which is what I like and draws me. I like being with other people and I rely on other people as well. I listen rather than speak. Recharging in the power of the gathered silence. Searching to allow the many thoughts to settle and sort themselves out. Be still and know that I am God was said in ministry the other day. That’s what I do. I am still. I forget all the worries and all that jobs I do, and I open my mind, and my soul and my spirit and wait for what ever is there to come. I don’t sit there kind of thinking about things. I just wait.

A male Attender and university student appreciates the getting away from the stresses of the university and into different ‘circles,’

Wanting the companionship and family-ness. They’re always there. There is always a family and it’s just sitting down with family in the Meeting House. What they offer is friendship. I love the community side of it. I centre down to talk to people who don’t talk.

Another female retired teacher, who has been attending for thirty years, describes her time in meeting as a release.

I get a sense of relief. A young relative of mine died recently and meeting gave me a feeling of relief. Here I am with people I *know* [her emphasis in speaking] have the same basic common beliefs even though they come from different directions. I also find it extraordinarily peaceful. One can find tranquillity. From a wider perspective I go to meeting to give praise and thanks for life. I feel I could not get through life very adequately without this very strong belief that there is a God. At the same time I have to say that some people have no belief in God, and may be extremely good people, and live very good lives, and keep their lives to a high moral standard. I can have more admiration for them, than many a person who has a standard

religious belief...Um...What does Meeting for Worship mean to me? It means so many things. I think; if there's some great national disaster like thousands upon thousands of poor Bangladeshis being swept away by floods, I feel I want to have quiet time and thought about that...I think I nearly always say the Lord's prayer, because I think there's no other prayer that's better.

One Friend, a male who has attended Quaker school and now works as a university researcher, describes Meeting for Worship as, 'An exercise in personal theological problem solving. It is a ritual that slows me down, and occasionally I get a feeling of connection'.

Another participant, who describes himself as a Buddhist, comes to meeting for meditation in supporting others in worship. He finds the Quaker meetings better for meditation than attending many Buddhist groups.

One informant who was helpful in understanding the Society described his use of worship as an opportunity to:

Empty myself of thought and just be, because when that is allowed to happen I think I can touch depths one does not know of, and one is aware all the time that your intelligence and your thought processes, your verbalising are on the one hand absolutely necessary to help you make sense of the experience, but in a way they are obstructions. That is the time to let these processes to be still, to discover, and be open to what lies through and beyond that, and that's what Fox and Penn were up to. I think that's lost a lot in the Society at this end of the twentieth century, because I think there is a lot of misunderstanding of that concept, and I think the people who are in Quakerism today think that it is a time to let the verbal reasoning run riot. Spoken ministry should ideally come from the depths that are beyond words, and it's at its most powerful when it does. When it's the un-thought-through verbalising of the experience put into words, and attempt all be it broken and fragile to communicate it. It can be very powerful.

My participation in meetings did not achieve the depth that this last informant described. I found most of the meetings very inspiring and the 'recharged' feeling was familiar to me. The common activity of silence, the tolerance and the sense of

common purpose were enough to give me a sense of meaning and an understanding of what motivated participants to partake in the worship. In the early days of fieldwork I found numerous distractions prevented the deeper sense of the meeting. A part of the process of being still is allowing the body to quiet. The participants conveyed stillness through maintaining a regular posture with minimal shifting. My health difficulties while conducting fieldwork made this aspect of stillness a challenge. I was also distracted by the compulsion to memorise, as near as possible, the spoken ministry. Since I was discouraged from taking notes during Meeting for Worship, I used mnemonics to recall the order, content, and the idiom used by the people who spoke, and I quickly left after 'the rise of meeting' to scribble some jottings for fuller elaboration when I returned home. I also engaged in the mental tasks of counting the participants, noting the people who were late, the number of males and females, etc. These activities were good for the observer, but a hindrance to the participant anthropologist. Towards the end of fieldwork my health condition improved, and my sense of urgency to record the ministries was less pressured. I became better able to still my body, and shifted in my seat a little less. Letting go of thoughts and ignoring the simple distractions of the traffic outside, or the other people shifting in their seats facilitated the mental stillness. Interestingly, when I became a Warden for the meeting, my attention was refocused. Since I was responsible for setting up the room for worship, and generally making the environment suitable for a successful meeting, the opportunity to achieve mental stillness was again challenged. I became more sensitive to how the other Wardens must have viewed Meeting for Worship, and could better empathise with the duties of the Elder and the Overseer, who are expected to manage the worship by watching

the clock and ensuring that the participants do not abuse the silence. Having responsibilities in the worship made it more difficult to let go of thoughts.

Children do not participate in the worship for the entire hour. In an interview with a woman who is active in working with children, I enquired why children do not participate in all of the worship. My informant used the Quaker inclination to defer to an individual's choice. 'Well, a child's being in meeting is up to the child and the parent really. Some children can sit in silence for an hour, but others can't. If a child gets fidgety, it can disrupt the silence, but most people don't mind. It's usually the parent that gets embarrassed'. While this informant left the individual child's participation up to the ability of the child to maintain the discipline for an hour, most children participate in age-specific activities when adults are in worship. Children enter the meeting from first floor in the last fifteen minutes of the hour. They will sit and join the worship, going to their parents or sitting with their friends. Their entry will bring smiles to the faces of some of the adults while others continue their close-eyed concentration. Their entry sometimes creates a stir as some children find it difficult to sit quietly. As they sit, they look to each other with restrained giggles or to the rest of the meeting wonder or bemusement. Occasionally they will cause a minor disruption to the meeting, which is absorbed, causing more worry to the parents than the rest of the meeting, confirming my informants observation. Sometimes the presence of the children inspires ministry either about children or directed to them.

The meeting concludes with people shaking hands with the people around them, usually whispering 'good morning'. The local meeting's Clerk then announces Quaker and non-Quaker events that are of interest. Visitors and new people are

given the opportunity to introduce themselves to the meeting so they can be sure to be welcomed. At the end of the announcements there is a final brief pause before the meeting rises. After the meeting most of the participants talk while drinking tea and coffee, then they gather to eat a simple lunch. This is a talkative occasion, contrasting with the silent worship. A few people stay and clean after the meal. The meal is viewed as a communion, but not the sacred occasion that is found in the Catholic church or the Church of Scotland, nor is it a secular event as Friends find this a false dichotomy.

### **Community**

The starkly visible dimension of plain dress or plain speaking that once marked the boundary between Friends and non-Friends is no longer used, so the sense of community that is recognisable to all (Hostetler 1964) requires other means. There was a sense of predicament in the Society due to the theological diversity, which explains the urgency for community sensed by the Friends I observed. A retired university instructor observed:

I: We have such a wide range of theological views... here again one has got to qualify... When they are expressed. People don't normally talk about anything that is explicitly or by implication their own theological views. They don't tend to, but if you read *The Friend* you become aware of the wide range we have. One of the difficulties is we don't have a creed. It's all very well, but a creed does bring people together as far as having certain things in common... but we don't have a creed. It's difficult to identify what we have in common. It's easy to bring out the old chestnut that we believe in 'that of God in everyone', but it's open to interpretation, and perhaps we should accept that we haven't anything in common theologically. Yet we stick together.

A: What keeps the Society together, then?

I: I don't know... I don't know... Perhaps a sense of community.

Developing a sense of community was vital. The participants in the meeting continually engaged in pursuits that would practice the ideal equality and the acknowledgement of ‘that of God’ of everyone who came to meeting. Since the best way for Friends to discern the truth from the Inner Light through is communal ‘discernment’, there is an imperative for the group to accept the responsibility for the maintenance of the relationships. The *Advices and Queries* that opened this chapter reflect this, and they place the responsibility on each participant to ‘bear the burden of each other’s failings’. Community was also deliberately developed and nurtured. Indeed, there was a fear that the meeting was losing its sense of community at the time of fieldwork. In their reckoning, a trusting group fosters the sharing of spiritual awareness, enriching the lives of the participants and the communal identity for the Society. The formal responsibility of establishing community belongs to Elders and Overseers, but it is also a topic of casual conversation. (Details about the roles of Elder and Overseer are detailed below and in Chapter 5.) The testimony of equality is the root of this endeavour. Colour, gender, sexual orientation, and social class should not exclude people from participating in the Society. This ideal also establishes the tolerance for the theological diversity found today.

### *Dining and Sharing*

This local meeting typically expressed community-building by sharing food. Meetings for Worship were regularly followed by a shared meal of vegetarian soup, bread, and cheese. Even the menu reflected the inclusiveness intended for these occasions. The ingredients used typically avoided items that may offend or cause allergic reaction, so everyone who wanted to participate in the meal could do so. Meat, genetically modified food, inorganic material are all avoided. The aversions

cater to political, and ideological understanding, and personal interpretations of health in the meeting. Making these concessions permitted all participants to share with preparing and eating the meal. The objections did make inclusiveness a challenge to those who were unfamiliar with such a deliberate diet. One Friend shared his first encounter with this norm. At his first Quaker 'bring and share' supper, he and his wife brought devilled eggs. When he noticed, near the end of the occasion, most of the eggs were still on the serving dish, he decided to take the plate around and offer them to people. The first person asked, 'Are they free-range eggs?' 'I'm not sure,' he responded. The person politely declined. The next person to receive an offer queried, 'Are they free-range eggs?' Wanting to rid himself of the eggs, this time he said yes. To this the person said, 'No thank you, free-range eggs don't agree with me'.

These dining occasions contrasted with Meeting for Worship by providing an opportunity to talk informally. One Attender explained how important these occasions are for sharing what Quakerism is, and for teaching the ideals of the Society.

One big incident that really made me believe that Quakerism isn't really a bad thing after all was one coffee after meeting, and this lady was speaking to me... something about believing in Jesus... and I said (laughing) 'well, I'm not sure I believe in that, so I don't think I could be a Quaker', and she said 'I've been coming here forty years, dearie, and I don't know if I believe'.

Meals and coffee times were well attended by not only those that participated in the meeting but also by people, Friends and non-Friends, that did not participate in worship. Quakers from a nearby meeting and people from other churches would come to enjoy a cheap meal or fellowship. Often these meals had a festive atmosphere. Playing children and happily conversing adults were common.

Conversation topics included meeting business, personal projects away from the meeting, work, current events, or the weather. Visitors at Sunday worship were welcomed to the meal, and the occasion was used to get to know them better.

The price for the meal was aimed at inclusion as well. People who could afford to pay for the meal were encouraged to contribute sixty pence to cover the cost. No one was pressured to pay if they could not afford the expense. There was no economic advantage associated with this food for the Preparative Meeting, or PM. It was ideally divorced from the notions of status that food can take away from the Meeting House, continuing the spirit of simplicity and equality. These Friends were embarrassed when the PM treasurer reported a small profit from the activity during a business meeting statement of accounts.

Dining occasions also occur after regional and Scotland-wide gatherings. After the business meetings tea is served with cakes, and at the longer meetings the hosting group serves soup and beverages to supplement lunches that people bring for themselves. These events allow Friends to establish community and common identity with wider circles of Friends. Eating is such a central communal event that an editor of *The Friend* urged Friends not to submit photos of Friends eating, because it had become a clichéd, worn photograph at communal events.

### *Group Activities*

Group activities are a regular opportunity to build a community by design. Meetings for Learning are study courses for exploring faith and providing a discourse for communal understanding of Quakerism. During the academic year two to four courses are arranged, covering a range of topics considered important and

interesting. These are initially organised by Elders in the meeting who choose convenors based on the person's abilities. Groups that did not continue were 'laid down' by the participants.

Special retreats are also held regularly. Many of these are local or regional, but there is a weekend gathering for Friends in the whole of Scotland as well. These gatherings facilitate relationships among the participants, expanding Quaker networks throughout the country, and across all age groups. At this event the activities are designed for age sets. Adults are encouraged to participate in learning courses and recreational activities together, while other trained adults are responsible for organizing activities for children and teen groups. Dining is communal, and catered by facility staff. The food is vegetarian for the ease of preparation and so no one is excluded from the meal. In the evenings a ceilidh is held, where people of all ages perform, sing and dance. Toward the end of the weekend the adults more sparsely attend activities. One informant stated that this was common for Friends who cannot take such organisation for too long. Another Friend joked that organising Friends is like herding cats. Families attend the General Meeting, or GM, retreat regularly each year. Many children and teenagers did not remember a summer where they did not participate. Similar events are organised for enquirers (people who express interest in the Society), and there is a children's summer school.

The most important gathering in the communal life of Friends is Meeting for Worship, as I have tried to express. The goal in Meeting for Worship is to attain a level of connection known as a 'gathered meeting,' where the participants enter a meaningful silence and a feeling of intimacy occurs. Gathered meetings are usually described as going beyond words, when, in historical terms, the participants agree the

event had a conspicuous presence of the Inner Light. 'In a gathered meeting we are in God', one Friend commented. Another Friend conveyed,

You know when you've been in a gathered meeting. It's the sense that you're all in the same place, level, reaching down to something, or up as the case may be. Away from the everyday, away from the meeting room into something else which is more important, that's unknowable perhaps. It's something - another dimension. A reaching together that gives it its gathered-ness. In relation to your work, it's the lack of conflict. It's the oneness.

According to another Member a gathered meeting is:

...where there are enough people undergoing the exercise of letting go and being inwardly still to catch the other people who are having difficulty so that sense of shared beyond-ness and the realisation of the best of human ideals of God among us. It happens sometimes. It's powerful when it does. It happens only occasionally. After a gathered meeting it's hard to talk to people. You don't want to break the silence. There's a great sense of sharing - a great sense of oneness. You feel that somehow you made some sort of advance together. The only thing that you want to share is that it's been a good experience. It's an awareness of...of unity. It's an awareness of the sensitivity of other people who are there as well. It's also a feeling that it is possible for...a...for the evil in you to be taken in hand, and, in Barclay's words, 'and the good raised up'. You feel that...you feel after what may be a short or a long time of struggling with things that the struggle's going to be that much easier. You're going to deal with things much more easily. It's really difficult to describe other than that.

A: I realised after asking the last question that I asked you to describe something that goes beyond words. (Laughs)

I: (Laughs) I've tried to analyse these things. All I know is that, when I came to be among Friends, I valued enormously the simplicity and the integrity of the people and the way their lives spoke the most, and it was only gradually that I came to appreciate the possibility of Meeting for Worship.

Gathered meetings usually happen in smaller groups, and Friends recall only a few occasions where they had this type of experience. Some Friends described a gathered meeting as one that maintains a coherent theme among the ministries.

### *Egalitarianism*

This aspect of community among a meeting's participants is based on the equality testimony, which becomes a practical aesthetic form as well as a political ideal. Joanna Overing's (1989) description of the Amerindians of the Amazon basin is helpful for understanding the Quaker approach to egalitarian association and community. Overing argues that the Western propensity to separate the aesthetic from ethics has frustrated anthropological understanding of the people in that region who do not draw such Kantian distinctions between aesthetics and ethics. She asserts there is an aesthetic to production among the Cubeo and the Piaroa that structures their domestic modes of production (Sahlins 1972) in such a manner as to not make it a descent into an anarchy of nature. Among the Cubeo (Goldman 1963, as described by Overing 1989) and the Piaroa, the de-emphasis on hierarchy and the use of informality as a political, aesthetic and social value allows these people to avoid coercion and subordination.<sup>ii</sup> A similar de-emphasis is found in the Society, as Friends prefer to use their lack of overt persuasion, and sense of personal discovery as the means of socio-political cohesion. Threats and aggressive persuasion are offensive to the Quaker community. Likewise Friends focus on the forms that bolster their understanding of egalitarian ideals through the emphasis of the equality testimony. This testimony is used as a heuristic and core value in the political structures of the Society.

The Cubeo and the Piaroa place equal importance on individualism and collectivism, alternating from one to the other when either becomes ascendant. Quaker history and current practice could easily be described as a negotiation between these two ambitions. The Naylor dispute, and the Story-Wilkinson dispute

show the tension and vacillations between the individual and the group or social structure. For the Cubeo ‘Only through personal autonomy...can the social be achieved’ (Overing 1989: 162), which also appears in the ethos of the Quaker meeting. These Amerindian groups are opposed to personal commands or submission just as the passages from *Advices and Queries* that open this chapter are referred to as ‘advices’ and ‘queries’, not commandments or commands. They serve to guide the Friend when it is deemed personally necessary. Direct commands in the Meeting House between adults were never observed. When one person wanted another person to change a behaviour, it was always done as a request. ‘Could we get help making soup?’ or, ‘Would Friends please consider...?’, suggesting the appropriate tact to encourage communal behaviour and personal responsibility.

The parallels between the descriptions of the Cubeo, Piaroa and Friends are informative. While Overing assumes that the aesthetics of the socio-political order found among the Amazonian Amerindians may be unfamiliar to us in the ‘west’, the generalisation is broken with Friends and their experience of community. Numerous structures of egalitarianism are deployed that are analogous between the groups, suggesting that the pursuit of communality and peace encourage particular behaviours to be practiced amongst people that seek these values.

Quakers express their egalitarian ideal by manifestly refusing to use titles. The apparently acephalous worship brings down barriers that come with status, allowing experienced Friends and novices to interact without formal titles to hinder the relation. Friends also do not distinguish each other with the titles achieved away from the Meeting House, like Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr, Professor, or Dean. This gives the meeting a sense of informality, stressing the political value of equality. Nearly all of

the adults in the meeting had or were working on a university degree. Several people were university instructors, but seldom does this directly arise in conversation. It came as a surprise when I discovered the level of distinction many of these people obtained in their careers. A person's status was a topic in conversation only rarely, and when the person concerned was not present. One Friend laughingly said, 'Had I known the level of distinction of these people, I would have been intimidated by their reputation'. This practice and the supportive ethos in the meeting leads to a sense of community through a non-competitive atmosphere. A newly convinced Member and retired headmaster said, 'I appreciate the lack of politics in the Meeting'. Activities at parties and social gatherings, particularly with young people, were designed to be non-competitive. Rather than playing games where there is a clear winner and loser, the activities facilitated equality and affirming interaction.

I mentioned earlier that the Society aims to practice equality and social inclusion. The meeting however is typically a homogeneous group, coming from white middle class society. This is in the meeting's awareness and many found the reality troubling. In ministry one Sunday a Friend noted that the Meeting House was far away from the housing schemes and off the bus routes to these areas, making the inclusion of these people unlikely.

### *Silence*

Jeremy Carrette (1993) explores the practice of silence in the Quaker context as being an intimate and inextricable part of Quaker language. He argues, Friends employ an inner dialogue during silence that cannot escape language. As silence relates to community he suggests that silence, 'documents a sense of the "self" in

relation to others by turning the language of community in on itself. It thus affirms community by suspending the diverse sounds of interaction, and focusing on the shared spaces between words which we all partake' (1993: 234). The silence is explored and interpreted in the community, giving it meaning among Friends who appreciate the inner experience and its sharing. Yet the act of silence has other means of fostering community, which are revealed when in light of the diverse theologies in the worship.

The intertwining of silence and language among Friends was also recognised by Howard (1994), whose use of Bakhtin helped her recognise the formation of a communal voice in a particular event she witnessed that was built upon core values, individual voices, and the unsaid into a narrative that established a sense of commonality. She describes a Quaker community in Costa Rica that was formed by a group of Americans that immigrated to set up a community that reacted against American militarism and materialism. The Friends ran a nature preserve and dairy farm, and endeavoured to live by their principles of simplicity and 'active loving'. In this context, silence as the unspoken cordoned the threats to the community and the thoughts that challenge the togetherness. The individual voices were filtered and included into a communal voice through the quoting of others, forming a coherent affirmation of the community ethos, directing the gaze of the group away from those things that were better left tacit and silent.

Silence fostered the sense of community in two other ways among the Friends I observed. Silent worship provided an opportunity for creating community by structuring the space and the meaning of the silence. While Friends aim to blur the distinction between the sacred and the secular, there is the distinction that

Meeting for Worship is a context where particular behaviours are expected; therefore the context is meaningful beyond daily experience. The group engaged in the same behaviour with communal understanding providing the Durkheimian structural elements to community. For Friends this is the form of silent worship and the apparent lack of form to the occasion. Friends are quiet about this structure, knowing that it is delicate and susceptible to abuse, but also that structure can inhibit access to the Inner Light. Only after repeated visits to a meeting does the structure of worship and silence emerge in a participant's awareness.

The *disciplined* silence suggests personal editing for the sake of the community. While Howard (1994) found individual voices were filtered by how the community remembered events through the quotation of particular individuals. This silence is viewed as one that facilitates community by placing the filter not in what is repeated and therefore endorsed, but also on the participant in the meeting. The lack of creeds, minimal outward symbolic adornment, and a liberal theology expand the model from which Friends can gain their spiritual understanding. Meeting participants, sitting quietly to seek a spiritual experience, create the illusion that everyone is performing the same activity. The behaviours they exhibit, upon first observation, are alike. Joint activity and the apparently joint pursuits are community building, but after regular participation, and when rapports develop amongst other participants, the individual differences become manifest. The lack of a creed eliminates this symbolic marker for Friends. There are no clergy sermonising sanctioned beliefs. The disciplined silence in Meeting for Worship provides the symbol upon which to focus in the face of such idiosyncratic theologies, coupled with the norm of 'addressing that of God', or the less theistic equivalent of acting

lovingly toward others. Common belief is too fluid to be the basis for the notion of community among Friends. With such differing theologies, the likelihood of disagreement is wholly possible. Silence in these situations maintains the community. It glosses over the differences that exist between individual theologies. Often participants admitted, that when certain people to minister, they would shut down and not attend to what they were hearing. The process of shutting down is caused either by personal disagreement of the ministry's theological basis, or because the listener already knows the message due to the speaker's repeated theme and its regular expression. Discussing this openly harms the meeting's community by inhibiting the expression of the Inner Light and it violates the ethos of loving support.

The discipline in these situations is encouraged. *Advices and Queries* urges people to listen patiently to ministry and look for the truth or relevance to personal understanding.

Do you respect that of God in everyone though it may be expressed in unfamiliar ways or be difficult to discern? Each of us has a particular experience of God and each must find the way to be true to it. When words are strange or disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth that other people's may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements of allegations that are unfair or untrue. Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

*Advices and Queries*  
1995: 1.02.17

Friends place considerable value on this structured silence, as they suggest that it is what separates them from other religious organisations. Friends internalise the silence and incorporate it into their identity. The particular meaning that they project on the occasion is multi-vocal and idiosyncratic, relying heavily on personal

theological understanding. As we will see, silence and the ethos of loving support manage this disparity between the participants. The structure of the silence is also in part formed by the limits on language imposed on the participants, and what cannot be said to create a meaningful experience. These rules will be elaborated further in Chapter 6, but it is important to show here that the *Advices and Queries* urge the participant to discipline their understanding of ministries when the truth within the spoken word is unfamiliar or contradicting to the listener. The silence can become a hegemonic silencing of alternative interpretations of experience, because Meeting for Worship is ideally not a venue for debate. Debate is the form of discourse for spaces away from the meeting room. The structure of silence in the face of conflict maintains the community until occasions where the conflict can either fade in its importance, as in the case where one or the other disputants may be persuaded by the other, or until there are other methods of managing the dispute in a Quakerly manner.

The second way silence facilitated community involves a person's opportunity to establish private meanings for the silence. While being silent, each participant is given the opportunity to exercise personal interpretations for the activity. The motivations for the silence can change as a person becomes more familiar with the setting. 'For a stranger entering an alien society, a knowledge of when not to speak may be as basic to the production of culturally acceptable behaviour as a knowledge of what to say' (Basso 1990: 82). Upon entering the Quaker worship the new participant may be silent simply because the rules for speaking have not yet been learned. Gaining greater familiarity with the silence allows other more theological meanings can be appended to the activity, and as the rules for speaking are learned the person may even minister. Appreciating the communal relaxation of the mind,

body and spirit can also create private, meaningful experiences, but also a communal one. Silence, then, allows the participant the opportunity to feel a part of a community by letting them project their idiosyncratic meanings on the silence, and assume that these meanings are shared. It provides the participant a greater opportunity to find meaning in the experience, using private, internal symbols, and using the cultural models that they bring to the occasion of worship.

### **Community and its Implications for Conflict**

Throughout this description I have outlined some of the markers that construct this community. Friends utilise methods of community building that are explicitly directed to this end: they dine together; they interact with a sense of equality; and they worship in silence together. These activities convey an aesthetic theme for the practice of their testimonies. Since Friends reject outward symbolism, they seldom acknowledge the symbolic form that they use as a demarcation between themselves and other groups. Indeed Friends would state that they are not using religious symbols to mark themselves as Quaker. However, as stated earlier there are numerous symbols in the presentation of the building that highlight it as a Quaker Meeting House: the posters, the reading material, the lack of adornment, all embody the testimonies. Interestingly, the presentation of the meeting room, recognised as not having symbols, is in fact a regularly occurring symbol. The circular seating arrangement is an important feature in Quaker meetings. This practice suggests that the circle contains greater significance. Taking from the notion that there is 'that of God within everyone' and the unadorned worship space, one could imagine the circle allowing the participant to meditate on the presence of God in the community visible in the worship service. Here Friends embody the symbolism that typically adorns the

church, synagogue or mosque – a theme that will recur throughout this interpretation. Worship allows the participants to reflect on their spiritual understanding using the presence of the fellow participants rather than the crucifix, the menorah, or the mandala. The complexity of the participant, sitting quietly in worship, is reduced to the essential Quaker element of his or her containing ‘that of God’ within them. This is supported in the presence of the other participants that are seeking the similar awareness through the same behaviour.

My interpretation, if I expressed it in Meeting for Worship, could serve as a ministry. Ministries regularly engage in the interpretation of the silence, or the motivations for going to worship. Like any other symbol, however, there are other interpretations. Worship is intended to be an introspective seeking of the ‘still small voice’, so the external interpretation that I suggest may not conform to the understanding of many Friends. In this instance, some Friends may question that there is any significance to the arrangements of the room. Chairs are pragmatically arranged to allow people to be more easily heard, reflecting Quaker simplicity. Friends arrange their worship space for the easiest access to the Inner Light and the communal appreciation of this experience. To do this each person with a message should be heard by all participants (equality), and this should be done with the practical expedience (simplicity) that does not harm others (peace).

The multi-vocality found among Friends suggests another source of identity and boundary. As was stated earlier, there is no common creed or belief among participants. There are many discourses in the meeting that are aiming toward a common truth. The truth sought should go beyond any one religious dogma, so many dialogues are accommodated. The hyphenated Quaker comes to the fore:

Buddhist-Quaker, Jewish-Quaker, Catholic-Quaker, Muslim-Quaker, or Humanist-Quaker. This individualistic approach to faith or spiritual understanding also suggests a boundary between the Society and other faiths. While other Christian faiths use their creed as one demarcation of their identity from other groups, Friends do not have this. Rather, participants in meetings have the apparent freedom to select from their own experience what is meaningful, and what is truthful.

This aspect of Quaker identity is actually troubling to some participants in the Society (for a Quaker account of this, see Heron 1999), but it has become a marker of contemporary Quaker identity. The reported discomfort comes from a lack of a common, traditionally Christian voice. Often when ministry is overtly Christian, the person speaking will mention Jesus, or God with the tone of an apology rather than an evangelical tone of assurance. It was not uncommon to hear in ministries, 'I know it isn't popular to mention God [or Jesus], but...' Until relatively recently the Quaker discourse on truth was primarily a Christian one. The lack of a creed did not threaten the Christian identity within the Society, because the conversation was kept within a Christian idiom and the schema was from a Christian symbolic system. I would assert that this was due, in part, to the relative lack of choice. Historically, the Christian boundary in the Religious Society of Friends was easily managed when technology and limited contact with other cultures allowed it to exist without the challenge of other non-Christian interpretations. The lack of a creed freed the Christian discourse to include personal experience of Jesus Christ. Continuing revelation of the Christ within was not a debate, because the other religious options were either not known or too far from personal experience to be relevant. In today's Society, with the influx of information of different cultures, either directly

experienced or second-hand, the discourse has expanded to include other models of religious understanding. Tolerance has nearly reached the status of testimony in practice if not in writing or consciousness, and this is applied to different theological understanding of people in and outside the Society. The boundaries that demarcate Quaker from non-Quaker do not have the advantage of a creed, which allows a common reference point on what is and is not debatable in a particular religion.

Finally, this impacts on the interaction of the local meeting and the wider Quaker organisation. This chapter has focused on the local construction of community, but this is not the limit to the sense of community within the Society. The community extends to the regional, the Scottish, and the Britain-wide levels of the organisation, but the participants in these levels are almost exclusively Members. As I mentioned earlier, Attenders are not usual participants in the business meetings that are points of contact for Friends in the region and where decisions for the national level are made. This artefact of Attender behaviour, and the fact that Members are the formal representatives to the central bodies for the region, that creates a hierarchy among the wider communities. Many Attenders and some Members in the region of study, view the community as being local, and feel no connection to the rest of the Society. Local meetings in other regions also seem distant, leading researchers to assert that the local meeting is the most important level in the Society (Collins 1994, Dandelion 1996, Bradney and Cownie 2000). A sense of community changes then between the Member active at the other levels of the Society and the participants (Members and Attenders) that choose to only participate in the local meeting at Sunday worship. The Member has greater opportunity and usually a greater desire to have a sense of community extending beyond the local.

Friends create community in numerous ways to get a sense of the spiritual, eternal, or divine. Through the means outlined above they seek a harmony that supports them as they create both an individual and communal understanding of their lives and the wider realms of existence. While the standard religious symbolic systems are rejected, they use their practice of corporately understood truths and their silent worship to maintain their boundaries with other groups. There are many issues to be reconciled in the production of this community. While the ambition of this chapter is to show the harmony found in this meeting and how it was produced, it is unrealistic to imagine the group in a state of homeostatic bliss. These Friends have real issues that they endeavour to reconcile, or at least manage. Attenders/Members, noise/silence, authority/freedom, statement/practice, and individual/communal are all tensions these Friends tacitly and manifestly manage as they create meaningful experiences together. The structural, cognitive, and behavioural methods that maintain the meeting help their sense of belonging as they produce unique solutions to these tensions will be explored in due course. The remainder of this thesis examines conflict as a category, a symbol in which Friends bring their unique interpretation, and as a context where Friends are able (or not) to employ their values that they aim to embody.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> The Quaker dove is an emblem used in peace demonstrations in the 1960s.

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<sup>ii</sup> Overing in this article asserts that anthropology is better at describing the hierarchical domination of people and less adept at acknowledging the equality and peaceful aspects of society. I will confess that this thesis is a part of the domination set, although not uncritically. In chapter 4 and 7, I address the problems of domination in Quaker polity, but throughout the thesis I suggest that there is a practiced hierarchy behind the veil of egalitarian ideals. As Overing acknowledges, 'the institutions of hierarchy must be understood in terms of the encompassing institutions of equality' (1989: 162). This urging is also recognised.

## Chapter 3 – Meeting for Worship for Business

Do you take part as often as you can in meetings for church affairs? Are you familiar enough with our church government to contribute to its disciplined processes? Do you consider difficult questions with an informed mind as well as a generous and loving spirit? Are you prepared to let your insights and personal wishes take their place alongside those of others or be set aside as the meeting seeks the right way forward? If you cannot attend, uphold the meeting prayerfully.

*Advices and Queries*

1995: 1.02.15

In the Introduction I point to the business meeting as my entry into the field. It was where I obtained permission for this study, and where most of my understanding of Quaker conflict management was formed. In Chapter 1, the business meeting illustrated a distinguishing feature between Attenders and Members, providing a one-way mirrored boundary between the two statuses, where Attenders are highlighted and excluded from particular decisions, and where Members control the membership. The business meeting is an important forum when looking at the construction and management of conflict, since it is the location for the enactment of this category of experience - a location where the understanding of dispute is structured into a category and practice that is unique to Friends.

Quaker business meetings are a unique form of decision making that takes its form from worship. The proper name of the business meeting is Meeting for Worship for Business, or Meeting for Worship for Church Affairs. Speaking in a business meeting is given the same significance as speaking in the silent worship. A contribution is ideally from the Inner Light, and it attempts to convey truth. These contributions are recorded by a Clerk, who drafts minutes while at the meeting for the group's acceptance. The minute should trace the trajectory of the group's

contributions in a process called 'getting a sense of the meeting'. Only when participants are in unity is the minute accepted. This process is used throughout the Society's various business meetings.

The contemporary structure of the Religious Society of Friends is formed into local, regional, and central meetings. This political process was designed to allow participation of as many Friends as possible at all levels of the organisation. The relationship of these structures is best described as a flattened hierarchy where authority is constantly negotiated among the local and central segments. The flattened nature arises from the apparent lack of one role leading or directing the decisions and policies for all Friends. The management of authority and power is a process that, for Friends, is ultimately given to the Inner Light. No one person serves as a central figure in this organisation. Rather the structure is layers of collectives that use worship to discern the will of God in the determination of corporate action, creating a hierarchical organisation that does not accept a single person's authority over communal truth and action.

This chapter illustrates the decision-making structures, and the key roles within the Quaker organisation. The chapter opens with a narrative that is central to the dissertation, describing a conflict that reached each tier of the Society. The conflict provides a figure to the ground of the Quaker organisation. The tensions illustrated important features of Quaker decision making by providing an example where the process fails. The role of the business meeting clerk and the responsibility of the collected body of Friends are challenged and reasserted. My focus early in this chapter is on the conflict, but valuable information about the roles and responsibilities later informs the nature of the incident. After the narrative, the

structures in the organisation are described, providing a detailed portrayal of the Society, illustrating Quaker decision making at each level of the Society, and the results of the process breaking down. Within the description of the levels of the Society, I also continue to stress the community in terms of the organisation and the meetings as the location for forming unity. In later chapters, the narrative indicates the negotiation of power, the locations where conflict is discussed and safely managed in the community, and it illustrates the Quaker disposition in conflict situations.

### **The Trident Ploughshares Incident**

In 1997 a non-Quaker organisation called Trident/Ploughshares 2000 requested non-violence training from a newly founded Quaker organisation, Turning the Tide (TTT). Turning the Tide is a unique service provided by the Society, specialising in training non-violent action from a spiritual or religious understanding. It is a committee under the central division called Quaker Peace and Service (QPS). After considerable deliberation, or in Quaker vernacular 'discernment,' TTT agreed to provide this training to Trident/Ploughshares 2000. According to an informant in the second focus group conducted after the first draft, Turning the Tide was a new committee that had not yet been,

'tested and tried. It wasn't strictly in the canon of Quaker organisations, although it had been supported, and in the course of discussion there was also suggestion that it may train people for...like opposing new bypasses, opposing tree cutting and so on, which is way off limits, in a way, for Quaker support. Although, you could say non-violence training is good anyway. So we were considering something, which we didn't know how it would go.

The group, Trident/Ploughshares 2000, is a anti-nuclear activist organisation with the ambition to disarm Britain, and eventually the world, of its nuclear capability. While their objection to nuclear weapons is shared by many groups, their particular emphasis is on their reading of law from the International Court of Justice suggesting that nuclear weapons and their production is illegal (Zelter 2001). From this law, participants in Trident/Ploughshares 2000 aim to bring their case against Britain's Trident nuclear programme to the International Court. Their protests take several forms, ranging from sitting vigil to direct action against military property at the Faslane naval base. The people involved in the group determine for themselves what degree of commitment they are willing to invest in the protest. The most basic level is providing spiritual and financial support, providing prayers, money, and food to the people that maintain the ongoing vigil at Faslane. Others participate by demonstrating at the naval base, by carrying signs and holding vigil in a constant demonstration against Trident.

The training that Trident/Ploughshares requested from TTT was for the next level of protest - those people who endeavoured to enter the naval base with the intention to vandalise naval property. The goal was to enter the base and, in a symbolic act, use hammers to damage the military equipment, representing the biblical message of peace by pounding swords into ploughshares (Isaiah 2:4). This level of protest carried the most risk and required the greatest commitment to the demonstration, and, according to the participants, to non-violence. The risk was harm to the protestor and to the guards protecting the military compound. To mitigate the risk of acting violently and to educate protestors on the religious reasons for non-violence, the organisers hoped to be trained by the Quaker organisation in

preparation for their protest. The participants made their intentions explicit to the government by sending a letter stating their demands to dismantle the programme, or protestors would enter the base. The people intending to commit this action gave their names to the authorities with this letter. Once an act of vandalism occurred the perpetrator would then confess to legal authorities with the intent of bringing their cause to the Scottish courts, and with it the case that Trident is in violation of international law. The assumption made by the protestors was that the perpetration of a minor crime, vandalism, was less of a moral and legal violation than Trident.

Some of the activists in Trident/Ploughshares 2000 were Members and Attenders of the Religious Society of Friends, but their participation was not as representatives of the Society. Their participation came from their personal 'concern' over preparations for war, and their personal expression of their Quaker witness to peace. A 'Concern' is a person's action that is led by the Inner Light. It is a compulsion to act according to belief for the Quaker source of Truth. 'Concerns' inform the behaviour of Quaker conscientious objectors during wartime, and people who work selflessly for relieving suffering with the imprisoned, the sick, or the poor. In this instance the participants were led to demonstrate, to the threat of their own personal freedom, against Britain's nuclear capability.

Turning the Tide prepared to train the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 activists with their unique curriculum in religiously motivated, non-violent, direct action. A representative of Turning the Tide shared this intention in a report to the central decision-making body in the Society, the Meeting for Sufferings (MfS). The report was presented as agenda item number twelve to MfS at the end of a long business meeting. Turning The Tide expressed in their report that they were not, 'conspiring

to do criminal damage but instead to train each individual to understand themselves, their own reactions and their deepest natures so they can take responsibility for what they do' (Chattell 1997:11). The report continued to outline the level of involvement TTT would have with the non-Quaker organisation.

What was intended to be a quick synopsis of QPS's current activities became a situation where the 'discernment' of MfS, QPS, and TTT were in question and some Friends felt the need to leave the Society. At the end of the report, some participants voiced concern over TTT providing training to an organisation that aimed to intentionally violate the law. Concerns over the Society's liability in the situation, the interpretation of the hammer as a symbol, and the interpretation of these acts as violence were expressed, and MfS worked to determine whether or not TTT should provide this training. The MfS Clerk called for five minutes silence to allow Friends time to ease their confusion on the matter, to seek that 'still small voice.' No unity could be found on the issues, so MfS decided to return to the matter at the next meeting to be held in February 1998. The minute recorded by the Clerk reads,

The proposal challenges us in our corporate understanding of our activity as a peace-promoting Church and we have struggled, seeking to know what we are called to do. We wish to have further information before we return to this issue in February.

Chattell 1997:14

The first level of the Society below the Meeting for Sufferings to hear about these concerns was the local level business meeting, the Preparative Meeting (PM). This particular meeting was the first to be convened by the new PM Clerk. The agenda was relatively unremarkable but there was the item, 'Friends' Urgent Concerns', which would be the first test of his ability to discern the 'Spirit of the Meeting'. A representative that regularly attends MfS gave information about the

crisis, and answered questions about Trident/Ploughshares 2000. This representative suggested that no decision should be made at this meeting in response to MfS, preferring to wait until more information was gained. Many participants wanted more information about Trident/Ploughshares 2000 and supported her request. The representative to MfS agreed to gather this information and present it at a special meeting to be held for making a decision.

Contributing to a Quaker business meeting is identical to contributing a ministry in Meeting for Worship, coming from the same source - the Inner Light. The speaker at the business meeting should stand and briefly supply their comment, or statement of truth. During the discussion of Trident/Ploughshares 2000, the pace and tone of this Preparative Meeting quickly became informal and conversational as people stated their concerns without using Quaker form. Rather than allowing some pause between contributions for reflection, comments were stated quickly reacting to the previous speaker, and Friends stopped standing when making their statements. The participants turned to face the speaker and the speakers made eye contact with the others, rather than directing their comments to the Clerk. Questions were asked directly to the speakers by other participants. The Clerk re-established the discipline of the meeting by reminding people to stand when making a contribution. He said, 'I remind Friends to stand when making a contribution'. In response the participants returned to the Quaker form. They stood and waited for the Clerk to acknowledge them before they contributed. Their contributions were directed at the Clerk, and they took a less spontaneous tone.

After further consideration of the issue, the Clerk read a draft minute, stating a proposed action. The meeting accepted the minute after some redrafts by nodding or saying 'I hope so'. The minute read:

The QSRE Central Committee Representative on Meeting for Sufferings expressed concern about issues surrounding proposed Britain Yearly Meeting support for Trident/Ploughshares 2000, and requested help from PM. We agreed the printed information from Trident/Ploughshares 2000 should be made available after Meeting for Worship as soon as possible, along with a summary of the issues raised by this, and appoint a special evening meeting at 7:30 p.m. Thursday 29/1/98 to discuss the issue. We ask the QSRE Central Committee representative to prepare a summary for distribution and to convene the special meeting.

The regional level business meeting, or Monthly Meeting (MM), where the majority of my observation occurred, convened in January 1998. The Trident Ploughshares 2000 issue was on the agenda in the regular report from the MfS representatives. One representative started the report, but said that he had to leave before the Trident issues were discussed, so he left this segment of the report to his fellow representative. This representative continued and became visibly upset with what had happened as she conveyed the story. Her face became red, and she started to stammer. She said, 'I was appalled and incensed with rage. Quaker Peace and Service have gone into prayerful depth, deciding to train this group. Well, we might go to prison; we have in the past'. This representative's protest concerned Meeting for Suffering's decision that challenged the prayerful discernment of TTT and QPS. She interrupted her report, saying 'I'll stop now. I'm getting too emotional'.

Soon after this report, Friends stood to give their ministry/view on the issue. Many of these people had also been to the PM where the topic was discussed. One Member added,

I am unhappy about this. We are being asked to take part in sabotage. The Religious Society of Friends has never condoned this in the past. It needs more and better consideration.

Another person who attend the December Meeting for Sufferings added,

My reaction was bewilderment. There was a mistrust of Quaker Peace and Service. As we got more information, we became more confused. There needs to be a corporate view. I am on both sides.

A third person shared his view.

I'm glad to hear about this. I was on QPS. We were not given the information I would have liked, so I looked into more information about Trident/Ploughshares 2000. I'm not prejudging the issue, but I was concerned by the decisions that were made at QPS.

A fourth person said,

Last weekend my PM considered this as well. Two points arose. The first was that it is normal in MfS to table an issue when no decision is made. In this case it has slowed down QPS staff and they are upset. The second point was that we are concentrating on the wrong thing. Quaker history is full of this. Meeting for Sufferings was asked to consider and give support to QPS, not to rally participants for Trident/Ploughshares 2000.

The representative who had edited her participation due to her emotional involvement stood again and added,

The reasons given for withholding QPS's training were the wrong ones. We were asked to help the TTT trainers. We don't need to agree with them, but we do need to support them. The Religious Society of Friends is the only group in Great Britain that trains in the spiritual basis in non-violence.

After these positions were expressed another person suggested that the Monthly Meeting table this issue until more information was made available. The next contribution suggested a special joint MM and PM should be held to draft a minute suggesting an action for MfS on the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 issue. Others agreed, and the Clerk drafted a minute on this action.

The MM decided that a few designated people should gather facts relevant to the situation and prepare them for presentation at a special gathering of the MM to be held for making a decision about the issue. These people prepared a paper that stated the positions expressed both in favour of, and opposed to, the QPS training and information on the group Trident/Ploughshares 2000. The information on the issues was used to produce a paper that served as an advertisement for the special session of the MM.

Thirty-one people came to the special meeting that lasted nearly three hours. Prior to the meeting, people entered stating that there was no way that they could support an activity that broke the law or was in fact an act of violence (using hammers to destroy property). Others said that they did not like the lack of support MfS demonstrated toward QPS in its actions, and they wanted MfS to allow the training to proceed. These comments were emphatic and emotionally charged. I heard these divergent, emphatic and emotionally charged positions, thinking that it would not be possible for the meeting to find unity on the issue.

The Clerk organised the meeting into two segments. The first part of the evening was devoted to sharing information. Three information sheets were passed to each of the participants. One sheet had *Advices and Queries* passages from *Quaker Faith and Practice*. These instructed the meeting on the conduct expected, stressing the meaning and form of business meetings. The *Advices and Queries* urged the participants to come, 'in an active, seeking spirit, not with minds already made up on a particular course of action, determined to push through at all costs'. They also stressed that participation is an act of service to the Society that requires support for other participants especially the Clerk. These statements and questions

also highlighted the discipline required in Quaker business meetings: ‘Listening attentively and prayerfully’, ‘with heart and mind prepared, ready to speak to the point when moved to do so’, ‘when you wish to speak, wait to be called by the Clerk’, ‘hold back personal anecdotes’, and ‘speak audibly’. The suggestions all indicate the constraints upon the individual in business meetings at all times, but the document stressed these constraints for this particular meeting. The second sheet stated the background of the situation at Meeting for Sufferings, listing the concerns of all sides of the dispute and the motivation behind calling this meeting.

The final sheet was a publication from Trident/Ploughshares 2000, stating the motivation and rationale for their protest. The four-page document continued to explicitly describe the tactics that were to be used and the timeline for their activities. They emphasised the peaceful and non-violent nature of the protest, while graphics of hammers over submarines adorned the pages. Finally, a video prepared by the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 activists was viewed which emphasised the points made in the handout, stressing the non-violent and deliberate nature of the protest.

The MM representatives to MfS reported on the events that occurred at the meeting in question, and special information gatherers provided information on Trident/Ploughshares 2000. After the presenters had finished, they answered questions to clarify what MfS was being asked to decide upon and what Trident/Ploughshares 2000 expected from Turning the Tide. The information-gathering nature of this section of the meeting was continually re-established by the MM Clerk when participants made comments toward making a decision.

The second part of the evening was spent developing a minute to be sent to MfS stating the MM’s position and recommendation. The views expressed by

various people before the meeting suggested that no unity would be possible, but the concerns expressed during the latter part of the evening, paired with the facts presented at the beginning of the night, brought people together and a minute was indeed accepted. The minute supported both the training that QPS wished to provide and individual Friends that wished to participate in the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 programme. The evening ended with people commenting on how well the minute expressed the spirit of the meeting.

Although the PM and MM were able to support QPS's decision, others in the Society had more difficulty accepting the behaviour of the Trident/Ploughshares activists and the Society's willingness to affiliate with the group. The issues continued to be debated in *The Friend*, the weekly publication produced primarily for a Quaker audience. Paul Honigman, a Friend, wrote an article declaring his intention to resign his membership in the Society for its willingness to endorse implicitly the non-democratic action of using violence to impose a political view (1998). He viewed this action as a shallow symbolic act that was aimed at grabbing headlines. He viewed the message of this action as Friends saying, 'We know God's will on this issue; no other point of view is tenable; our will be done' (Honigman 1998: 10). Letters to the editor revealed strong opinion on the issue. They called for calm reflection on the peace testimony, loving support for the decision-makers, dissent from the training, and threats of cancelling membership.

In its February session, Meeting for Sufferings spent a considerable effort considering the issue. The meeting proceeded in a manner similar to the MM described above. Time was taken by the Clerk to highlight how the decision should be made, emphasising the need for discipline during the discussion. The Clerk also

noted that, ‘the business has to do with our discernment in this particular worshipping group as we meet in this group. It is not in ‘right ordering’ for me to bring to your attention communications from individuals and Preparative Meetings’ (Chattell 1998:10). Friends then spent the beginning of the session considering which issues required a decision from them and to establish TTT’s role. The group determined a distinction must be made between ‘incitement’ and ‘training’ when drafting a minute to avoid legal ramifications. During this discussion supporters emphasised that Quaker history of religiously motivated activism would help their case if they were called into court and that not providing the training may damage their credibility ‘in the eyes of other churches and the peace movement’ (Chattell 1998: 10). Next the group considered questions over the extent of TTT involvement, and legal issues. The QPS general secretary, Andrew Clark, handled the questions.

Finally the meeting turned its attention toward making a decision. ‘The atmosphere was tense, but prayerful, as speaker after speaker rose to support involvement’ (Chattell 1998: 11). MfS minuted:

After a long and careful consideration, which has included anxiety and fears both about permitting and not permitting Turning the Tide to take up the training in non-violence which has been requested by Trident Ploughshares, we share the discernment of QPS that our experience and programme is particularly appropriate.’

The minute then quotes QPS minute 97/47, and continues:

‘Reservations about the particular programme and aims of Trident Ploughshares remain amongst us, and we do not authorise Turning the Tide to go beyond that training in non-violence into those that are of specific planning for particular actions.

(Chattell 1998: 12)

There were thanks to staff, and an appreciation of the learning process that MfS had gone through.

This incident provides rich material for forming our understanding about the Quaker understanding of conflict. It illustrates the primary structural features of the Society and the manner in which they can interact. We witness the discipline required in the Quaker process. We are granted access to what happens when the business process fails, and when it is successfully managed. Finally, the tropes informing these interactions are available for explication. The rest of this chapter is devoted to understanding the business meetings and the organisation of the Society, giving particular attention to the ‘discernment’ amongst Friends.

### **Detailing the Quaker Organisation**

The basic outline of the Quaker organisational structure was described in Chapter 1. Here we will examine the workings of this structure and the manner in which the values of the Society are expressed in this structure and in their distribution of power.

#### *The Preparative Meeting (PM) and Local Meetings*

The local level decision-making structure is known as the Preparative Meeting (PM). The simple name arises from the function it serves, namely to prepare issues for consideration at the regional Monthly Meeting. These local business meetings are forums to consider local issues and the issues that are considered relevant to the regional business meeting. Decisions are given worshipful consideration, and the direction that the meeting unifies with is taken to be truthful and, for some Friends, viewed as ‘leadings’ from God. When the Clerk perceives the group to be ready, the agenda is read and representatives from the PM are selected to go to the regional

meeting then return with a Monthly Meeting report delivered after a Sunday Meeting for Worship.

During one PM the Clerk asked how Friends wanted to proceed on an issue and stated, 'we can do what we want here, this is not like the MM', suggesting that the PM is more negotiable in its form than the other levels of the Society. The practices of PM, however, rarely stray from the conventional form. The Quaker worship process serves as a template for decision-making meetings. These meetings are frequently called Business Meetings for Worship, and ideally they are held with the same reverence as Meeting for Worship. The business meeting is described as a programmed Meeting for Worship, where there is a definite purpose to make decisions. When Friends gather for business, they enter the meeting with the same reverence displayed at Meeting for Worship. The Clerk and Assistant Clerk sit at a table in front of the rest of the participants. They sit quietly controlling the silence. Deliberation commences once everyone has had an opportunity to 'centre down,' or prepare to receive the Inner Light. The others sit in chairs that are arranged in a semi-circular pattern, facing the Clerk and Assistant Clerk. To the uninitiated observer the Clerk appears to be a chairperson, or a president over the meeting and the Assistant Clerk as the supporting secretary. Their placement in the room, however, is pragmatic, positioning them to hear the contributions from the other participants to draft the minutes. After five to ten minutes of silence the Clerk stands to begin the meeting welcoming the participants and announcing the agenda. The agenda is regularly printed and placed on the chairs for the participants. Attenders at the meeting are announced and recorded in the minutes. Deaths are announced and recorded. The items requiring a decision are then discussed in order. The process of

drafting a minute is the most demanding on the participant's attention and time. After the decision-making phase of the meeting, correspondence addressed to the meeting are announced to the participants. Finally, the PM is asked for 'any other business' to be included at the next month's local meeting. The participants return to silence for about five minutes, and then adjourn. At this level, there is some social interaction after the meeting; however, people at the local level meet regularly, so this post-meeting interaction is usually brief.

In the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 request, the PM was the first tier of the Society to discuss the result from the Meeting for Suffering's decision. Informal talk occurred prior to the meeting, making the PM Clerk aware of the situation, and allowing him to include the concern on the next PM agenda. During the meeting the issue was discussed with such urgency that the participants needed reminding of Quaker process. The Clerk disciplined the group by stressing the need to stand when contributing a ministry, and speaking consecutively. The reminder was gentle but assertive. 'I'll remind Friends to stand when making a contribution'. Using the word 'Friends' asserted the process, identity, and ethos of the activity, and marked the occasion as being different from a debate or a conversation. Stressing that Friends should stand also brought the other behaviours associated with Quaker form into action. The Clerk did not need to address all of the behaviours that are important to the process. This simple statement was enough to remind the participants of the discipline. Historically Friends did not acknowledge sacred or profane, preferring to view all of God's creation as sacred. During the Quietist period Friends applied this belief to speaking, and they used deliberate, 'plain' speaking in their life away from the Meeting House. This act extended personal discipline into the speaking in their

private lives. The use of plain speaking was rare during my observation in business meetings or away from the Meeting House. The discipline embedded in the idiom of plain speaking now requires greater assertion by the Clerk in business meetings. Through stressing the discipline of Quaker process, we see the Clerk emphasises a boundary between Quaker business talk and informal, or even debating talk. 'Quaker Meeting for Worship is particularly vulnerable to abuse. It requires constant nurture and discipline. Its centeredness can be jeopardised by individuals determined to be heard whose truths are unassailable, who belittle the offerings of others, who need to lecture, who need to be correct' (Morley 1993: 13). The clerk embodies this discipline, and encourages, teaches and reminds others to maintain this discipline.

Participants at the PM, in the narrative, had concerns that they wanted addressed in Meeting for Sufferings, and they wanted more information before any course of action was determined at that tier. In the political structure of the Society, individual and local concerns must first be discerned in the MM before they are taken to the central bodies to be considered legitimate contributions for the entire Society. This protocol was implemented at the PM. Knowing that their concerns in the PM would not be addressed in Meeting for Sufferings, they agreed to pass the issue on to the MM. The Clerk of MfS reiterated this conventional form as she stated the personal and PM letters given to MfS would not be taken into account in the decision.

The primary activity for Friends at this local level of the organisation is ultimately Meeting for Worship. For this reason it is argued that the PM, or local group is the most important tier of the Society (Collins 1994, Dandelion 1996). The other social events organised at this level such as prayer groups, Meetings for

Learning, parties and local level committees to foster a sense of community and create an atmosphere of support. At one business meeting a man asserted in ministry, 'If Friends House [the actual and symbolic central office of the organisation] were suddenly gone, I would still go to my local meeting'. This statement demonstrates not only the affinity for those in the local group, but it also demonstrates the distance that many people feel from the central organisation of the Society. Indeed there is a tendency for some meetings to be congregational, minimising the importance of the central body in their spiritual life.

Within the Preparative Meeting there are other positions that facilitate the running of the various meetings, as well as, the maintenance of the Meeting House. Overseers and Elders are appointed by the region's Members to guide the spiritual life of the meeting and to aid Members and Attenders in times of spiritual need. During the Meeting for Worship, they ensure that the silent worship is not abused. When it is needed, the Elder provides gentle discipline to those who give ministries that are too long or deemed inappropriate. The local levels are also structured with the position of the business meeting Clerk who works as a secretary convening business meetings, drafting minutes for group consideration, and maintaining correspondence with the PM.

### *The Monthly Meeting (MM)*

The next level of organisation, the Monthly Meeting, is a collective of three to five Preparative Meetings that gathers once a month to discuss issues brought forward by the separate PM or from the central body. Historically the MM was the most important organisational structure, and this is where issues of membership and

discipline are considered. All Members of the constituent meetings are allowed to participate in these business meetings. Attenders can participate, but they are required to seek permission from the MM Clerk, and they must leave when issues regarding individual membership are considered. The MM is the body from which Elders, Overseers, and the representatives to central committees are selected.

Monthly Meeting also delegates responsibilities to the regional committees. The nominations committee is the MM committee that considers who is capable of fulfilling the various roles within the MM. Elders form a committee that help the region's PM Elders, ensuring regional control of the spiritual well-being within the local meetings, giving the ability to discern to the wider body and ensuring discipline remains in the regional body. Overseers are also chosen from the region. Fellow Overseers support each other at this level ensuring that the participants in Meeting for Worship are assisted in times of need. The library committee, premises committee, wardenship committee, and the treasurer all work toward the maintenance of the region's property and finances.

The business meetings held at this level are quite similar to those at the local level, roughly following the same order of topics for consideration: deaths, items for consideration, and correspondences. The agenda is distributed to the participants on arrival. Important items for business for the region are recorded which are informed by the minutes of the PM. There are important differences at this regional level, however.

The Monthly Meeting adheres more rigidly to the business meeting's norms, giving greater attention to correct form. This tier serves as the region's voice in affairs affecting the entire Quaker organisation, and between the region and the legal

system. Marriages are organised through the MM. Since there is no clergy the MM has a registering officer who submits the marriage licence, and all who participate in the worship for marriage sign the marriage certificate as witnesses. The MM also decides on applications of membership to the Society. Attenders choosing to become Members must apply to the MM for consideration with a letter of intent. The applicant is visited by MM Members to discuss the expectations of membership, the applicant's understanding of the Society, and their views on spiritual matters. After these discussions the Members submit a written recommendation to the MM for the decision on the application. People in this sense become Members of the regional, not the local worshipping body (i.e. of the Monthly Meeting, not the Preparative Meeting), creating a conservative, homogeneous enforcement of what it means to be a Quaker. The PM is not able to stray from the structure and the broad belief system Friends share without the endorsement of the wider assembly of the Monthly Meeting. The Monthly Meeting, with its regulation of membership, assignment of persons to particular roles, and control over communication to the central body, makes it the more powerful section in the Quaker system.

Anyone wanting to participate in this level of the business meeting is encouraged to do so. Attenders need to ask for permission in order to participate, but this is rarely refused. The Attender is marked in business meetings primarily for the Clerk to qualify their contributions if the Attender is moved to speak. Since anyone has access to the Inner Light, all who participate in business meetings may contribute to a decision. The belief and practice that it is not acceptable for a person to inhibit the Inner Light wherever the source is at play here, so Attenders are not discouraged from communicating, however their ability to discern can be tested by the group and

the Clerk. An Attender's inexperience with Quaker form or Quaker motivation can give reason to qualify their remarks. The Attender also may not know the background to the issue within the region.

Participation in these meetings allows the Attender access to a convincing aspect to Quaker life – taking part in the decision process and experiencing the development of unified action. On many occasions during business meetings, I personally felt a connection with Friends. Although I never verbally contributed to a decision, I did regularly feel the urge. The decision-making employed, which respects the contribution of everyone creates a unified course of action, giving me the urge to apply for membership on many occasions. The regional meeting considering the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident described above was a particularly good illustration. Prior to the meeting the participants spoke in strong terms about their position on Trident/Ploughshares 2000, giving the impression that no unity would be found that evening. Although I made no verbal contribution, my being there with all of the other participants was viewed as supporting the meeting and their decision. In Quaker idiom this is called ‘upholding the meeting.’ When the minute was read and everyone agreed on the statement, I felt a physical sensation that was not simply relief from the long evening being concluded. Hair stood on the back of my neck, and there was a sense of accomplishment. Many Friends described this as feeling the presence of the Inner Light when I described it to them. For those that participated in the night's discussion, there was a sense of *communitas* from the success in developing a unified statement of truth.

The incident reveals the challenge Friends set for themselves when attempting to discern the Inner Light, particularly when this discernment requires so many

people. The Monthly Meeting decided to encourage Meeting for Sufferings to allow the training of Trident/Ploughshares 2000 activists and offer support to those individual Friends that compelled to participate in the demonstration. The minute was accepted and the MM Clerk sent the decision to MfS in a letter. Many of the participants at the meeting felt MfS was inappropriately questioning the discernment of the Inner Light made by Quaker Peace and Service, and Turning the Tide. For the people holding this opinion, this was an abuse of power in the organisational machinery, since these committees were simply providing a report on current activities. To others the intervention made by MfS was correct, since the committees at the central level are accountable to the main deliberative body.

The context of the business meeting also reveals the constraint on the individual in the expression of their position in a dispute. Friends avoid emotion and attempt to edit reactive statements in this arena. The representative to Meeting for Sufferings stopped herself when she felt she was getting 'too emotional.' The Clerk at the second meeting asserted discipline by providing a list of relevant passages from *Quaker Faith and Practice*. The Clerk also managed discipline by controlling the procedure of the evening, making the first part of the meeting strictly for gaining information. The second part of the evening established the minute to be sent to Meeting for Sufferings. The Clerk had the occasion to reiterate the structure of the meeting when people began to speak of action during the information gathering part of the meeting.

From the narrative we can see that the Monthly Meeting holds the greatest power in the Quaker organisation, effectively asserting itself to the central body and the local bodies, and even to individual Members. The MM determines the

membership within the Society according to the Member's understanding of membership and the region's collective Quaker identity.

*The General Meeting (GM) and Quaker Link Scotland*

Issues pertinent to Quakers more generally are considered at the next level of meeting, the General Meeting. Although this segment of the Quaker organisation did not contribute to the decisions relating to the Trident/Ploughshares incident, it is an important section of the Society, particularly in Scotland. These meetings are convened four times a year, and they involve the Members of a district's Monthly Meetings. The meetings deal with the business of filling General Meeting posts and preparing regional lectures and events. *Quaker Faith and Practice* establishes that the GM is responsible for,

conference and inspiration, and for a broad oversight of the life and witness of the Society within its area, considering regularly what is being done and what might be done to extend the service of its Members and reach out to those who are in need of spiritual guidance and friendship.

1995: 5.01

In Scotland the General Meeting has greater responsibility than do other General Meetings in the rest of Britain. The General Meeting for Scotland has devolved responsibilities from the central body due to differences in the Scottish legal system. This parallels the differing legal system in Scotland and the devolving power in British and Scottish politics. Marriage and the Quaker refusal to take oaths are managed under different laws in Scotland than in England. The Scotland General Meeting also handles 'outreach' (the Quaker form of public relations, educating people outside of the Society about its perspective in religious understanding), children's summer schools, and an early summer family retreat, in addition to their

regular business meetings. The meeting consists of a business session in the morning and a presentation in the afternoon. Once a year the GM is residential, taking place over an entire weekend, and hosted by one of the Scottish Monthly Meetings. At these meetings the participants spend a weekend being hosted by local Quaker families. The business meeting is conducted, and the remainder of the event consists of activities and lectures. Meetings are a social occasion for Friends from all over Scotland. Friends from the Highlands and the Islands, who are geographically isolated from larger concentrations of Friends, particularly appreciate these occasions to be with fellow Friends.

The business meetings during fieldwork dealt with two main issues: General Meeting restructuring and the children's summer school. The 'outreach' organisation of the General Meeting for Scotland, Quaker Link Scotland, was in the process of being reorganised into sets of Function Groups and General Meeting Committees. The committees would, in the future, work as the central body of the General Meeting with the Function groups working on specific tasks for Friends in Scotland. Friends considered creating a separate Yearly Meeting in Scotland because of the differences in the legal systems with the rest of Britain. This option was not pursued because of the small population of Quakers in Scotland. The risk of over-taxing the few Friends able to participate in the organisational matters of the Society prevented the devolving of the responsibilities. Function Groups were viewed as the better alternative, where advertising the Society is the responsibility of the central body, and responding to the generated interest to the advertisements is the responsibility of the function groups. The meeting decided to accept the following function groups: the Agenda Group, Conference Arranging, Children and Young People, Eldership and

Oversight, Finance, Nominations, Outreach, Peace and Social Issues, Growth Points, and Administration. These function groups are aimed at supporting the Clerk in decision-making, administration, and speeding up decisions that require quick response to outside organisations. Finally the groups enable more effort to go into decisions than resources would previously allow.

The General Meeting is comparatively powerless in relation to the central body and the Monthly Meeting. As is noted above, the General Meeting in Scotland does maintain more responsibilities than other General Meetings in Britain, but the deliberation conducted at this level impacts this GM and its activities. The General Meeting does little to contribute to the decisions of the wider Quaker organisation, especially in relation to the MM and MfS.

#### *The Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM)*

The most inclusive of the business meetings within Quaker organisation for its Members is the Yearly Meeting. This meeting is composed of all of Britain's Monthly Meetings. Friends gather once a year for this event to consider the business that affects the entire Society in Britain and for developing spiritual awareness. The meeting is held at Friends House in London, but every four years it is convened residentially in another part of Britain. This allows people to participate who normally would not travel to London. All Members are encouraged to participate. Attenders may participate with special permission from the YM Recording Clerk and with the recommendation of at least one MM Elder. Special bursaries are available for those who wish to attend, but may not be able to afford the expense.

During fieldwork YM was held in Aberystwyth, Wales. This meeting occurred from 2 to 9 August. In addition to the decision-making aspect, lectures, presentations, and training events were offered to develop spiritual awareness. Each day began with a session known as 'openings' that were meetings that promoted reflection on passages from *Quaker Faith and Practice*. An appointed speaker read a passage then gave a personal interpretation. After silent meditation, a selection from *Advices and Queries* was read and the 'later-comers' were allowed to enter Meeting for Worship. Since there are so many participants in this worship, the people who minister are assisted by stewards who move about the room with a microphone, allowing all to hear. Upon the closing of Meeting for Worship, the business meeting commences while maintaining the spirit of worship.

Decisions that are made during the business portion of the Yearly Meeting affect all Quakers in Britain. The issues that are to be considered by the YM are published in advance. The book, titled *Proceedings 1997*, contained instructions for attending the meeting and the proposed agenda. It also contains testimonies about recently deceased Friends, epistles from Yearly Meetings from the rest of the world, and various central committee reports. Nearly one thousand people participate in these business meetings, requiring greater discipline from the participants, and greater control and concentration by the Clerks. The instructions state that the best support or 'upholding' of the meeting is silent participation that prayerfully supports the speaker and the Clerk. After people contribute their ministries on the issue at hand the Clerk prepares a draft minute for all to consider. In this process the Clerk looks down as the contributions are noted in writing. The participants remain seated and quietly wait until the Clerk's attention returns to the meeting. When the Clerk

looks up to the people, they are then able to stand to await recognition from the Clerk.

The Clerk is unable to distinguish if the potential speaker will make a relevant contribution or simply restate a point, so there is some risk of wasting time when the Clerk selects a speaker. Many people are compelled to stand repeatedly until they are recognised by the Clerk. The Clerk considers the pattern by which individual participants will stand to be acknowledged. Some people stand persistently for the Clerk's recognition. Others stand only once for recognition, then decide not to stand again because a previous speaker has contributed a similar message, or they reconsidered the relevance of their message. For the Clerk these people are more conscientious and discerning about their contribution. They are more likely to be called if they stand later (Britain Yearly Meeting 1997). Participants that are not called to contribute are urged to '[b]e not disappointed if you are not called to speak, but be content that the Yearly Meeting as a whole is rightly following guidance' (Britain Yearly Meeting 1997: 20). For those people that find it difficult to keep discipline, the Elders and Overseers that are known to the person are urged to give them a listening ear that 'may save the Yearly Meeting some difficulty' (Britain Yearly Meeting 1997: 21).

This particular business meeting had an agenda containing thirty-one issues for consideration. The agenda ranged from interpreting the meaning of the Inner Light and accepting the challenge that this creates for the Society and for individuals, and it considered the correspondences from Meeting for Sufferings and other Yearly Meetings throughout the world. Specific interest was given to interpretation of the

Social testimonies and to Quaker involvement in ecumenical organisations that use creedal and assertive Christian discourse.

The issues raised and the conclusions made at YM become the topics of local and regional discussion. The social occasions at the other tiers of the Society are venues where Friends interpret the decisions at YM and the business meetings at these levels implement these interpretations. A ministry at this particular YM stated that there was a 'spiritual hunger' in the Society, causing considerable discussion and concern at the local meeting I observed. Members and Attenders discussed what this phrase meant. Some saw it as a reality; whereas, others viewed it as alarmist. Elders considered the problem, and sought methods to create a more meaningful experience at Sunday worship. I will return to this in Chapter 7.

The decisions made by the Yearly Meeting are regulatory for the Society. The appropriate manners by which Friends are to convene meetings and establish the roles of the Society's posts are ultimately decided by the YM after considerable consultation with the other tiers of the Society. It regulates the formal distinctions of what is and is not Quaker. This role of the YM in the organisation is perceived as changing, where some Monthly Meetings are assuming more control over what they consider legitimate behaviour.

My description here, based on observation of the interactions of the tiers of the Society would agree with this Member's fears. The local and regional meetings were tending to take the lead on issues of filling the roles of the Society and making independent interpretations of marriage. There was a sense among participants in local level I observed that Friends House and London was too distant. The Member that confessed that if Friends House closed, he would still go to his local meeting to

worship was expressing this sentiment. The GM for Scotland is also more independent since they have more responsibilities than other GMs in the UK, creating another sense of distance from Friends House.

### *Meeting for Sufferings (MfS) and Central Committees*

The Meeting for Sufferings is the central decision-making body that meets between sessions of the Yearly Meeting it is analogous to a Board of Directors in other organisations. Two to four representatives from the seventy-three Monthly Meetings from across Britain and from the central committees gather eight times a year to consider the current issues in the Society. These gatherings are at Friends House in London. Only Members are able to participate.<sup>i</sup> The body is set the task of managing the Society between sessions of the YM. They represent the Society to outside organisations, handle grievances, manage accounts, and communication from the central body and the membership. This is the tier where the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 issues came to realization, affecting the rest of the Society.

The meetings are less of a social occasion than the business meetings in the political organisation. The demands on time and resources make these busy occasions. In advance of the meeting a tentative agenda and the minutes from the previous meeting and the minutes from the MfS committee, MSC, are sent to the representatives for their preparation. MSC is a committee that organises the issues to be considered at the meeting, providing details and presenting possible options. Upon entering Friends House, participants have the opportunity to talk with the Clerk and the treasurer to discuss issues before the meeting. Members receive a copy of the agenda then they gather with little opportunity for talking informally. The little time

offered is spent quickly greeting familiar Friends and discussing the agenda. The meeting begins with twenty minutes of silent worship. The proceedings are initiated with a welcome to Members that have newly come to MfS, and a consideration nominations committee recommendations for central and MfS specific committees, and MfS representatives to external organisations. The lunch break is the only opportunity to gather socially. When the Members return from lunch, they return into the matters needing attention. Most people then rush to trains on their return trip home when the meeting ends.

Finally, MfS as a decision-making body receives reports from the central committees: Quaker Peace and Service, Quaker Home Service, Quaker Social Responsibility and Education, and Administrative Committee. These committees have their own responsibilities and their periodic reports inform MfS on their activities and provide advice on issues relating to their remit. In the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident, confusion arose over QPS's role, and their making a decision that should have been left to MfS. I will discuss this further in Chapter 6, but it is important to note the incident was partly a procedural, or structural issue being addressed when the MfS decision to halt the training arose.

## **Conclusion**

The different tiers maintain important realms of the Society. The local levels are places for the liberal exploration of spiritual understanding and the sense of community. In this arena personal experiences are expressed and the greatest amount of theological freedom is promoted, particularly in Meeting for Worship. The most conservative section of the Society is the MM, controlling the membership

and selecting the Elders, Overseers and representatives to the central body. Finally the central body, including the YM, MfS and the central committees, officially represent the Society to the rest of the world. They are the primary supports for activities abroad, maintaining the outward identity of the Society. The balance of power in the Society hangs from the MM that tempers the communal voice of the local and the central bodies. The Meeting for Sufferings is the final arbiter on decisions for the Society, but, as the Trident/Ploughshares incident shows, the Monthly Meeting closely monitors the power of this tier. These informal jurisdictions of the system can create tensions when one tier oversteps this casual remit.

The flattened hierarchy that organises the Society involves numerous participants and numerous voices. These voices today represent a variety of religious understandings speaking on the various issues that the Society confronts as they attempt to live their common testimonies. The decisions-making process that the Society employs allows these voices an opportunity to be heard, and establishes a forum that requires the participant to (re)act with discipline to the voices that speak in business meetings. The issues involved in the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident were a tangle of interpretations on issues of violence and peace, authorised representation, and law, but the heart of the matter was a judgement on discerning the Inner Light. Historically, when the Society was restricted to a Christian discourse, this process was a method to determine God's will directing action. Minutes were statements of action holding moral authority. Today this moral authority continues, whether it is from love, the Inner Light or any other theological underpinning found among the participants.

The Trident/Ploughshares incident illustrates the challenge presented to the Society in their method of decision-making. While Quaker Peace and Service and Turning the Tide were willing to train participants in Trident/Ploughshares 2000, their discernment on the matter was challenged by some Members of the Meeting for Sufferings. Much of the upset regarding the training centred on the actions that Trident/Ploughshares participants were aiming to perpetrate and the risks that this would have on the people, property and the Society's reputation. Others were equally upset that Meeting for Sufferings was challenging Quaker Peace and Service and Turning the Tide's ability to discern the Inner Light. These people insisted that MfS entrusts the central committees with the ability to act. The conclusion that formed the final MfS minute allowed the training of Trident/Ploughshares 2000 participants without endorsing this group's proposed behaviour. While many people continued to be concerned about the implications of Quaker involvement with the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 people, the Society was able to create a minute that substantiated the structures and procedures that contribute to the edifice of Quaker identity.

The next four chapters continue to explore the implications of this incident and the manner in which it was managed. The notion of 'discernment' and the procedure utilised in the determination of the will of God contribute to wider discussions on power for anthropology. As Foucault noticed in his discussion on penal systems and punishing the body, seventeenth-century Friends employed considerable discipline in their lives, which Friends also injected into prison reform (1977). Friends today employ a complicated collage of power relations to maintain the Society that requires further description to be explored in the next chapter. Later.

the cognitions and practices that promote this discipline are identified and elaborated upon, with particular emphasis on their deployment within the context of conflict. To understand the construction of conflict and its management several questions require attention: How are power relations managed and to what end? What are the concepts that Friends employ in their religious system? How does this set of ideas relate to their notion of conflict? And, what are the practices Friends use in their management of conflict? These questions are addressed in the remainder of the thesis to further our understanding of Quakers in conflict.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> The account is from an informant's description who participated as a MfS representative. In the focus a MfS representative commented that while the facts are correct, I have not captured the spirit of the event.

## Chapter 4 - Power and the Social Contract

Are your meetings for church affairs held in a spirit of worship and dependence on the guidance of God? Remember that we do not seek a majority decision nor even consensus. As we wait patiently for divine guidance, our experience is that the right way will open and we shall be led into unity.

*Advices and Queries*

1995: 01.02.14

The Quaker organisation, built with the values of truth, peace, simplicity and equality, and with a distrust of individually held power, provides a fascinating context where we can view the management of power relations. The structures, framing formal Quaker decisions and communal actions, illustrate the effectiveness of the context on the regulation of individual behaviour, revealing Quaker operations of power. The worshipful act of Quaker decision-making is dependent on considerable self-control and a hegemonic adherence to a particular method. This structured and structuring form illustrates the system's power to exert discipline on the participants. While this interplay between the structure and the body is enacted, the creation is the disciplined embodiment of a social contract. This assertion establishes a theoretical tension that Friends enact in their production of belief and action. I suggest in this chapter that Friends are engaged in the ritualisation of the Society's values as they participate in Meeting for Worship that is then enacted further in business meetings. While I make this assertion, I also contend that the Quaker business meetings are performances of a social contract where agency and socialised discipline are interwoven.

This chapter explores the operations by which Friends create the opportunity for communally held power. Continuing from the previous chapter, I will describe further the people who participate in business meetings and illustrate the ritualisation

of Quaker discipline in the processes of decision-making. I will then turn to show the parallels which Quaker decision-making has with social contract political organisation, relating my description to Rousseau's social contract.

This context distributes power through the management of the self for the sake of the group, and the discipline is most highly enacted by the person who performs the role of Clerk. The next section of this chapter illustrates how Friends employ the internalisation of the Society's values to establish the social contract, and discover a Rousseauian general will, making the power of the communal action paramount. Finally, I explore the implications this has on conflict management.

### **People at the Business Meetings**

The people who participate in business meeting are typically those who can devote the necessary time. The average duration of the Preparative Meetings I observed was two hours; the Monthly Meetings lasted four hours on average, and the General Meetings took an entire Saturday. In the case of the residential General Meetings, an entire weekend was devoted. This time requirement meant that the people who participated were usually pensioners or middle-aged people who did not have children requiring supervision. Business meeting participants were also involved in other organisational activities elsewhere in the Society. Generally, people who participated in PM usually participated in the MM. Some MM participants were also involved in regional or central committees as MM representatives. They tended to be middle-class and usually professional. At the Monthly Meetings (7 observed) women (n=13.28 average) typically outnumbered men (n=11.42 average), and there

was very little difference among genders at Preparative Meetings (7 observed), men (n=9.85 average) and women (n=9.00 average).

Members were the most regular participants in these meetings. As was mentioned in Chapter 2, few Attenders participate in business meetings. Attenders were either not interested in the activity, or they stated their confidence that the governing of the meeting did not require their participation, trusting that those interested in making decisions were doing so with proper sensitivity. Some Attenders stated that they did not become Members because they did not want to feel responsible for the governance of the meeting. This phenomenon suggests that in practice there is a hierarchy enacted in the Society in which those who choose to participate decide communal actions for those who choose not to participate. On only one occasion did I witness an Attender contribute to a business meeting's minute, and the Attender's contribution was not reflected in the minute. When I asked the Clerk about the omission, he stated that the issue was one that was regularly considered, and the Attender's suggestion was an option the meeting had already considered. As they generally do not participate in business meetings, Attenders are not as informed on the issues confronting the meeting nor are they aware of the approaches considered previously. The Monthly Meeting's newsletter would publish the minutes from each meeting, but the decisions made in the meetings were not regularly a topic of conversation.

Another important aspect to participating in business meetings is the amount of travel required. The regional and central meetings involve considerable amounts of travel, necessitating time and money. Participating in meetings is viewed as so important that the MM offers to reimburse the travel expenses for people who go to

these events regularly, although few people request reimbursement. The emphasis on equality in the Society is stressed by not excluding those on a low income. If a person wanted to attend any type of meeting or activity, the MM had a bursary for funding, or transportation was arranged by sharing rides. This encouragement was extended to both Members and Attenders who were regular contributors to the community.

In business meetings people generally act as they do in Meeting for Worship, but with some important differences. The business meetings are extensions of Meeting for Worship where participants make decisions as an act of worship. Ministries in business meeting are statements performed for the production of the minute, stressing the discipline that structures Meeting for Worship. The group's focus in Meeting for Worship is on silence; whereas, the business meetings focus on the production of the minute, requiring a verbal contribution by some or all of the participants. Speaking in business meetings takes the same form as in Meeting for Worship. The contribution is deliberate and ideally from the Inner Light. The person stands when contributing, and at GM business meeting he or she will also state their name and their Monthly Meeting before proceeding. Ideally the person will speak in a clear voice directed to the Clerk, but for everyone to hear. The communication is brief and relevant to the current topic being considered.

Business meetings and Sunday worship are also contrasted by the degree programming for the occasion. In Meeting for Worship the preference is for unstructured worship, ministry should be freely led by the Inner Light. People should not come with a prepared ministry, and any attempt to control the worship is met with resistance. Resistance was observed when the local meeting attempted to

manage where children fit in the silent worship. It is felt that children do not appreciate the whole hour of silent worship, making them difficult to place in the community. This is an on-going concern for Friends. While they aim to expose the children to the meaning of silent worship, they also endeavour to address the child's need for outward stimulation. One attempt to remedy this was the holding of a once a month meeting that encouraged the participation of adults and children. These meetings were called 'All-Age Meeting for Worship'. They were held at the same time as the standard Meeting for Worship in a different room from the main meeting room. The meeting would start with ten to fifteen minutes of silence, and then a programmed activity focusing on a theme was initiated. Often these meetings used story telling to illustrate a Quaker ideal. The children would then have an opportunity to draw pictures and interact with the adults present. Finally the children and adults would have tea or juice. The entire meeting took an hour. The organisers of these All-Age Meetings for Worship would express frustration that the only people participating in these events were Members of the Children's Committee and sometimes the children's parents. The sense that others were not supporting the children was keenly felt. In conversations I learned that the reason that other adults chose not to participate was the aversion to the programmed nature of the worship. These meetings were described as too directed and didactic. The direction was a human contrivance and the ethos of standard Meeting for Worship is the free leading of the spirit.

This aversion to programming is not a feature of business meetings. The programmed and controlled nature of the business meeting is readily apparent when comparing it to Meeting for Worship. The room in the business meeting changes its

focus from a circle of worshippers to a semicircle that centres on the Clerk and assistant Clerk's table. In the business meeting the Clerk breaks the silence with a welcome, and an introduction of the agenda. The agenda, set by the Clerk, focuses the attention of the participants, and indirectly suggests how the Inner Light should be used. Verbal contributions are still considered as ministry and directed toward greater understanding of the issue, and the revealing of truth, as it becomes a course of communal action. Participants need to focus on the speaker's contribution; whereas, in Meeting for Worship the speaker can be quietly ignored. The listener can disregard the Meeting for Worship ministry without offending the speaker and a meaningful experience is still achievable. The business meeting ideally must consider the contributions of all the participants when forming a 'sense of the meeting'. If a Clerk breaches this aspiration when writing a minute, the oversight is mentioned in the reading of the draft minute. The Clerk will then edit the minute to include unmentioned perspectives, or the group will further consider the relevance of altering the minute.

Creating a minute requires considerable attentiveness from all involved, but particularly from the Clerk and assistant Clerk. The Clerk must acknowledge the contributions from all who minister verbally, and interpret the silence of those who do not minister. This occurs when 'capturing the Spirit (or spirit) of the meeting', or 'getting a sense of the meeting'. The Clerk records the essence of the contributions into a draft statement. The draft is read, and accepted when the group agrees that the spirit of the meeting was expressed. This is discovered when people respond to the minute with statements of 'I hope so', and quiet nods.

Minute-taking provides another distinction between business meetings and Meeting for Worship. Statements in Meeting for Worship are not typically recorded, because this form of ministry is not a communal statement. Meeting for Worship is a setting where ministry is an individual responsibility, and it is quietly and communally tested, using the *Advices and Queries* and the norm of support. Occasionally the ministries are written to assist people that are hearing impaired in appreciating ministry, but these notes are not for public consumption. When I requested permission from the PM to perform research, some people were concerned that I would take notes during worship. This was viewed as potentially inhibiting ministry and the expression of the Inner Light. In business meetings note taking was not considered a problem, and I was freely able to take fieldnotes as others were taking notes for reports to various bodies within the organisation. This note taking reflected another distinction that formal statements are communal or communally affirmed, and they are a formal representation. Since the ministries in business meetings are intended to make a written statement which synthesises the ministries into a unified testimony, recording ministries does not inhibit the proceedings. The business meeting gathers for recording public statements, using a procedure that allows the participants' concerns and differences to be addressed. The minutes that are produced are eventually sent to the Scottish register in Edinburgh and to Friends House in London. They become a part of the historical record, marking the beliefs and actions endorsed by Friends in the region. Although not many people visit these documents, they do become the Society's public face for posterity. This aspect of the minute does not appear to capture their attention as Friends produce a minute.

however. The urgency is to communally find Truth when forming a minute for a course of action.

Unity is the desired goal in both forms of meeting, and the source of legitimacy for Friends. The gathered meeting in Meeting for Worship is a lasting experience for the participants where they communally feel the presence of the Inner Light, then this experience may be shared vocally. Silence is the primary vehicle for this experience. Ministry has the potential to either distract or facilitate the gathered feeling, so, for many Friends, silence has the greatest potential for creating unity. At business meetings the ministry or contribution to the communal statement and action forms the unity. The people that participated in the MM special session considering Trident/Ploughshares 2000 shared a sense of togetherness, when before the meeting this did not seem possible. Silence can be an expression of consent, dissent, or indifference in the business meeting, which I will explore in Chapter 7.

Looking at distinctions between these types of Quaker meetings, we begin to note the nature in which conflict is acknowledged and controlled. Internal conflict is an inappropriate topic for ministry in Meeting for Worship. Meeting for Worship is not the forum for making decisions or discussing issues. When issues within the meeting or the Society do arise in this setting, there is a rapid response from the Elders and Overseers, and the resulting action would establish a smaller meeting for managing the situation. If people persist in addressing the conflicts within the Society in silent worship, they are marginalised and described as 'not getting it'. In the business meetings conflict can be acknowledged, but in a regulated manner. Friends avoid using the names of the people that they are in disagreement with. (These practices are explored further in Chapter 6 and 7.) When an issue is divisive

in a business meeting Friends focus their contributions to the Clerk, who is making the response to the division through the creation of the minute. If no unity can be found in the separate ministries, the issue can be 'laid aside' by deciding to wait and consider the issue at a later time, or by delegating the decision to a committee. Laying aside decisions was a technique used throughout the different tiers of the Society in the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident. When participants in Meeting for Sufferings questioned Quaker Peace and Service's discernment of the Inner Light, the entire Society became involved in judging the appropriateness of their actions.

### *Contextualised Power*

In Quaker business meetings, a decision is fashioned while maintaining the ethos of Meeting for Worship. The supportive aspect of the community is offered to all participants in worship, and in the business meeting I witnessed, the support is heavily concentrated on the two positions: the Clerk and the assistant Clerk. Friends use the phrase 'upholding'<sup>i</sup> to describe the practice. Upholding is directed towards the Clerk and assistant Clerk in the business meeting, and the Members and Attenders who are not present at the business meeting are encouraged to 'uphold' prayerfully those who are present at the meeting. This network of support suggests that particular behaviours are encouraged. The people at the business meeting should be quiet and considerate toward the Clerk and assistant Clerk while they take notes and draft the minutes that reflect the understanding of the collective. The people who are not in the business meeting are expected to support the prayerful discernment of the people who are there, assuming that the Spirit was there for

leading the people to the best decision. Upholding, from this observation, is a form of discipline that can silence dissent for the good of the community.

The individual freedom allowed with personal religious understanding is restricted when entering the business meeting. In this setting private theologies and individual actions do not represent the Society. Representation is the pursuit of the collective business meetings. Friends may act from their concern as a Quaker in their lives away from the meeting, but they rarely act *for* Quakers without explicit, written endorsement granted from a Monthly Meeting, Yearly Meeting, Meeting for Sufferings or the central committees. Many conventions practiced in Meeting for Worship are more rigidly observed in this setting: the language that emerges from the silence is a more deliberate moving toward a decision, stressing collective understanding, and placing collective control over legitimate representation. In the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 narrative we see the regulation of the individual with the managing of silence, editing emotional expression, and overt enforcement of the Quaker process to control the participants, and in many ways to control the outcome so that a loving decision is reached.

The power exerted on the collective is manifest in guiding how to make legitimate decisions. As I suggest throughout the thesis, particularly in the discussion regarding the Clerk's power, individually led decisions are spurned. The 'sense of the meeting' is the only acceptable means of making a minute. Voting, even though it is democratic, is unacceptable in the Society as a decision-making strategy. The time pressures common in business meetings, and the more mundane decisions requiring action, suggested for some that this is an attractive way to make decisions, but it is viewed as un-Quakerly. The adherence to the Quaker structure

and the requirement that the decisions arise from the discernment of truth and the Inner Light prevent this possibility. The vote would disrupt the political order, which places the Inner Light at the centre. The Quaker business meeting, I reiterate, is an act of worship. While the distinction between the sacred and the profane is blurred amongst Friends, it is certain that the behaviours, and the form of discussion differ in this context from activities away from the meeting.<sup>ii</sup>

Individually held power is distrusted among Friends. In fact some Friends would dispute the notion that they hold any power at all - communal or otherwise. This was strongly asserted during the focus groups, when in conversation most of the participants who were currently acting as clerks or had done so in the past, stressed that power structures in the Society were minimal in comparison to other churches. Primary authority in Quaker meetings arises from the communal discernment of the Inner Light – the source of authority in the Society today; therefore, authority is constructed to be theocratic. The modern theological complexities within the Society and convoluting this generalisation must qualify the statement which once would have been consensual. Not all Friends accept God as the centre of the decision making. A Clerk corrected me when I asked if God's assistance was required for mundane decisions, by taking out the theological under-pinning to the question. He responded, 'I avoid the theistic phrasing, and prefer to think that the decision must be made in a loving way'. Situations requiring specialist knowledge of law, finance, and in some circumstances spiritual matters are deferred to individual professionals in the meeting, but their opinions are not conclusions in the decision-making process. Their advice is taken into consideration, and it is usually abided, but it is not perfunctorily accepted. The emphasis on equality among Friends assures that a

decision is a joint affair, not made by a single authority where the inferiors accept a ruling from the superior.

The greatest regulatory form in the business meeting is self-restraint, and few people practice it more than the Clerk. This position is one that comes the nearest to individually held power in the Quaker decision-making structure. The Clerk has the authority to set the business meeting agenda, maintain business-meeting discipline, discern the ‘spirit of the meeting’, and be the focus for correspondence within and outside Quaker organization. The Clerk is sometimes described as a ‘secretary’ for the meeting. The metaphor, borrowed from the business world, establishes the relationship and the expectations of the role. Clerks act to assist the meeting in producing minutes that are sensitive to the Inner Light, and perform other tasks that are likened to this role. However, the primary trope describing the Clerk in the Quaker domain is ‘servant of the meeting’ – a trope worthy of greater elaboration.

The phrase, ‘servant of the meeting’, is an interesting metaphor used by a group that holds equality as a testimony or eternal truth. Being a servant suggests hierarchy, contradicting this cherished value. In practice the Clerk’s subservience appears to be toward the meeting with the duties that the role entails. A former Clerk joked that the position is actually the ‘slave of the meeting’ since the business meeting Clerk has so many duties. The Clerk is responsible for,

spiritual discernment so that he or she may watch the growth of the meeting toward unity and judge the right time to submit the minute, which in its first form may serve to clear the mind of the meeting about the issues which really need its decision.

Morley 1993: 3.07

The danger, for Friends, is that the *person* in the Clerk’s role can transgress their remit, taking charge of the decision-making, and not allowing the *Spirit* of the

meeting to lead the group. The search for Truth in Meeting for Worship is brought to the business meeting where participants contribute in their ministry toward a decision and a course of action. The Clerk, rather than taking a vote, considers the contributions and attempts to synthesise a statement that captures the intent of the contributions collectively. This process is referred to as getting a 'sense of the meeting'. The activity requires concentration, and an ability to discriminate people's contributions without inserting a personal agenda. The 'servant' trope describes the Clerk's relationship with the collective through subservience, but in Quaker understanding the authority for action is from God's will as discerned by the collective. This indicates that the Clerk is not the servant of the collective, but the servant of the Truth that those people are able to channel.

The Clerk's sensitivity to the power entrusted in the position also relates to the dissemination of information. Clerks are focal points of information between the PM, YM, committees, and organisations outside the Society. By deciding what information is important for the meeting and how it is to be presented, the Clerk is able to direct the meeting's awareness, and, in some sense, how they should come to understand the information. Items can be placed on the business meeting agenda in a manner that allows a topic more or less time for discernment. Again the 'servant' or 'secretary' metaphor is called upon as a means of directing how this information is managed. The Clerk must be sensitive to the responsibility entrusted in the role that allows Members to use factual information to prepare their hearts and minds for making the best informed and Spirit-led decision. The distribution of information in the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 illustrates this point.

Finally, the Clerk's most explicit control in business meetings is the exertion of Quaker process on individuals and the group. As in the narrative when the PM Clerk interrupted the group that had started a debate on Turning the Tides' involvement with Trident/Ploughshares 2000, the Clerk controlled the meeting by asserting the procedure. Similar to a congressional parliamentarian, the Clerk maintains the decorum and ensures the adherence to the structure. Commonly this is performed in meetings by asking the group to come to silence, and at other times it is more overt through stating the proper form that contributions should take. In the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident the MfS Clerk demonstrates this by stating that the personal and PM letters on the issue would not be considered in the meeting's reflection since it is 'not in right ordering'. In the MM the Clerk provided a paper highlighting the relevant *Advices and Queries*. At times asserting this order pragmatically returns the group to a pace of discussion that the Clerk can manage for his or her own comprehension. More importantly, stressing proper form reminds the participants of their Quaker identity. Enforcing the discipline within the business meeting is practiced with regard to the Quaker disposition that minimises individually-held, absolutist forms of power, and encourages the Quaker idiom that reflects Quaker values.

The exercise for everyone present is to submit the personal will to that of the group and the Inner Light. The personal power held by the Clerk, indeed by any participant, is strictly regulated. The regulation is personally imposed, but the collective and the Clerk ensures conformity as breaches in self-regulation are lovingly disciplined. According to an informant, at a particular Yearly Meeting, the Clerk found it difficult to get a sense of the meeting:

The YM Clerk said, 'We need some silence. Can you uphold the table?' What occurred to me was that he just asked one thousand people to pray for him. That's pretty astonishing. I mean it's one thing to be prayed for without knowing it. I know that my mother-in-law is the type of person that when she goes to church, she will say a prayer for me and I don't know if that has affects my life or not. I don't really think it does, but it's a very different thing to actually have someone say not just 'I need your help', but to specifically say, in Quaker code, 'I need your help. Please pray for me and indirectly yourself, because I'm up here working for you, and I'm not finding my way with what you want me to do' ... That was a very powerful experience.

A discussion about the role of the Clerk emerged in the last focus group, where three acting Clerks and four people who had filled the position in the past shared their interpretations. The following is a section from the transcript where we discussed the nature of the Clerk's power within the meeting.

Speaker 1:

What I have experienced is the sort of balance – the tension. I accept the constructive sense of tension, and clearly there is, in sort of social psychology terms, there is an opportunity to control, but there's consciousness of being a 'servant of the meeting'. It actually has, in my experience, a very excellent effect. So, I wish I had been a clerk earlier in my life. I think [laughing] it would have helped me out in situations outside. You know?

Speaker 2:

The position of the Clerk, which is definitely a 'servant of the meeting', and that is very, very firmly embedded in the Quaker's mind. Indeed, we are all servants.

Speaker 1:

Look at any other organisations where the clerk goes away and writes any old... You Know. I think the power is constrained by not just the sense of being a servant, but also by the procedure. Whereby minutes are done in front of every body.

Speaker 2:

A Clerk may come in with a draft minute, where you only need to fill in names, and so forth... that may be completely thrown out.

Speaker 3:

It seems to me, having been in a number of these positions over the years, that there is very much a hierarchy, and I don't think you bring that out sufficiently strongly for my part. And, I think I disagree with some Friends in that I would say that writing a minute is a very powerful position to be in. of course one takes account of what is said, but at the end of the day you are writing the minute, and I think that is... The rhetoric that you employ eventually will be convincing and people will accept it. I'm not suggesting that there is a trick about this at all. The fact is you are there writing the minute and eventually... Perhaps it's because you wear people away. They defer.

Speaker 4:

My observation of Clerks and people within the Society, making a minute at a variety of levels, may be more or less sensitive, perhaps you might say conscientious in reflecting the language of that has been used in the meeting. My own feeling is that sometimes people have turned things into their own words, which perhaps don't reflect the 'sense of the meeting' as well as it was actually stated in the meeting, and, in fact, if part of the minute is to reflect what people in the meeting have thought about the issue, the minute should reflect the language as much as possible. That varies probably with memory and the ability to get down in notes what is said.

This exchange illustrates the egalitarian ideal that Friends seek to establish in their community in light of concentrated responsibility. For most of these speakers there is a refusal that Clerks attempt to dominate, and the 'servant' metaphor and the public nature of the minute-taking foils a Clerk's attempt to control the meeting. Later in this analysis, I demonstrate the hierarchies that occur in the Society (Chapter 7), and I agree with Speaker 3 in both the power of the Clerk's position, and the existence of hierarchies in the Society. The Clerk's power is not an absolutist one, but one which arises from a concentration of not only responsibility, and also a concentration of the redemptive hegemony that the Society reproduces in its participants. The Clerk can feel a sense of powerlessness in the responsibilities that are placed on him or her, and may be disciplined if they transgress. The Clerk does become an exemplar and the reproducer of the ideological domination that informs

the Quaker disposition – a model of the Quaker habitus. The Clerk does guard the decision-making form, and insures that it remains a Quakerly act. Clerking a meeting in this sense is appropriating the symbolic aspects of the minute to make certain that it is sufficiently Quaker.

Business meetings are arrangements where the people strive to develop an understanding of the Inner Light's will for the collective. The participants in these meetings are typically Members who have made a commitment to the Society, and accept the responsibility for maintaining the organisational structure and decorum of business meetings, and adhere to their understanding of the Inner Light. People who do not regularly attend the business meetings do so with quiet agreement with what is decided by the governing body. Power in the business meeting is managed by refusing to allow individuals to control the process. The Clerk of the meeting is under the most constraint and requires the greatest expression of self-control, because the role has the greatest access to individually-held power in the Quaker organisation. The decision-making process is reminiscent of social contract political theory, and the next section will explore these parallels.

## **The Quaker Organisation and the Social Contract**

A male Attender and regular participant in Young Friends activities:

Christianity is something that comes from above rather than below, literally. I mean it's something that comes from people who want power and take it on board and use. Perhaps not so much now, but like bishops... They have so much power, and so much money, and so much wealth. Together they ruled the land; whereas, Paganism...that word has bad connotations as well...natural religionism...what ever you want to call it...I feel it comes from the people up. It just...it celebrates nature and sets what is happening by the seasons. Um...about the way the land changes and we work with it to survive. We need to look after the land and cherish the land. Without it, without the connection you start dabbling into things

which we don't need... things that are mechanical and chemical... these new fangled things. They are hard to deal with. I just find it wrong. This again is like religion – top-down – trying to deal with things through power and force rather than trying to understand what's there already and work with it. Simplicity and equality make the most difference to me. Equality... A local democracy that isn't top-down is important. Old tribes... you would know more about this... small-sized communities... that's what we use in the Quaker community. It's the ultimate devolution.

A male Member who has served as a Clerk and Elder:

Perhaps its like the priesthood of all believers or related to that kind of thing. We hold these things [the Quaker business method] in trust for the wider church. Although these things may have been widespread historically, it's now very rare. We think it's very important, and we hold it in trust for the wider church. I think the business method is tremendously important. It's an innovative solution to the power and authority that is the foundation of Protestantism – for better or worse. It's important we don't lose sight of it. It really does take a different approach. I really had to school myself, because I'm used to running meetings in a professional context, and I tend to be moderately directive, and moderately over-confident about my ability to know what's going on and what the outcome is going to be. What I learned in the most direct and unequivocal way as a Quaker committee convener was that the Quaker way is particularly good at coming up with answers or solutions to problems that no one walked in with... That, by and large, the model that you have in the ordinary kind of business meeting is that someone understands the problem, and they explain their solution to it. We can agree or disagree, and we're done with it. With the Quaker business method, sometimes this is the case, but crucially what we are really good at is coming away with a solution that none of us walked in with. The fact that nobody is in charge; nobody has precedence, that 'character is the only rank'. We have weighty Friends, but they have achieved, not because of who they are or what their name is. There's something about silence, queuing to the commitment, to this idea that the Clerk is the servant of the meeting. The Clerk is not in charge except in the very limited sense of making sure not everyone talks at once. That the minute is not supposed to be the Clerk's minute. It's supposed to be the meeting's minute. These things added up to people being able to synthesise a resolution to a problem that wasn't there until people started ministering about it, and that's pretty impressive.

These two extended quotations in very different ways encapsulate the Quaker approach to power and establish similar ways of managing decisions. The first quote comes from an interview in which I prompted the interviewee with a question about

spirituality, which became an exposition on the proper religion and addressed issues of power. The second interviewee was asked about the nature of Quaker business meetings, and it again touches on the management of power in the Quaker setting. The Society's structure, with its suspicion of individually held power and inclusive ideals, suggests a social contract governmental style, or the notion that the legitimate government is a voluntary agreement among free moral agents. Historically, the social contract was coming into fruition as a practised political theory just as the Quaker millennial movement was gelling as a collective identity.<sup>iii</sup>

Thus far I have suggested the influence of the structural and hegemonic features of the Society on the actions of the participants. By bringing the social contract into the explanation, I introduce agency. The importance of choice is a vital element of the social contract as it was conceived by Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant. The social contract's origins are attributed to the Greek theories of the 'good regime', and the natural sociability of humanity. The Christian emphasis on individual choice and responsibility were incremental steps made in the Reformation. In the social contract, human will is assumed as necessary so that, 'men may unite in a single perfect community' (Suarez 1872 [1612]) based on deliberate choice. The early roots of this thinking also lie with William of Ockham, who elaborated that legitimate authority required the free consent of the ruled (McGrade 1974), and Suarez in the seventeenth century, who asserted that free will and political consent are inseparable. Locke viewed the social contract as, 'the deliberate act of free and equal individuals acting consciously and rationally together' (Waldron 1994: 53), not requiring full submission to the sovereign. In the seventeenth century, consent became a moral faculty in the contract through Hobbes' *Leviathan* where, 'The right

of all sovereigns is derived originally from consent of every one of those that are to be governed' (1958 [1651]: 42). Rousseau firmly established contractual thinking into political performance, again based on the assumption of a free moral agent. He was not concerned with the definition of freedom, 'the philosophical meaning of the word 'freedom' is in no part of my subject' (1988: 266), but the social contract requires the deliberation of free moral agents as it is rendered in eighteenth-century Christian understanding. For Kant the social contract was 'merely an idea of reason' that generates the basis of a normative standard for testing laws and social arrangements (Waldron 1994).

The free will required in the social contract presents a slight challenge in this interpretation of the Society, in which, I assert, social controls regulate decisions. The challenge lies in attempting to reconcile Bentham's controlled subject and Rousseau's free moral agent. Foucault suggests in his description of prison social history that Friends internalised the values of Bentham's panopticon (Carrette 2000). The panopticon-styled prison allows the prisoner no escape from observation, instilling an environment of compliance. His assertion that Quakers internalise this process arises from the constant presence of the Inner Light within the believer, what is actually an internalization of religious belief (Carrette 2000: 121). The continual awareness of the supreme moral authority within everyone establishes discipline in the believer. Foucault illustrates his thesis by describing the technology of discipline enacted on the inhabitants of Quaker run prisons in seventeenth-century Pennsylvania, where discipline arises from prisoners confronting their conscience. Friends also used it to regulate their own lives. The community and the Elders and

Overseers as policed Members to ensure they were 'walking in the Light'. Friends that did not abide by the rules of the Society were expelled.

The people acting as Elders and Overseers do not practice this dimension of their role as vigorously today. While Foucault's interpretation may have characterised seventeenth-century Quakers and their systems of discipline, his assertions are less descriptive of recent practices. Today the roles of the Elder and Overseer do not entail the same degree of control in policing the participant in meetings, and the Elder and Overseer's ability to control loses potency with the constraints on their authority (Dandelion 1993), and when meeting participants are away from the Meeting House. The participant in the Society is entrusted to be their own judge of appropriate Quaker behaviour when not interacting in the Quaker setting, allowing personal interpretation of the Inner Light to be the guide for behavior.

Foucault's interpretation also loses its interpretative efficacy with the multi-vocal understanding of God and the Inner Light found in the Society. The Christian interpretation of the Inner Light is no longer the exclusive cultural model of God among Quakers, so the omnipotent and omniscient aspects of the internal God do not entail the same regulatory power that Foucault affords the concept. There was very little emphasis on sin and damnation among the Friends I witnessed. The vengeful notions of God were disregarded for the partiality of an all-loving presence. With this change, Friends no longer have the ever-present observer found in the former constructions of the Inner Light. The human policing of behaviour and the internal observation of an Inner Light have lost their efficacy of control. People move in and out of membership, and personal choice to attend Meeting for Worship can fluctuate

throughout a person's lifetime, and the social and economic loss that occurred on leaving the Society in the past is no longer a threatening factor in this decision. There are few repercussions for this rise and fall in participation, or not 'walking in the Light'. The only repercussion may be the sense of loss from no longer being a Member, and the relationships that this membership entails. Without the threat of loss and without the threat of an internal deity to control behaviour, Foucault's heuristic of the panopticon loses its value. Today's Society appears to internalise something much less sinister than the panopticon. Based on my observation, the Quaker processes of embodiment instill the ideal of the social contract into the participant.

Rousseau's social contract required people to turn power over to the sovereign only rarely to reclaim it.<sup>iv</sup> In the Society there is ideally no single sovereign, but an acceptance that the Inner Light will lead, and this guidance can only be determined by communal discernment of God's will – what I would argue is the general will of the gathered meeting and expressed in the creation of a minute. The minute, which correctly expresses the 'spirit of the meeting' is an enactment of the general will and affirms a social contract.

What in fact is an act of sovereignty? It is not an agreement between superior and an inferior, but an agreement between the body and each of its members, a legitimate agreement, because it is based upon the social contract; equitable, because it is common to all; useful, because it can have no other purpose than the general good; and reliable because it is guaranteed by the public force and the supreme power. As long as the subjects are only bound by the agreements of this sort, they obey no one but their own will, and to ask how far the respective rights of the sovereign and citizens extend is to ask to what point the latter can commit themselves to each other, one towards all and all towards one.

Rousseau 1988: 103

Sovereignty, or the supreme ruler, within the Religious Society of Friends lies in the 'Inner Light' metaphor, which is understood through the notions of the testimony of equality embedded in the structures of the Society and in the method of making decisions. Rousseau asserts that no individual will lose in the social contract, since the individual regains what is given to the community. 'The individual thus finds himself to have entered into a reciprocal agreement not only with the body of which they were to become members but also with a sovereign which henceforth is deemed to possess a moral personality' (Jennings 1994: 118). In the case of the Society the sovereign is the ultimate moral personality – the Inner Light. Jennings continues, 'to prevent the inevitable descent into a "state of nature" where the association would be, "either tyrannical or void" Rousseau therefore has to resort to a fiction: the general will' (1994: 118). This construction of the 'will' as something that, 'is always right and always tends to the public good' is sufficient to allow Rousseau to stipulate that the sovereign, and the sovereign alone, is the sole judge of the contract's implementation. The state as such is viable only upon this condition. With Friends however, the sovereign, or the Inner Light, is discerned by the congregation, who, once they have discovered the will of God, are obliged to act.

The extended quotations that introduced this section highlight the similarities between Quaker thinking and the social contract. The first informant stressed what he viewed as the natural aspects of the meeting as a 'bottom-up' form of thinking and distribution of power. For this Attender the nearness to nature enabled the participant to be free from abuse by hierarchal religion. For my informant the individually held power he associated with mainstream Christianity was an unnatural means for procuring and protecting wealth, echoing Rousseau's view of government.

‘For Rousseau, government and the social contract differed. Government originated from a desire by the rich to protect the property they had acquired. The social contract, in contrast, is based on democratic consent’ (Barnard 2000: 18). My informant favoured the congregational tendencies of the Quaker organisation, attributing to them a state of nature and a democratic, egalitarian lifestyle comparable to that advocated by Locke and Rousseau. Rousseau’s understanding of the social contract was such that he believed that only a small city would be capable of maintaining such an arrangement. Perhaps this can explain why today’s Society of Friends counts only around 20,000 Members, and serves to explain the challenge for the Society, regarding the large proportion of Attenders gaining from the contract without making the decision to join or contribute to its production.

The second quotation provides a further endorsement for the Quaker management of power. The decisions made in business meetings are the property of the group and no one person, since the conclusions are unknown until the meeting explores the character of the problem. For this informant, Friends are able to establish new, unimagined conclusions to the issues they manage through their process. He also cites the structures of egalitarianism that deny social rank in producing a minute. Friends ideally consider ‘weight’ as a person’s character that is recognised through a person’s Quakerly actions. In relation to Rousseau’s contract this informant appreciates the creative aspects to exploring the general will, and personally affords considerable value to the process. Interestingly, later in this interview he expresses a view that contradicts the congregational tendencies that were expressed by the first informant, preferring the general will discovered by the wider Society. This informant acknowledges the top-down aspects of the Quaker

organisation, and finds the congregational trend in the Society today a threat. suggesting an appreciation for the form of the sovereign in the Society and stressing the importance of the Quaker meaning of the structures and practices.

The Yearly Meeting has a policy that the marriage ceremony is for one man and for one woman, and there is a Monthly Meeting that has established a policy that is in direct contradiction to that. The question 'What is the net effect of this?' is tearing people apart...and I know I am in the minority in the meeting and elsewhere in Britain about the business of authority and the nature of the Monthly Meetings and the Yearly Meeting. There are plenty of people who have never been, and I don't mean this in a condescending way, that have never been to London, and who...It's easy to never think about, and therefore to most unreflectively be convinced that the Monthly Meeting is in charge, when in fact that is not the case. This sort of incipient congregationalism is something that really does worry me. It is the source of conflict because it is a question about...When somebody in a business meeting points to something in *Church Government* that states 'you shall' or 'you shall not'...What is the status of that? What do we have to do in response to that? It doesn't happen very often, but it does implicitly every time somebody says in a discussion about nominations, 'Maybe we should ask so and so', and somebody else says 'I don't think they are a Member, and the incumbent in that position has to be a Member'. Well who says? The answer is *Church Government*. Yearly Meeting says. I'm sure there are Monthly Meetings who have taken to simply disregarding this. The unreflexive consideration of Friends principles says this is bogus, right? 'How could we possibly say that so and so isn't fit to be an Overseer because they're not a Member? That's patently absurd. They're clearly the right person for the job, so we're going to make them an Overseer'. You know...'*Church Government* be damned'... that's opening up the floodgates. Yearly Meeting, the physical event, as opposed to the organisation, speaks for all who use it, and makes binding decisions. It is just as binding as PM or MM. We're all there. Even if we do not go, and by God, if you're at YM, you are painfully aware of the responsibility that's there by being there. You are making decisions for 24,000 to 25,000 people... But, it's something about which there is no doubt that conflict is underway. It's only really been avoided because...well, I don't know...maybe well just lapse into congregationalism and Britain Yearly Meeting will be just like Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in twenty years, or like Pacific Yearly Meeting where YM, the event, is just a friendly get together. It's no different from the summer gathering. It's a place to get together and meet like-minded people, but it doesn't actually have any substance.

With the theological diversity we see among Friends there also changes to the contract which is moving from an agreement that is based on a Christian theological

understanding of a communal will to one that cannot be easily described with this Rousseauian model. The discourse amongst Quakers is not confined to Christianity, and some would argue that the conversation is not even confined to a religious theme, but includes a secular one. Since the meaning of the 'Inner Light' is not confined to this realm of meaning, there is a challenge to making the communal understanding of God the moral authority or sovereign. Friends using a less theistic understanding of worship, contribute then to the Quaker social contract without the Godlike sovereign, allowing the general will to simply arise out of the process of the interaction between the participants. In this instance we see the contract to be more like the mutualism described by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who in his critique of Rousseau asserts that the social contract is not between the sovereign and the members of the contract, but between individuals as individuals (1988). God, the sovereign, is slowly being replaced by a contract that is an agreement between the participants alone. In this arrangement people are organised for a definite purpose and time, providing equal contributions of resources to the common good. Outside of the contract, participants are independent. Proudhon's contract implied no obligation until those involved in the contract promised delivery. Proudhon wrote, 'When I agree with one or more of my fellow citizens it is clear that my own will is law; it is myself who in fulfilling my obligation, am my own government' (Proudhon 1988: 205). The agreement is one of integrity, since Friends do not use law as the heuristic to explain their social bonds. When participants refuse to become Members or withdraw their membership from the Society, we witness the agreement or disagreement with the contract without the fear of upsetting a God, or an individualistic interpretation of God's will. The lack of economic threat involved in

marrying out of the Society, or leaving due to personal disagreement with the contract, no longer exists in the Society, so those ties that bound people to membership in the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries no longer offer the Society a hegemonic force to compel particular behaviours. Personal integrity binds contemporary Friends. If a Friend does not agree with a corporate decision, their integrity should compel them to voice this dissent. When the circumstances are such that the individual cannot sway the meeting, and the person cannot reconcile their belief to the decision, the result is a threat of resigning membership.

### **The Challenge in Practicing Communal Power**

Hannah Arendt in her exploration of Rousseau's general will acknowledges, 'The enduring unity of a people inspired by one will must not be mistaken for stability' (1963: 76). In the language of revolution, Rousseau asserts that the individuals creating the general will require a common enemy to react against, distracting them from their own differences. Using a less militant tone, Friends do unite against those things that are antithetical to their testimonies. While Friends are accountable to law and the wider social body, their actions are not necessarily dictated by these forces (Bradney and Cownie 2000), as evidenced by their non-conformism. Laws are abided by when they are viewed as just. The Trident/Ploughshares 2000 narrative illustrates what some Friends are willing to do when they oppose, what is in their understanding, an unjust law. They feel led to confront the injustice as an expression of their faith. Even though Friends are willing to oppose the law, they are accountable to it in other ways, making the notion of sovereignty metaphorical in relation to the wider society. Amongst Friends, the metaphor becomes practice.

Rousseau found it necessary to attribute law to an absolute moral authority, which Friends internalise. Montesquieu never found the need to attribute this highest authority to the laws that direct society, assuming that the laws had their own validity (Barnard 2000). For Friends, the organisation does not need laws. The minute that is led by the internal moral authority is reason enough to guide action.

Recalling the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident, many Friends had difficulty with the decision made by Turning the Tide. These specialists in the Society were acting on their discernment of the Inner Light that they had developed in the course of their work. Their specialisation is in the training of non-violent action based on spiritual awareness. Using the Quaker decision-making processes, the group decided to train the non-Quaker group. Some of the people in the Society viewed the actions of Trident/Ploughshares 2000 as violent, and they challenged the discernment of Turning the Tide. Others considered the legal ramifications to MfS, if they allowed the training to proceed. Finally, some Friends saw the threat to the contract through the improper means of making the decision to train the Trident protestors.

This last concern suggests that there is an appropriate form of representations in the organisation. With the ethos of that abhors individually held power, yet appreciates personal experience, we see tension that requires reconciliation when Friends prepares a decision in the name of the Society. The YM is the ultimate authority in the Society, which is allowed to represent the position of the Society to the outside world. On occasions where one person is needed to convey the Society, Friends prepare their statement with the stipulation that it is their understanding that they are speaking from, and that their statements are not necessarily the view of all

Friends. Ascertaining the general will is the job of a recognised gathered body. Their discernment must be based on the disciplined Quaker process to be viewed as legitimate. We saw the decisions about the Trident/Ploughshares training, in Chapter 3, mistakenly get handed to QPS by the MfS Clerk – a serious breach of Quaker protocol. Then the Society implemented further consideration through the local, regional, and national tiers. Each of these arenas of decision making, and the committees that serve each of these collectives form a functional representation, where functional groups, or working-groups work to represent the entirety of that particular tier.

Rousseau viewed representation as a threat to the general will, when participants in the contract are not willing to accept the personal responsibility, preferring to allow others take on their responsibility. A similar experience is manifest in the practices of the Society, where participants, primarily Attenders, defer the decision making to a select few who choose to participate regularly in the meetings. I will show in Chapter 7 how this leads to a hierarchy, where Members, who are educated in Quakerly behaviour, are the managers of the key symbols of the Society and the implementers of the policies that control the meaning of these symbols.

The use of committees, or function groups, at all levels of the Society are successful at conflict management, and an effective way to distribute power. Committees are able to gather and synthesise information quickly, particularly with the minute detail required for decisions. The committees then pass on their information to the wider body for their discernment. Rather than the larger body getting engrossed in the details and the numerous possibilities in a decision, a

committee brings the larger group a finite set of choices, omitting those that are least attractive based on their discernment requested by the larger meeting. Committees limit the possibility for discussion in the larger group, and the opportunity for wider disagreement. This occurred at the Monthly Meeting where decisions about the maintenance of the building were given to a Fabric and Maintenance Committee. This group submitted requests for repairs and alteration of the building's features to the MM treasurer. The practice avoided the problem of too many voices in the decision-making, and the potential conflicts that can arise from these apparently mundane decisions. An informant told me about the difficulties involved in the decision to carpet the meeting room. Some people wanted the room carpeted, while others thought this was an extravagance. When I was conducting fieldwork among Quakers in Indiana, an informant told of a meeting that was 'laid down', or dissolved, because of arguments over wallpapering the meeting room (Kline 1996). Michael Sheeran also highlights a similar anecdote among Friends in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (1983).

During the Meeting for Sufferings report from Turning the Tide, the system of devolving decisions to small groups failed to manage the process effectively. Some of the MM representatives did not acknowledge that the QPS committee was providing a report on their activities. Their report aimed to inform MfS, not to get permission. Quaker Peace and Service, specifically Turning the Tide, also failed to acknowledge their accountability to Meeting for Sufferings. One of the issues made manifest in the incident involves the ability to discern the Inner Light, and trusting that others are capable of this process. Permitting a non-Quaker organisation access to the Society's resources in order to do violence is discordant in the view of some

Quakers. The smaller group that made this decision violated the social contract, and threats of resigning membership ensued. An informant in the focus groups shared that one problem with the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident resulted from the informal arrangements between QPS and the MfS Clerk to make a decision, without the important step of having the MfS request this action. The Clerk also implemented sovereignty beyond her authority by trying to side step the general will of the MfS.

‘Unity,’ ‘discernment,’ and ‘concern’ are all used as watchwords for Friends, and they are closely related to notions of appropriately wielded power. For Rousseau, society was legitimate only when its individual Members were in accord with laws that were created by and applied equally to all. Selfishness was avoided by governmental subordination to these laws applied to every citizen. When there are no enemies to react against, the individuals that constitute the general will are at risk of turning on each other. Rousseau, according to Arendt, found the common enemy to be the particular interest of each citizen. ‘The common enemy within the nation is the sum total of the particular interests of all citizens’ (Arendt 1963:78). In the Society selfishness is this enemy. Traditionally, ultimate authority in the Society is given to God. Access to this authority is possible individually, but it is most reliable if it is tested communally. This testing of individual perceptions of Truth is the spirit of all meetings from Sunday worship to local, regional, and national business meetings, even small and less formal committee meetings. Decisions are not taken when the Clerk is aware of dissent and no underlying commonality can be found. The awareness of ‘Unity’ allows the group to proceed to a draft minute and eventually to accept the minute. The Trident/Ploughshares 2000 narrative shows

how concerns can be raised by the few and an action halted. Proceeding on a course of action without this unity suggests making a decision that is not in accordance with the will of God.

## **Conclusion**

Quaker Business meetings are rituals where future actions are identified and common identity is achieved. As I stated in the introduction, my understanding of ritual comes from Catherine Bell (1992, 1997) via Durkheim, Gluckman and Victor Turner. When considering conflict in anthropology, and its relation to ritual, these names emerge as authoritative voices. Gluckman (1962, 1963, and 1965) and Turner (1966) emphasise the social control aspects of ritual, and view the activity as a means of managing the tensions within society. They assert that conflict in moral relations is performed in the controlled ritual setting. Among Quakers the business meeting is an exercise in ritualisation informing Quaker relationships and a ritual context where tensions are managed, enacting the tensions between the structure and the freedom, and creating a communal voice through the tiers of the organisation. It is the setting where a chosen discipline is enacted. Two implications are of interest regarding this study. The first issue is the relationship between structure and agency which leads to the second, the management of conflict. The illustrations in this chapter provide some justification for Foucault's suggestion that in the past Quakers embodied the qualities of the panopticon, but I suggest Friends employ considerable agency while enacting a Rousseauian social contract. Rituals punctuate the group's social relations (Geertz 1973, Turner 1977, Douglas 1960, 1974 and Lukes 1975), and the Quaker Meeting for Worship seeks to practice the equality of the participants. The values

and organisational structures in the Society regulate the actions of Friends, maintaining a sense of community in the face of conflict. The power relations that reflect the equality work to minimise the individual's control, particularly in circumstances where statuses and responsibilities are concentrated, like we see in the roles of the Elder, Overseer, and Clerk. The trope 'servant of the meeting' highlights the ambition to bestow responsibility, but restrain power. Individually held power is mitigated through the assertion of egalitarian structures. What can appear to be a small breach of business meeting discipline is responded to with its reassertion. Friends are reminded of the proper form in business meetings, and Meeting for Worship subtly through the actions of fellow participants, and overtly through forms of regulation. Although the structure is asserted, participants agree to the form, or find another by leaving the Society, and joining another denomination or faith. The conversion of the participant to the correctness of the structure is called 'convincement'. Many Members state they became convinced after attending a business meeting, as was stated earlier. Rather than an internalisation of the panopticon, social contract theory suggests that the participant has agreed as a moral agent, acknowledging the benefits to the contract. With the Society the participant can withdraw if the contract is no longer viewed as satisfying.

The use of 'internalisation of the panopticon' and 'internalisation of the social contract' as metaphors for Quaker discipline also makes a statement about the relations between the participants of the Society. The Society balances utilitarian structure and the freedom of the social contract. The seventeenth-century authority granted to Elders and Overseers is no longer as totalitarian, taking away the fearful aspects that are suggested in the idea of the panopticon. The social contract is a

commitment to a community where the person accepts the loss of some freedoms in exchange for what is gained in participation. The hegemony that results from the social contract among Friends is one that disguises itself through efforts to minimise the impact on freedom. The egalitarian structures in the 'servant of the meeting', and the free ministry in business meetings direct attention away from the hierarchies, and the loss of freedom that occurs with commitment to the community. The reflexive relationship of Friends to their religion suggests that not everyone is blind to what I have described. The phenomenon will interest some participants and not be a concern to others. The enjoyment of support and supporting people who have similar concerns is enough for many to become Members.

Finally, the tensions between the panopticon and the contract create an interesting situation when conflicts arise, whereby the contract is maintained by practising the structured actions of Quakerism. Enacting the testimonies, and avoiding the appearance of individually held power, becomes the heuristic for sociable behaviour when disagreement arises. The behaviours that are internalised in worship become the mode of expression when acting 'Quakerly': addressing the Inner Light of the disputant, minimising rash emotion-led behaviour, and using silence and a proper Quaker idiom, become the proper expression. This consideration of the structures and structuring of Quaker behaviour provides insight into the overarching context where Friends interact. This also brings our attention to the cognitive and affective aspects to worship, and finally to the Quaker logic to conflict. In the remaining chapters I will explore these aspects of the Society and what is unique to Friends, by explicating the tropes that inform conflict practices among Friends.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Some Quakers also enrich the metaphor by saying ‘up-holding in the Light.’

<sup>ii</sup> Observing Friends away from the Meeting House was limited. The practice of their faith off-stage is would prove to be an important study in the practice and embodiment of value in various contexts.

<sup>iii</sup> This section gives only passing acknowledgement to the parallel development of the structures and practices of the Religious Society of Friends and the development of social contract theory. The discussion does not afford a greater analysis to the historical phenomenon that it warrants.

<sup>iv</sup> Rousseau is viewed as the most important proponent of social contract theory, so the parallels established here will focus primarily on his *On Social Contract*. I do not want to engage in the contractual origins of political establishments debate, so the scope of this discussion does not include the origins of the political humanity (see Gellner 1995).

<sup>v</sup> *Church Government* is the book used prior to *Quaker Faith and Practice* that outlined legitimate Quaker business practice.

## Chapter 5 - The Cognitive Context: Quaker Generative Tropes

Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life.

*Advices and Queries*  
1995: 1.02.1

Bring the whole of your life under the ordering of the spirit of Christ. Are you open to the healing power of God's love? Cherish that of God within you, so that this love may grow in you and guide you. Let your worship and your daily life enrich each other. Treasure your experience of God, however it comes to you. Remember that Christianity is not a notion but a way.

*Advices and Queries*  
1995: 1.02.2

These *Advices and Queries* are the first offered in *Quaker Faith and Practice*, asserting the origins of the Religious Society of Friends as a Christian group, and establishing the modus operandi by which Friends should engage with the world. While the use of the Christian idiom is recognisable in these passages, it becomes less apparent as the book continues, reflecting the complicated theology based on private spiritual understanding that is tested communally. Some Friends perceive their common language disappearing. The current edition of *Quaker Faith and Practice* illustrates the waning dominance of the Christian idiom, where some passages appear secular or spiritual without a particularly specific theology. This breadth of meaning and understanding results in a unique Quaker schema which is difficult to capture in generality, but the attempt will aid understanding of Quaker practices and approaches to conflict. 'Schema', for the purposes of this discussion, are 'abstract representations of the environment' (Mandler 1984: 56), or an

‘organised framework of object and relations which has yet to be filled in with concrete detail’ (D’ Andrade 1995: 124).

We have had reason to explore the context of the Meeting for Worship and the meaning that this activity has for Friends, and we explored the negotiation of power in the Society and the structures, and tropes used in this management. This discussion will carry on from those previous chapters, delving into the generative figures from which current structures and practices are founded. In the Introduction, I justify considering cognition and tropes as a means to understanding the Quaker construction of conflict and the cultural logic to its management. Conflict is viewed as a context nested within wider contexts, where particular meanings and behaviours are promoted in the pursuit of culturally informed interests. What is described here is a constellation of meanings that inform a cognitive context, which is developed by highlighting the metaphors and idioms that are unique to the Society. These figures and forms of speaking informed my understanding of the Quaker cultural model, or higher order schema.

Peter Collins describes the internalisation of symbols in the Quaker community, and the process of ‘plaining’, as a cognitive process where the participant brings a unique interpretation to bear on everyday life (Collins 1996). Collins continues, the Quaker literature (Canonical Quakerism), and participating in Meeting for Worship (Vernacular Quakerism) informs the habitus of the participant, by creating a *genre*, or a symbolic system (Sperber 1975) without implications of a closed system. This was extremely useful when developing an understanding of Quaker belief and understanding. My interpretation here uses the idiom of connectionism and tropes to establish a Quaker model, or schema, because it helps

describe the influence of other belief systems, or *genres*, or cultural schemas on the Quaker understanding and habitus. The preference toward the theory of tropes lies in the role these figures play in the constructed nature of meaning (Fernandez 1986, 1991, and Turner 1991). The alteration in terminology will also help understanding the construction of ‘conflict’ in the cognitive context, when we reach Chapter 6.

The cognitive context I convey here is certainly incomplete since it focuses primarily on only three tropes.<sup>1</sup> The tropes that I describe are, however, basic in contemporary Canonical and Vernacular Quakerism, and they also impact the manner in which Friends practice conflict management. The tensions that are found in the theological understanding in the Society and in the interaction in and away from the Meeting House are through the use of the tropes highlighted in this discussion. Understanding them and their entailments will provide an adequate picture for the further discussion on ‘conflict’.

Another challenge to the development of a cognitive context lies in its non-exclusivity in the mind of the person. The cognitive model unique to Friends is not the only source of meaning that Friends have at their disposal for interpreting the world. Schema are nested, or hierarchically arranged (D’Andrade 1995), so the Quaker higher order schema, is nestled within and amongst other schema like a Judeo-Christian schema, legal schema, or scientific schema. However, within the setting of Meeting for Worship, the Quaker schema that is given priority, justifying the attempt to distil Quaker meanings from other models of understanding. It is the mode by which participants are encouraged to internalise and use to interpret the world through community support. The Quaker schema, or model, itself is embedded with other subschema, which lose their unique meaning when divorced

from the broader schematic context. The subschema that are offered in this description are tropes that not only embed the Quaker schema, they provide a unique understanding to fill in environmental ambiguity. When offered limited or vague stimuli, a person will fill in gaps to complete the image, or scene. Using historical understanding, assumptions of causation, or cultural reasoning, a person 'mentally creates a partially specified world' (Fillmore 1975: 125) to render it coherent. Quinn (1991) also suggests that culturally informed metaphors suggest the logic related to reasoning. Therefore, to approach the Quaker schema, I will explore the Quaker system and explicate the generative tropes that constitute it, establishing the cognitive context available to participants in the Society.

### **General Attributes to the Cognitive Context**

Constructing of an ideal-type, Quaker schema is a dangerous exercise given such theological diversity. Indeed, when accounting for all theological forms participants employ in Quaker meetings, the diversity expands, creating an apparent lack of commonality. There is also the caution that many Attenders value participating in meeting life, but they are reluctant to adopt many of the meanings which Friends employ. Even those meanings that Friends share are not uncontested. Friends are reflexive with their religion (as noted by Bauman 1983, and Collins 1994), as they deliberate the implications of their belief and suggest appropriate behaviour. I was surprised by the number of participants in the local meeting who were former clergy from the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church, and the Baptist Church, showing the degree to which some Members are engaged with their

religious beliefs. In Quaker discourse, the importance of particular terms and their meanings are constant topics for discussion. So, the focus here is not to assert what Quakers think, only to reveal what tropes Friends used during fieldwork, providing insight into what is available for thinking. As we will see, the success of the tropes used by Friends lies in the utility which permits understanding from many religious systems.

The various cultural models in British society and the world certainly influenced the Friends under consideration. Ministries at Sunday morning worship reflected the utility of other religious and secular understanding. Speakers shared their interpretations from their occupation into their ministry. A physicist ministered using a 'thought experiment' to convey his notion of perfect behaviour, for example. It is important to note that these ministries, while using a particular idiom outside the standard Christian expression, were still directed toward the understanding of Truth, keeping with the ethos of worship. Once spoken, the ministries are available for private interpretation. The participant can then append their own theological reading of the ministry. This suggests that the Quaker schema is constantly manipulated and continually expanding. Indeed, with the constant influx of information and belief from other people, Friends are required to place this new information into their own schema yet retain a sense of communal uniqueness. The challenge of this is revealed in post-colonial Britain as people currently negotiate the abundance of information from other societies. Instant information from the media, travel, business and the physical and social sciences expand what must be interpreted and what one can interpret with. Two relics of empire, the knowledge of the other and the structures of global transportation, continue to provide the British citizen with the opportunity to

read about other religions and modes of life, and to visit and participate, if it is affordable. The missionising and assimilation of the other had the subtle effect of influencing the missionary's own understanding, and the stories told upon returning stirred the imagination. Today, information about other people and their beliefs increases what needs to be reconciled by people exposed to the plurality. Traditional religious discourses in Britain were dominated by interpretation of Christian symbols within a Christian model; whereas, contemporary discourses negotiate the validity, meaning, and acceptance of other religions. This changing discourse was illustrated in the buildings within the vicinity of the primary field site. I surveyed the city centre near the Meeting House, going two blocks north and south of the High Street. There were nineteen buildings originally used for Christian purposes, for church services, offices, residence, and retail. Those buildings that are no longer churches, sit vacant, or function as pub complexes and visitor centres (nine buildings total). There were nearly as many shops in the city centre that sold New Age religious regalia, or served a secular purpose, as there were active churches (ten churches total). This phenomenon reflects the increase in religious choice found in British society, and results in decreasing participation in British churches.

Of the numerous religious symbolic systems on offer for interpreting the world, some are valued over others by groups, and some groups will restrict those symbolic systems they find acceptable. Groups that restrict accommodating meanings from other models, or significantly alter the meanings of a foreign discourse I regard as concept-restrictive groups. Novel concepts foreign to the favoured interpretive model are refused incorporation because of a perceived incompatibility. People that utilise the novel concept are then marked as the other.

With this conservatism, any new concepts that do enter the valued cultural model require considerable alteration. These complexes of meaning, therefore, have a heuristic value on incoming concepts. The protected model is orthodox and slow to change because the novel concepts are altered so they have a minimal effect on the existing structure of ideas. The other possibility is concept-inclusive groups that incorporate those new meanings into their own model and accept the changes that can result from incorporating the new concept. The structure of the source cultural model is more fluid in these circumstances. The group may continue to alter the meaning of the novel concept by trying to understand its essence, but the group is less protective of their source model. This illustrates the contemporary Quaker setting. The challenge that this strategy provides, as mentioned above, is maintaining a sense of uniqueness and coherence of identity. Friends use particular metaphors to provide this coherence.

The following tropes are those that were most regularly used amongst the Friends I observed. Many are embedded so deeply in Quaker discourse that their unique meaning is obscured, while others are uniquely Quaker, marking the identity of the speaker as a Friend. The use of these idioms is irreverently referred to as 'Quaker Speak'. Quaker language has varied forms and meanings in the history of the Society. Originally Friends used the peculiarity of plain speaking, using 'thee' and 'thou' rather than 'you'. This phraseology established a clear boundary for the Society, and conveyed a theological point that God existed in everyone, and the deference conveyed in 'you' was inappropriate. Plain speaking was also a reaction to the effusive flattery used in greetings during the seventeenth century. This was viewed as lacking integrity and addressing the carnal aspect of the person, not the

Spirit (Bauman 1983). These practices reflect a concept-restrictive group strategy. As plain speaking faded from use, many terms were retained for their utility in expressing Quaker understanding of spirituality. Certain enclaves of old Quaker language practice exist today, particularly in the United States where some Friends continue the use of thee and thou, but normal language practice today is nearly indistinguishable from English and Scots depending on the location of the meeting. Plain speaking has given way to a subtle coded language among Quakers today. An Attender who participated in Quaker meetings for thirty years described the idiom.

A: Have you ever ministered in meeting?

I: Never! Never. Um...I think...for years it was because I wanted to hear how other people did it, and not being quite so sure in those days how...well, being acquainted with the sort of process of thought that goes on, if you like, that is rather peculiar to Quakers. (Chuckles) Do you understand me?

A: (Chuckles) Yes. I'm interested to know. What is it that is unique to Quakers?

I: I think it's the way it's expressed...perhaps. The use of certain words, like 'concern' (chuckles). There are plenty of others. Or just how to put it, if you like.

Since numerous terms within the context of the meeting are secular, regular participation is required before the subtle meanings are recognisable as having a special significance in this context. The higher order Quaker schema contains sub-schema, like 'friend', 'house', 'meeting' and 'concern', which all have special significance in the Quaker context, conveying greater convolutions in their use.

## **Generative Tropes: The ‘inner light’, ‘journey’, and ‘friend’**

The metaphors that serve as the tropic workhorses among Friends are the ‘inner light’, the ‘journey,’ and ‘friend’. Together the tropes gird contemporary Quaker discourse, reflecting historical and modern meaning, yet allowing novel interpretations of Quaker practice to enter the discussion. The ‘inner light’ and ‘friend’ are taken directly from the constantly negotiated Quaker model, and would readily be recognised by participants as central concepts in Quaker thinking. The ‘journey’ trope is less obviously influential in the Society even though it occurs in Quaker discourse almost as regularly as the ‘inner light’. Both the ‘inner light’ and ‘journey’ tropes have clear Christian entailments, but both also can be found in other religious and secular models, providing the Christian and Universalist Friends common symbols to apply their interpretation.

### *The Inner Light*

The Inner Light is the key generative trope from which the Quaker ethical system, social organisation, and heuristic for practice are taken. It is visible in Friends’ writing; mentioned in casual conversation; and exhaustively interpreted in ministry. During fieldwork, the Meeting House’s lift had a broken light, making any journey in it a dark leap of faith. To remedy this, a torch was placed inside, and a sign was affixed saying, ‘The lift’s light is temporarily out of order. Please use the torch provided, or trust in the Light Within’. A group of American Friends were visiting the Meeting House at the time, and one of their number looked into the dark elevator and asked, ‘Where’s the light within?’ When I was told the story, I hoped that the

Friend was making a more profound statement about the interpretation of the Inner Light in the Society today, but I was left in doubt.

The Inner Light indicates the Quaker belief that there is ‘that of God in every one’, and it is the trope which has the greatest impact on a Quaker’s behaviour. The metaphor traditionally represented Jesus Christ’s presence in each human. According to George Fox the attentive person could discover this aspect of themselves, and a Quaker’s interactions with others should attempt to access this attribute in everyone. The impact this has on the believer involves constant self-assessment, and communal discernment. Usage of the Inner Light trope can be conveyed as the ‘God is in’ metaphor. This internal orientation is conveyed in worship, illustrated in Chapter 2, through the descriptions of the meaning of Meeting for Worship. When preparing for the silence early in the worship, participants are described as ‘centring-down’. The quiet contemplation that ensues is an attempt to discover this aspect of the self. It is also manifested in the aesthetic found in the meeting room, where there is little adornment to inspire the worshipper other than their the presence of the Inner Light amongst the ‘gathered meeting’. The absence of ornate architecture, a prepared sermon, or crucifixes directs the participant’s religious attention to the silence and the internal experience of worship. The fellow participants also indicate the trope as symbolic reminders of ‘that of God within’. During fieldwork, a visitor worshipping at a Quaker meeting for the first time was surprised that there was no overt Christian message in the meeting. The absence of a sermon or reading from the New Testament compelled her to ask the Friend who brought her, ‘Where was Jesus during the worship?’ The Friend simply pointed to her, responding, ‘You were thinking about Jesus that whole time’. The internalising

of the religious regalia was novel to the visitor, who looked for the physical, external, and overt representations of Christianity, wanting outward and visual verification that the activity was indeed Christian.

Light is a visual metaphor suggesting illumination of the physical world, and indicating a means of interpretation. When paired with 'inner' a different metaphysical schema is entered. Richard Bauman, in his ethnography of speaking amongst seventeenth-century Friends, establishes the relationship of the Inner Light to other key notions that guided Quaker understanding (1998). He suggests the 'light' metaphor arises from the New Testament 'The true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (John 1:9). This is paired with the 'inner' metaphor providing the source of communication and access to God's guiding truth. Related to this central trope is the notion of the 'still small voice'. The word of God is conveyed through this means, and the stillness establishes the need for Friends to wait in silence to hear this communication. Worship exercises the person's ability to reach the 'still small voice' of God. Finally, the word of God is equated to Truth. This syllogism of metaphors makes Truth and the Light synonymous. 'Living in the Truth,' and 'living in the Light' were common statements among seventeenth-century Friends (Bauman 1983), and they still have currency among Friends today. In this setting the Inner Light was more than simply wisdom, or conscience. It was a goal and a direction for living.

While the emphasis on the Inner Light has fluctuated throughout Quaker history, Friends today continue to seek an experience with the Inner Light in a communal act of worship, and its tropic qualities remain. In ministry one Friend expressed his understanding of the Inner Light using the historical understanding. He

interpreted why this voice is so quiet, stating that, ‘humans could not handle God conversing with them in a normal voice’. The ministry illustrated the ‘still small voice’ with the story of Noah. The man who spoke the ministry thought that Noah would have gone insane had the voice been a loud thunderous one, or even a normal conversational tone. He concluded that we had to practise and listen carefully for this voice.

The Bible has numerous uses of the ‘light’ trope. The first expression of God’s power in the Old Testament is the creation of light, and the early books of the Old Testament are narratives of God granting and withdrawing this light to humanity. The metaphor of God as a guiding light is established throughout the Old and New testaments. The Christian entailments that are involved with the ‘light’ trope create a domain associated with divine presence, goodness, knowledge, truth, wisdom, and guidance. Of particular interest for Friends, are those passages that place the light of God or Jesus within the person.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:14

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Matthew 6:22

In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

John 3:19

The ‘light’ trope continues to have its Christian entailments among Friends; however, metaphors, like symbols, are ultimately ambiguous allowing the individual

to bring her or his previous understanding to the figure, and to the context where it is used. This allows other meanings to be applied by meeting participants that do not use a notion of God as a spiritual centre. In secular circumstances, 'inner', 'light', and 'truth' diminish the Christian entailments, while the metaphors maintain their generative utility in the Quaker model. An inner truth is still sought and communally tested by those participants who do not utilise a theological interpretation of the activity. Humanist approaches to the Inner Light overlap with the Christian symbolic system within the Quaker community with their interpretation that 'light is truth', however the conclusion is devoid of the theological steps to the syllogism.

An interesting feature of Quaker meetings I attended was the relative absence of biblical passages. They were not regularly or overtly used in ministry. Ministry may refer to the 'light', but the connection to a Christian symbolic system is left to the listener to create. Often people sharing an overtly Christian ministry would do so apologetically, stating 'I know it isn't fashionable to talk about Jesus, but...' They then continued their interpretation of a Bible passage based on personal experience. Friends looking to the Inner Light for inspiration are given the freedom to explore the truths they encounter. Favourite quotations, like 'let your life speak', and 'what canst thou say?' encapsulate the practice of de-emphasising biblical authority, and focuses on the personal experience of truth. Quakers regularly stress the Christian origins of the Inner Light, but, with the broadening of the Quaker discourse involving multiple theologies, the trope changes its emphasis from the seventeenth-century understanding. The Quaker participant's acceptance of this authority and the awareness of other faiths through direct participation, travel abroad and by reading non-Christian literature establish the Universalist model in Quaker meetings.

Universalist Friend Ralph Hetherington, asserted that the Universalist form of Quakerism centres on the primacy of the Inner Light (1993). The three tenets of Universalist Quakerism are: the reality of the Inner Light; the Inner Light as the source of spiritual authority over the scriptures; and the belief of God in everyone. The Inner Light is associated with love, truth, and life, and it expands the unity of Meeting for Worship, to the Society of Friends, and the whole of humanity. Indeed some friends would extend the trope pantheistically to all of creation. This Universalist interpretation of the Inner Light brings construal from other religious models that are quietly enacted in worship, creating private contexts to the Quaker activity. Personal understanding of Catholic liturgy, Buddhist meditation, Islamic teaching, and Native American myth inform the Universalist understanding of the 'inner light' trope. These personal constructions are only realised when the person speaks in ministry, or when sharing their understanding over soup or in Meetings for Learning.

Buddhist meditations toward enlightenment nestle within the activity of Quaker Meeting for Worship. Buddhist Attenders and Members at the meeting where I participated would use the silence for meditation, supporting the silence, and focusing on common notions of the light. The 'light' trope in the Buddhist model is related to knowledge, awareness, and further progression to Dharma. Light directs the person to emancipation from the tedium of the self and life. The Buddha, the shining majesty, inculcates the world, suggesting the source of light and a separation of people from this light. Universalist Friends further their understanding of the 'light' from their exploration of Buddhist writing and through participation in Buddhist activities in Britain and abroad. They perceive a similarity of the light-

dark, wisdom-delusion, enlightenment-suffering oppositions found in Buddhist understanding and the Quaker writings of Fox, Penn and Barclay.

Muslim participants in meeting are less prevalent than Buddhist Quakers. but participants at the primary field site were informed by the Islamic interpretation shared in meeting. During fieldwork an Attender regularly ministered, occasionally citing the Koran, and providing an understanding of the Inner Light based on his experience as a Muslim.

For the socialised participant the circular orientation of the room where everyone can be seen replaces the obvious Christian symbolism found in other churches, focusing the participant's contemplation on 'that of God' in their fellow worshippers as opposed to outward manifestations. While each participant has that 'still small voice' within them, it is ideally a truth that each person will recognise when it is shared. The symbolic orientation of the room intensifies the experience of the 'God is in' metaphor by providing a room devoid of paintings, battle flags, stained glass, and memorials. It engrains the belief of the divine in the other and the self, establishing the imperative of addressing that aspect of the individual. Neglecting the divine in everyone is ignoring Truth, and it is an act of injustice by not allowing the person to experience this aspect of his or her being.

As I have illustrated, interpretations of the light abound within this milieu. This heterodoxy and orthodoxy vie for control over what is represented in the light, and other key symbols. 'Is it Christian, divine or secular?' This debate does not question the shared assumption that there is a fundamental value of humanity serving as the doxa of the Society, moulding the natural world and the generative scheme together. In the debate this value goes-without-saying. Yet, contradicting the

assumption that doxic values go unobserved (Bourdieu 1977), Friends do explicitly work in various forms from differing theologies. Because the Society's participants are so reflexive about their faith, and its implications on their personal and communal actions, the normally understood unspoken and silent nature of the doxa becomes manifest and concluded. There is a value to all humanity for Friends, and the participants in Quaker meetings aim to embody this tenet, while readily admitting their failure to do this on every occasion.

The 'light' schema in its numerous manifestations informs the relations among the meeting's participants, the accessibility to Truth, and the communal methods for ascertaining this truth. As we will see, the impact this has on the nature of conflict and the management of these situations is considerable.

### *The Journey*

While the 'light' trope suggests the common element to all humanity, the theological basis of the notion creates diversity in contemporary Quaker discourses. So how can the Society maintain itself in the face of such theological diversity? The 'light' trope requires assistance in maintaining the group's coherence, and as the history of the Society demonstrates, the trope has always required this assistance as its authority waxed and waned in popular Quaker imagination. The Bible vacillates in popularity throughout Quaker history as a source of religious authority, and as a source of meaning that imbues the Inner Light with its sacred dimensions. There is no single answer to this question in today's Society, nor is there a single source domain from which to seek an answer. I suggested in Chapter 2 that the silencing of the participant in Meeting for Worship facilitates a sense of community, and the

establishing of this time and space as an occasion where debate should not occur both provide part of the cohesion. However, Friends also employ the ‘journey’ metaphor to manage their diversity. In that chapter, I quote a retired schoolteacher who described Meeting for Worship as a source of relief. She valued the perception that this relief came from being with people who all have ‘basic common beliefs even though they come from different directions’. Later in the interview I asked what these common beliefs are.

A: Can you express what that common belief is?

Value of life? ... Value of... I hesitate to say belief in God, because, as I already said, there’s Quakers that don’t believe in God. Belief in good. God with an ‘o’ in. Um... A searching for a better way of life. Wanting peace in the world. Though it’s from very different approaches.

Within this informant’s responses are ideas like ‘direction’, ‘searching’, and ‘approaches’, which inform the thinking of many Friends when trying to describe the theological complexity, and the awareness of the differing interpretations among Friends. These ideas are entailments to the ‘journey’ trope that assists in managing the diversity and the potential conflict that this diversity suggests.

My first important encounter with the ‘journey’ trope came when I was asked by local PM Elders to convene a Meeting for Learning on spiritual journal writing. Journal writing was once an essential aspect to the Society, aiding the writer and the audience with the interpretation of their own narrative, and how they were guided through their spiritual understanding. *The Journal of George Fox* is the most popular example. While I was grateful for the offer to convene the group, I hesitated, because I sensed that Friends viewed my continual note taking and other writing as a spiritual endeavour – a perspective I did not share. When I expressed my reservation, I

stressed that my journal writing was not a spiritual exercise. I also emphasised that I was not a particularly spiritual person, suggesting that I may not be the best person to convene such a group. The Elder said, 'That's okay. That's just where you are on your spiritual journey'. This was an argument I could not escape. It reflected the tolerance Friends have towards the spiritual understanding of others.<sup>ii</sup> After accepting, I was given material published by Quaker Home Service on 'Writing our Spiritual Journeys' to aid in convening the course. The 'journey' trope's utility came into focus as Friends applied it to my participation and their own. Friends tolerate new ideas, and they express a readiness to incorporate new ideas that help broaden their understanding of spiritual life. They pursue these avenues from their nonconformity to particular creeds. With this sense of exploration Friends use the 'journey' to permit the freedom of personal exploration while it provides a common language in the midst of such diversity.

Meeting for Worship is an opportunity for participants to have support on this personal and sometimes lonely quest, and it provides the participant the benefit of another person's experience of spiritual truth. Each participant is considered to be at various locations on this journey, seeking the truth that transcends time. This indicates a positionality, and relationship where some Friends are more advanced in their Quaker understanding, or further along on their journey. The trope allows for the eventuality that participants will come to a point in their journey where they can appreciate or be 'convinced' of the value of the testimonies shared and maintained by Members. At this point, the person accepts the truths contained in the testimonies, and their new commitment forms the future path of the journey. Attenders may arrive at a place on their spiritual journey where they will become Members or decide

on a different direction with a different faith. The trope allows for the individual and personal character of conviction, that no priest or vicar will persuade the novice. The novice will persuade his or herself to the Quaker belief, encouraged by what comes to be viewed as similar experiences of others expressed in conversation, ministries, and passages in *Quaker Faith and Practice*.

Interviews indicate that this trope has many useful entailments. The journey indicates the process of spiritual life for Friends, during their search for answers and gaining greater awareness. It also relates to the focal point, and place of support in their quest. Many people described their experience of Meeting for Worship as ‘coming home’, a place on the journey where rejuvenation, comfort and support are found. The ‘journey’ metaphor melds with Meeting House, and for smaller meetings in the actual homes of the participants, enriching the utility of the metaphor in the description of the Quaker spiritual life.

The journey is also evoked in the discrepancy, or cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), between a person’s identity as a Quaker and their personal behaviour that may not conform to Quaker standards. Friends will readily admit that they are not saintly, or that they are not actually achieving the Quaker ideal in their practice. For example, some Friends emphasise, or embody, certain testimonies over others in their journey, sometimes sacrificing personal freedom for their belief in the peace testimony, showing defiant integrity in the choice of occupation, or being more adept at living simply. This is where they are on their spiritual journey, according to Friends. While some participants have difficulty disengaging from their possessions for a simpler life, others are challenged by the threats to their integrity in the workplace. Informants when discussing their not living up to a particular testimony

often remarked, 'I am not at that point in my spiritual journey'. Evoking this trope under these circumstances helps the Friend reconcile belief and practice. It is easier for the Friend, who gains so much from meeting and identifying as a Quaker, to use the journey trope than imagine the other cognitive possibilities - 'I'm a bad Quaker,' or 'I'm no longer a Quaker'. Some Friends will consider resignation when they cannot reconcile their actions with the testimonies, or when the communal practices of the Society do not conform with their own view. The well publicised threats of resignation which arose from the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident illustrate this 'parting of ways', when dissonance becomes conflicting views. These acts of defiance, aimed at forcing a decision, were also expressions of spirituality, showing that the process of spiritual development can also lead a Member out of the Society, when their personal interpretation of truth is in discord with the communal view.

The 'journey' also gains utility among contemporary Friends since it is found in so many religious models. Within the Christian model, both the Old and New Testaments use 'the journey'. Abraham, Jacob, and the nation of Israel were travellers in Genesis, and the New Testament tells of the journey of Christ and his disciples seeking spiritual revelation and establishing doctrine. Pilgrimages have long been in the Christian practice for gaining spiritual enlightenment, achieving absolution, and demonstrating religious commitment.

Within the Quaker context there is a tradition of journeys in search of Truth. The Seekers, George Fox, the travelling ministry of the Valiant Sixty, and Friends 'travelling under concern' imbue the trope with meaning specific to the Quaker experience. The journey trope paired with the Inner Light describes the Quaker schema. The Inner Light provides guidance on the journey, indicating direction for

the silent and expectant worshipper. Meeting for Worship, or 'home' is the place where one can quietly reflect on which direction the Inner Light will lead. Adrian Cairns describes the personal and persuasive experience and the Quaker acceptance of his Universalist understanding.

Before I came to Quakers some fourteen years ago, I was fearful of acceptance by a group so principled and strict in their ways. Indeed, I found them so; yet they also had such a warm and liberally open-minded attitude to 'free-thinkers' like myself that, like so many before me I felt I had arrived at my spiritual 'home'.

1994: 6

A Member I interviewed used the journey trope in a similar manner when describing his entry into the Society.

I picked up some leaflets to read more about Quakers and what they said made so much sense to me. They described where I was in my journey... I was uncomfortable with where I was at the church I was attending. We walked into our local Meeting House and felt instantly at home. I applied for membership a few months later. I felt as at home as that.

Given the emphasis on practice in the Society, indifference to the testimonies is unlikely certainly among Members, since they have chosen to accept these truths as a means of guiding their lives. Some Attenders will recognise the value of the testimonies but may not acknowledge them as a way of life. One Attender, a female university student, admitted that she was not interested in Quaker history, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, or the testimonies, but liked participating in worship because of the silence and the sense of community. Many people participated because of the friendly atmosphere, the opportunity to meditate, or for the simple meal provided after worship. These facts are recognised by Members, while some feel threatened by those not motivated to understand the unique Quaker interpretation of the meeting. However, these people are not pressed on the matter, since Friends recognise these

people as being on their own spiritual journey, which has brought them to the Quaker meeting. In time their indifference could lead to commitment. During a business meeting discussion on the issue of the large numbers of Attenders in the meeting, a female Member chuckled and informally stated, 'I think many Attenders come here for the soup. But, still we need to give them the benefit of the doubt'. This opinion was echoed throughout fieldwork in informal settings amongst trusted Friends. It is generally regarded as appropriate to have Members further along on their journey to inform other participants on how to proceed directly or without a direct request for help.

Thomas (1999) describes the modern practice of Quaker pilgrimages which illustrates the theological diversity and, what she terms, post-modern individualism found today, and brings the 'journey' trope into a practice. Friends travel primarily to '1652 country', between the Lake District and Lancashire, where there are numerous sites relating to the early days of Quakerism. Several Friends from where I researched had travelled this journey just prior to my joining them. Numerous photographs were displayed in the Meeting House's foyer, prominently labelled 'A Quaker Pilgrimage to "1652 Country"'. Other pilgrimages in the Society reflected the theological diversity, going to sites relating to other religious shrines in Britain, including a tour called, 'In the footsteps of Gandhi' (Dandelion 1998b: 23), and the United States (Thomas 1999). Thomas, citing Collins (1996) and Dandelion (1998a) underscores the assertion that the 'journey' metaphor is a unifying trope in the face of post-modern fragmentation, but she also suggests that it follows a trend toward tourism seen throughout the world (1999: 31).

*Friend*

The 'friend' trope serves numerous purposes, reflecting the varieties of context in and out of the Society, making the figure a polytrope (Onuki-Tieney 1991). The use of the concept in the secular context can create confusion when it is used to express the label of the denomination. Today, the statement 'I am a Friend' creates confusion outside the Quaker context that similar statements like 'I am a Catholic', or 'I am a Muslim' do not suffer. A 'friend' in the secular schema is a relationship based on personal choice, and a sense of affinity for another person that is not restricted to notions of kinship. In the Quaker context, the concept is a metonymic trope that is a subset of secular, non-kin relationship. In the Quaker model 'Friend' suggests a common spiritual understanding as well as a sense of diffuse enduring solidarity. 'Friend' is a relationship that brings with it a sense of common understanding about the world and how people should interact with others, and it indicates a set of disciplines that are abided by, and assumptions of what is true. It carries a behavioural code by which the Society's participants are encouraged to engage with all people. The general social rules on how friends should interact apply, but in the Society this underscores a belief that God is in all people. The trusting, affectionate, and supportive bonds implied in secular friendships are characteristics that Quakers nurture in their meetings by giving them a moral imperative, and then attempt to implement the rules away from the Society. In practice both within and outside of the Society, when the person is more familiar, the courtesies continue, but the level of intimacy through the deepening friendship may not occur. A perceived lack of similarity will limit the degree of friendship, beyond the basic regard afforded each participant in the meeting. The loving support does continue even in situations when

an individual is not understood. Within the Society the support is a communal one where Friends can feel supported even in instances where individuals may not like one another. In large meetings these differences can be muted and direct confrontation becomes unlikely.

Historically the use of the 'Friend' trope was an even stronger emblem, setting firm the separation of the Society's Members from the wider society. The title was paired with the obligations of membership (dress, speech, and endogamy), which stressed the boundary between Friends and non-Friends. 'Friend', at this time, was appended to the 'light' trope and its Quaker domain equivalent 'truth', so Quakers were 'Friends in the Light', or 'Friends in the Truth', a facet of Quaker identity that contemporary Christian Quakers constantly reassert. The Friends holding this view make an argument that the extraction of the 'Friend' trope from the Christian schema will result in a loss of meaning and identity. This reacts against the ethos of acceptance and tolerance found in the Society, particularly as it relates to the Society's theological liberalisation. This liberal theology places the 'friend' trope into a secularised, or perhaps a better phrase, a generalised sacred schema where the 'Friendly' behaviours are touted as the hallmark in today's Quaker identity. Therefore the 'friend' trope becomes a focus of the discourse amongst the theological extremes where the basis of the relationship is itself contemplated. The meanings shift as it moves across the theological models.

Yet another area where the 'friend' trope shifts its meaning lies in the degree of commitment to the Society and the testimonies which a participant expresses. This commitment lies not only in the practice of the testimonies, but also in the understanding of Quaker structure and history. For many participants in the Society

the terms 'Friend' and 'Quaker' are synonymous. They are often interchangeable to avoid the confusion, as I alluded above, when conversation about the Society involves someone who is unfamiliar, or an outsider. Interestingly, using the term Quaker within the context of the meeting marks a delicate boundary for participants in the Society. For the 'seasoned' Friend, or long-standing Member, the use of Quaker is not generally used when amongst other Friends. The use of 'Quaker' in this context marks new participants and Attenders not aware that amongst Members the term 'Friend' is preferred (in conversation with Susan Robson 2001).

Within the context of the Meeting for Worship there are ambiguities with the usage, since 'Friend' is often used to refer to all participants in the Society. In Chapter 1, I identified the boundary that acts as a one-way mirror, where Members observe the distinction between themselves and Attenders. The usage of 'Friend' in this context establishes the ambiguities at this boundary. A title 'Friend' is a Member of the Society. The use of the title is less rigidly used, however. Although 'Friend' can suggest a boundary between Members and Attenders, the coding of the word is conveniently obscure, blurring the boundary; for example, at the end of Meeting for Worship the PM Clerk stands to give announcements, beginning with the phrase, 'Good morning Friends'. This introduction to the announcements is not intended to be for Members exclusively, but for everyone in attendance. The welcome suggests that everyone is a Friend, but from the 'inside', amongst Members, the boundary is real. The situation is not apparent to the Attenders, who receive the welcome and feel integrated into the community, yet rarely attend the business meetings to recognise any practiced discrepancy.

When the term 'friend' is capitalised with an uppercase 'F' it denotes a Member of the Religious Society of Friends, as I have stated above. Some Attenders would refer to themselves as Friends without making the public commitment to the Society through membership, but this usage does illustrate an identification with Quakerism. A lower case 'f' denotes a form of secular relationship. There is another usage that highlights the boundary between Friends and non-Friends. The boundary is suggested in the usage of 'Ffriend' in Quaker writing. There are two usages of this form. In *The Friend*, the Ffriend will appear in advertisements for letting property. The owner is willing to let the property to Members in the Society or those affiliated with the Society. Some Friends will use the spelling 'Ffriend' to indicate this dual meaning and the dual relationship of being close and being spiritually like-minded. The one usage illustrates the boundary between Members and non-Members, but the other suggests that the relationship is both a spiritual relationship *and* a secular one. The friendships are nested so the Members of the meeting also share a level of intimacy outside of the meeting's context. The merging of the two tropes shows the diversity found in the Society. Although the participants are Friends, they may not be friends. They do not associate outside of the context of the meeting.

Another level to 'friend' is reached when it is paired with the structurally informal and communal recognition of a person's status based on their spiritual experience. The 'Weighty' Friend is one whose spiritual experience gives weight to their statements, particularly in ministry. When used with the journey trope, the Weighty Friend is the person who is viewed as being further ahead on their spiritual journey as evidenced by their wisdom, and their ability to practice the testimonies. Historically, travelling ministers, or recorded ministers performed the duties as

spiritual leaders. This formally recognised position taught the inexperienced participants in the Quaker way. Today these duties are separated. Elders fulfil the nurturing of participants in the Quaker way; and Weighty Friends informally provide the content to spiritual life during worship (Dandelion 1996). Sometimes Weighty Friends are remembered through the publication of their journals, or through epistles submitted to the Yearly Meeting by the Monthly Meeting. Other Weighty Friends are cited for their wisdom and experience in *Quaker Faith and Practice*, or are chosen to give the Swarthmore Lectures.

Most Friends would be embarrassed or even offended if they were directly referred to as a Weighty Friend. This phenomenon indicates a denial of power and contributes to the egalitarian structures in the Society. The status of 'weight' is achieved and given by other Friends, self-pronounced 'weight' is hubris, and anyone making such a pronouncement would be considered with suspicion. Weighty Friends do not officially receive a title, making the status evasive and difficult to trace. The three focus groups each had a different understanding of 'weight'. One group denied the relevance in the Society today. The second group accepted the importance of 'weight' in the Society still. Focus group three considered the power these people have in meetings.

A 'seasoned' Friend indicates a person who is experienced with Quaker form and discourse, who has held positions in the society and may be sought after for advice on Quaker practices. They demonstrate knowledge of the Quaker field of production or the Quaker game – an understanding of the logic that dictates the Society. This is different from a Weighty Friend, but the two are not mutually exclusive. Weighty Friends and seasoned Friends are overlapping sets of Quaker.

where the Weighty Friend embodies the testimonies and the seasoned Friend focuses on the maintenance of the Society's organisation through participation in business meeting, acting as a representative, or being a Member employed by the Society. The Weighty Friend's words carry weight partly because they will seldom speak, but primarily because they are seen as embodying the truths they encounter. Occasionally, the Weighty Friend conveys a charisma that can create a following, a situation that is viewed with suspicion, since it can lead to individually wielded power. The lesson is carried from the Naylor incident in the seventeenth-century. No one in the meeting I observed reached this level of weight.

In this discussion, I need to make an important detour directed by the information gleaned from the focus groups, which were conducted toward the end of writing the thesis. At each of the focus groups, Friends wanted to correct my understanding of 'Weighty Friend'. In the first focus group, the discussion suggested that this metaphor was waning in its use. Neither of the informants thought it was useful, and found the phrase mildly offensive. The second focus group questioned my original description of the metaphor. In this conversation, Friends accepted the status and recognised that it described Friends that deserved some recognition for their ability to enact their belief. They disagreed with my original interpretation reported in the draft of the thesis they examined. In the earlier draft, I imagined that Weighty Friends were a subset of 'seasoned Friends', suggesting that Weighty Friends were not only adept at enacting their belief, but also adept at participating in the organisational aspects of the Society. This, they successfully argued, is not the case. 'In fact, Weighty Friends would prefer to simply go about practising their

belief, and may not care what is happening in the business meetings'. I gratefully qualified my interpretation to convey this subtlety.

The third focus group concentrated on the importance of experience in determining 'weight'. As I mention in Chapter 4, this focus group questioned my interpretation of power concentrations in the role of the Clerk, and my suggestion that there are power hierarchies in the Society. When we came to my description of 'weight', my informants wanted more emphasis placed on the experience these Friends had in trying to apply the testimonies. One Friend, also disagreed that the people quoted in *Quaker Faith and Practice* were Weighty Friends. The passages are simply 'interpretations and experiences of faith'.

There are several important additions to my understanding of 'weight' from these discussions. Firstly, 'weight' is a part of the Quaker discourse, and it is very contested. The three conversations all made different comments and suggested particular qualifications made on my interpretation. I came to recognise this as a debate over power in the Society. Dandelion (1996) describes Weighty Friends as Members who achieve their status by being informally acknowledged for their ability to enact the 'behavioural creed'. Their status affords them the opportunity to interpret the content of ministry, something that is not accepted by the formally recognised Elder, who protects the form of ministry. I suggest that the focus groups, in their debating my interpretation, have supported Dandelion's assertion. The first group minimised the status, which minimises or denies that there is a power discrepancy. The second group accepted the status, and the third stressed the source of a Weighty Friends credibility.

In the third focus group, we debated the power hierarchies in the Society and the concentration of power in the Clerk's position. The informants in the group stressed that there were no power hierarchies in the Society. Toward the end of the conversation two Friends spoke to each other about another Friend who was particularly adept at convening meetings. This was so much the case that the person's talents were recognised outside of the Society where non-Friends were impressed by getting through a difficult meeting agenda within one meeting when this Friend was chairing the proceedings. As the two informants were relating this narrative, I recalled Gilsenan's observations of Lebanese society (1996), where narratives about people were shared reinforcing power structures through the repeating of these narratives. The narratives Friends repeated in conversations over soup, or in ministry were as rhetorical in this setting as narratives of violence were in Gilsenan's account.

The account of 'what happened', whether or not an 'event' had occurred, and, if so, what was its nature, always had a rhetorical purpose, however veiled: it sought to persuade or impose upon others, 'the truth' of a situation and a social order. And every narrative of a present event tacitly or explicitly drew on claims and assumptions about the value of different genealogies, pasts and biographies.

Gilsenan 1996: 59

Rather than reproduce heroic notions based on violence, however, Friends enact power through telling and retelling narratives where the testimonies are the source of heroism.

The Quaker implementation of absolutist notions of power would deny this interpretation much validity. The denial of power was consistently asserted in the final focus group, by the people who had served or were currently serving as Clerks, Elders and Overseers. They compared their lack of power to positions that found in

the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church or the Church of Scotland, where the positions were characterised as locations of real power with relations to government. Yet, the power that I distinguish, lying within the ‘Weighty Friend’ trope, is power through example and its impact on the interpretation and behaviour of others.

Returning now to my interpretation of the ‘friend’ polytrope. ‘Friend’ actually changes meaning, and use as one moves in different circles in and out of the Religious Society of Friends. The concentric and overlapping circles bind people outside of the Society as friends, and non-Members, then, the peripheral participation of Attenders, who contribute to the Society as non-committed participants. It is unlikely that those Attenders who consider themselves to be Friends would be corrected, even though they have not become Members. In fact this identification is encouraged as it indicates the potential Member. Friends, ‘seasoned’ and ‘Weighty’, are the centre of the Society, suggesting a hierarchy that is based on knowledge of the Society’s workings, and an expression of commitment to the Society and the testimonies. This hierarchy is veiled at the local level through acts of acceptance and inclusiveness and the emphasis on equality. The distinctions in status are more apparent as one enters the decision-making bodies, and when one becomes involved in the informal discussions about the Society.

The ‘Friend’ trope also takes interesting forms in conflict situations. By stressing the relationship and its basis as a spiritual understanding, Friends are provided a form of social control in the midst of disagreement. This feature of the ‘friend’ trope is elaborated in the next chapter.

## Conclusion

The 'Inner Light', the 'journey' and the 'friend' are all central tropes, and while they are all useful for the Society's participants, the diversity that underlies the meaning of these heuristics reflects the potential for conflict. Interestingly, the concepts that supply Friends with so much value and meaning contain both a means of managing conflicts and a means of generating them. The Inner Light unites all humanity, and creates an ethical system that mandates the Quaker to address this aspect within each person. The trope also encourages a sense of community through this search of the human common denominator. With these attributes, the light trope manages conflicts, directing thought and behaviour away from disunity. Yet, as we have seen, the compulsion to be accepting and tolerant highlights the theological differences amongst Friends. People view these differences as a threat to what they hold as unique and central to the Society – the Christian message. Likewise, the 'friend' trope unifies and manages conflicts by establishing the substance of the relationship, and it is employed when conflicts or disagreements occur by asserting the relationship and characteristic that unifies the disputants. Again, the theological complexities found in the Society challenge the underlying nature of this trope, by bringing into question the meaning of the relationship. The primary unifying trope for Friends is the 'journey'. Since the trope is recognised in so many theological models and the activity does not require a theological acknowledgement, the 'journey' provides a functional heuristic for all participants in the meeting. The 'journey', used within the ethos of tolerance, manages the diversity and reconciles the contradictions underlying the 'light' and 'friend' tropes.

I want to make explicit that tropes are able to serve as a means of managing conflict. The 'journey' manages the diversity that causes tension among many in the Society, yet the metaphor allows common participation, and directs an aspiration that the Quaker way will be reached by the people who are not on this path. Participants in Quaker meetings employ their own understanding to the activity. The theological diversity indicates the degree of agency tolerated by Friends, allowing people to practice their own cognitive context in the silence within the overarching Quaker cognitive context. The overarching 'journey' trope is not alone in managing the diversity. As I shall show in the following chapters, the other cognitive and practiced aspects of the Society all work together in trying to manage the diversity and the tension which many perceive.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> I restrict my description of propositions (White 1987), or culturally codified clichés to my discussion of the construction of conflict in the next chapter.

<sup>ii</sup> Or, perhaps it reflected the desperation of the Elder needing someone to convene the meeting.

## Chapter 6: Quaker 'Conflict' Schema

Are your meetings for church affairs held in a spirit of worship and in dependence on the guidance of God? Remember that we do not seek a majority decision nor even consensus. As we wait patiently for divine guidance our experience is that the right way will open and we shall be led into unity.

*Advices and Queries*  
1995: 1.02.14

In Woody Allen's film *Sleeper* the main character, Milo, played by Allen, is awakened from cryogenic storage to help save the world from a hegemonic dictatorship. Futuristic doctors take Milo out of his slumber because he has no tagged identity in the 'Big Brother'-styled society, making him the perfect person to lead a revolution. An anxious, bemused, and resistant Milo responds, 'I'm no good with fights. I was once beaten up by Quakers'.

Couched within this quip are two interesting features. Firstly, it highlights a key feature of Quaker identity as Pacifists in the popular imagination. The joke also utilises the comic's trick of juxtaposing extremes to create humorous absurdity,<sup>i</sup> bringing us to the second interesting feature. Allen's observation emphasises the contradiction of a violent Quaker. Friends are viewed as Pacifists by those both in and outside the Society.<sup>ii</sup> It is an enduring perception of their public identity, so the notion of Friends fighting is an incongruous combination of supposedly irreconcilable features – the violent Pacifist. Violence rests within the domain of 'conflict' in most mental schemes, so mentioning conflict usually elicits notions of quarrel, harm, and war. In my experiences during research, the incongruity of a 'violent Quaker' was equally incompatible as 'Quakers in conflict'. The irreconcilability between 'conflict' and 'Quaker' is an extension to Woody Allen's humorous observation. Often upon hearing my dissertation topic, people outside the

Society were puzzled at the possibility of Friends in conflict. Reactions to the topic within the Society came in two forms. Occasionally, there was a denial of the occurrence, and a slight offence at the suggestion. Most Friends, however, laughed on hearing the topic, then either walked away, or said 'I've got a lot of information for you'. As we have seen, conflict is not out of the realm of experience among Friends nor is it an absurd reality. So, where does 'conflict', as a schema, reside in relation to the wider Quaker schema?

The peace testimony provides the most obvious answer to this question. As Friends focus their attention on maintaining peace, their imagination appears automatically guided away from dispute. Meeting for Worship adds to the focus on internal peace, since it focuses on the gathered experience. This is suggested in Chapter 2, but there are other heuristics that inform the cognitive aspects of the Quaker construction of conflict. In the previous chapter I explored the key metaphors employed in the Society today. In this chapter I develop representation of their conflict construct through the analysis of their idioms and tropes, and the places where this language is used. This construction of 'conflict' is then viewed in relation to the wider Quaker schema to understand its location in the Quaker imagination. The source of information to develop this 'conflict' schema arises from two types of emic information. A distinction is used in this discussion between the manner in which Friends talk *about* 'conflict' and the manner in which they talk in conflict situations. Talking about conflict as an experience objectifies the phenomenon; whereas, talking in a conflict situation is an expression of particular interests amongst parties, conveying subjective motivation and interpretation of the active dispute. These two forms are combined to inform our understanding of their

construction of ‘conflict’. Prior to the exploration of the tropes, and their play in the Quaker model, the contexts where conflicts are discussed will be examined.

### **Discussing Conflicts: Locating the Spaces for Discourse**

Friends, like other people, employ particular spaces for particular forms of discussion. Certain areas are, in practice, more Quakerly than others, even though Friends do not regard activities or spaces as more sacred. The open discussion of conflict is an excellent illustration of this. In an interview, a female employee of Friends House in London shared a story that illustrates the phenomenon. In the course of a tense discussion with a male employee, the informant followed the man through the halls and into the men’s toilet, arguing her point. The debate ended sharply when the man finally entered the Quiet Room, a room that is reserved for Quaker worship. The existence of such a room in the administrative centre is not unusual; however, its use as a space where differences between people cannot be expressed highlights how particular spaces have specific legitimate ‘Quakerly’ activities intended for them.

During fieldwork, ‘conflict’ as a topic of discussion, or as an actual contrast needing to be reconciled, was acceptable only in certain contexts. There was a time and space for the acknowledgement of conflict. To appreciate the spaces for conflict, the stage metaphor developed by Goffman is helpful (1959).<sup>iii</sup> The discussions and behaviours performed in Meeting for Worship and business meetings serve as on-stage behaviour. The off-stage includes those informal, social gatherings where Friends are together, but not engaging in deliberately worshipful behaviours, like ceilidhs, and after meeting lunches. Friends would assert that these behaviours were

indeed acts expressing the Quaker ideals, and so the distinction that is suggested here, in their view, may be a false one. While Friends do attempt to express their faith in all of their actions, there are normative rules that are acknowledged in formal contexts but not in the informal contexts.

Participants in the meeting engage in a more open expression of conflict when away from the Meeting House. This extends the stage metaphor to those behaviours that are not in the theatre, creating realms where Friends express opinions and enact particular behaviours that are inappropriate in the Meeting House's context. These areas allow for public enactment of Quaker ideals intended for a non-Quaker audience, and those private behaviours that may not be intended for a Quaker audience. These performances are public occasions where individual participants act as a Quaker in a very public manner, such as in political demonstrations, and when refusing to swear oaths in court. This can be viewed as a performance 'onstage but not in the theatre'. There are, finally, behaviours that are 'offstage and not in the theatre'. These behaviours are personal expressions that are not intended to be for a wider audience, even a Quaker audience.

Dandelion makes a distinction between 'Quaker time' and private time to illustrate those behaviours that are intended to be for meeting and those that are not (1996). Goffman's theatrical metaphor is preferred for two reasons. Firstly, the phrase 'Quaker time' has a different meaning among American Friends, referring to the casual start and end to Quaker activities. 'This party will start at 8:00, Quaker time', meaning that the party could actually start earlier or later. A similar phrase is found amongst the Kwakiutl. 'The potlatch will start at 11:00, Indian time'. In this instance the communal activity could actually begin at noon (Personal Observation

June 1995). The second reason for making the onstage and offstage distinction is that it illustrates the level of formality found between Friends gathering for Meeting for Worship and Friends gathering for a communal activity that does not conform to the rules of worship (e.g. after-meeting fellowship coffee, 'bring and share' meals, or parties). While both activities are, using Dandelion's phrase, Quaker time, they utilise different degrees of Quaker discipline and formality. Extending Goffman's metaphor will also let me illustrate the Quaker behaviour that occurs outside of Dandelion's Quaker time, and private life behaviour that can occur amongst Quakers.

This discussion focuses on the conflicts that occur at these various locations (onstage, offstage, etc.), rather than on general Quaker behaviour. The observations about conflict through these arenas of Quaker experience will provide the foundation for the further discussion of the idiom and tropes to develop the schema of conflict and its relationship with the wider Quaker schema. General rules for acknowledging conflict emerge in this description, which will gain further ethnographic detail in the following sections and in Chapter 7.

### *The Onstage 'Conflict'*

Three onstage locations are: Meeting for Worship, business meetings, and committee meetings. In these contexts it is important for Friends to express the values of the Society as a symbolic expression of conviction, or as a participant in the social contract. The regulation and self-discipline required in these settings limit the topics of discussion and the idiom that the expression is to take (Davis 1988). While each

of these settings are onstage, each has different purposes and requirements on how to regulate behaviour and expression.

In Chapter 2, I stressed the ethos of community and unity sought in Meeting for Worship. 'Meeting' is the apt description of the gathering as it expresses the joining of activity and spirit as participants use silence to achieve a 'gathered' sense. This ethos provides a space where acknowledgement of conflict takes a particular form, or is avoided completely. 'Conflicts' were a regular topic of ministry, but the context-appropriate conflicts were those found outside the Society. The wars and military actions throughout the world were more agreeable conflicts for participants on these occasions. However, not all participants appreciate these ministries, some Friends oppose the disruption to the focus on unity, and the reactive nature of this type of ministry. Observation suggests that conflicts that are internal to the Society are inappropriate topics for ministry completely. Open discussion of a dispute in the Meeting for Worship would be a breach of the unity, and a destruction of the gathered sense. Occasionally in ministry, a violation of the unspoken rule to avoid conflict occurs. Through openly stating a problem, revealing an interpersonal dispute, or revealing the Society's contradictions, the opportunity for a gathered meeting is jeopardised. The infraction of the informal rule typically receives a quick response from Elders and Overseers offstage as they act to assess the situation and attempt to rectify the problem. When a person repeatedly brings the issues within the meeting into Meeting for Worship, they are either 'elderred', the assertion of Quaker discipline in by an Elder, or the person is labelled by others as a someone that 'doesn't get it'.

The second arena where Friends are onstage is the business meeting. In this setting the ethos of unity is maintained, however, the tensions of the meeting are deliberately addressed. This creates occasions where the gathered sense is at the greatest risk, but, when the disputes are examined and resolved, it is also where the gathered body has its greatest expression of Quaker identity. To ensure the development of harmony, rules regarding the manner in which conflicts are expressed are formally implemented. Formal regulation arises in the structure of the meeting that is set in *Quaker Faith and Practice*. The *Advices and Queries* also establish the self-discipline for participants, and conformity to the general will is the informal regulation of expressing conflict.

Occasions where business meetings are tense through a divergence of interests require greater discipline from the group. The language in these situations can reflect the anxiety through the tone of the speaker, and through the use of plain speaking, the Quaker idiom which is the focus in the next section. To manage the conflict away from becoming an interpersonal dispute, the participants direct their comments to 'the table' and indirectly to the Clerk. Emotionally charged language is avoided in order to be seen as disciplined, and to be more persuasive. The participants in business meetings are typically Members, having more experience in this self-discipline. If Quaker discipline is not expressed during disputes, the particular individual is viewed as being an inexperienced Quaker. Conflicts in the business meeting are occasions where personal interest are imbued with religious belief, and cast in the language of spiritual imperative. A disputant will view their position as a moral statement, a reflection of the Inner Light, making the management of the situation a challenge.

Committee meetings manage decision-making and help to contain potentially contentious discussions. As was stated in Chapter 3, committee meetings are a continuation of the business meetings, and are still acts of worship; however, the language in these settings is less constrained by Quaker idiom. These occasions are informal and at times jocular. The constraints on expression of conflicts compel the participants to continue acknowledging the Inner Light amongst the disputants. To illustrate, on occasions where conflicts are discussed openly, the participants (usually Members) will avoid naming the individuals involved directly, preferring to use the phrase 'our Friend' as often as clarity permits.

Interestingly, the Overseers Committee meetings are confidential, creating a space unique to the Society. Friends aim to create a space where competition and manipulation are reduced, if not eliminated, influencing the discourse by requiring rules of politeness and sociability to be exaggerated. Overseers are assigned the role of pastoral care for the participants in the meeting. They visit the sick in hospital; financially support participants that are in need; and provide spiritual and emotional resources to people in other times of crisis. Their meetings are discussions on sensitive information about the private lives of the people in the meeting. Creating a confidential space allows a select few the ability to disregard the conventions of discretion for the sake of the community. The sense of openness suggested in acknowledging the Inner Light in all participants, and in the free ministry found in Meeting for Worship is challenged in this situation by the need to protect the sensitive information. These committee meetings were not directly observed, due to their confidentiality; however, interviews with Overseers reveal that the spirit of Meeting for Worship is still maintained, but the risk of digressing into gossip exists.

The distinction between gossip and worshipful talk was a regular, yet unspoken contrast. This onstage arena minimised the threat of conflict through restricting who can contribute, and the form of the discussion.

These rules of social interaction are dictated by the wider British middle-class sensitivity with the added force of the Quaker aversion to idle talk. These rules were also encountered in the interview context, where I sought to create a confidential space. I thought that this would facilitate the open discussion of conflict, but I had not fully taken account of the aversion to idle talk. The discussion of 'conflict' was indeed a challenge when the informant perceived the questioning as prying for gossip. This resulted in the informant being vague with detail, and avoiding using specific names, when describing specific instances of conflict.<sup>iv</sup>

Finally, in more problematic situations Friends utilise two other formal forums to discuss disputes. These meetings are called Meetings for Clearness and Threshing Meetings, and they serve to allow more freedom to explore the issues while keeping the conflict away from a wider group. The Meetings for Clearness are intended to work through the situation so a decision can be made, while Threshing Meetings are reserved solely for discussion (Committee on Eldership and Oversight 2000). These meetings are effective at containing interpersonal disputes, and keeping other meeting participants unaware of the problem. When the dispute is meeting wide, Threshing Meetings and Meetings for Clearness can prevent the issue from dividing the entire Monthly Meeting, or Yearly Meeting. Expressing tension in these situations are also attempts to redress the situation, maintaining the relationships between the disputants.

*The Offstage 'Conflict'*

While still in the 'theatre' of the Meeting House but offstage, Friends discuss conflicts informally. Offstage language is under fewer constraints, than the meetings described above. These occasions include social gatherings, like meals and ceilidhs, and other Quaker gatherings that do not involve the worship form. These offstage conversations may use the Quaker idiom, but they are less restricted to the form. There are numerous locations within the building for this style of conflict discourse: in the lobby before Meeting for Worship, in the meeting room after worship, and in conversations over soup. In these discussions, other extra-Quaker domains of meaning may be employed to convey conflict; although, the Quaker ideal of community is still sought. Numerous tropes (to be discussed below) are used to convey conflict in this setting that would be misplaced onstage with its constraints on language.

The morning's ministry is a common topic of conversation at the offstage meals. These conversations highlight the theological divergence and the meeting's ability to absorb the variety. Complaints usually focus on the form or duration of the ministry, rather than the content. When the person who gave the message is relatively new to the meeting, comment will assess the appropriateness of the topic and the idiom in which it was presented. Discussion of this type will usually occur between people who are familiar with one another, and have similar likes and dislikes in ministry. Other quiet discussions occur as people stand apart from the gathering to discuss other issues within the meeting – personal, interpersonal, and meeting-wide. The appropriate approaches to the problems are discussed at this informal time, addressing who should be approached with the issue and at what tier

of the Society. Many issues are managed in this informal manner, particularly interpersonal disputes. However, some disputes are discussed offstage that are not addressed in business meetings and are not resolved.

The local meeting has participated as a venue for a festival for nearly ten years. The event required considerable effort from the meeting that taxed some participants, resulting in expressions of discontent and a sense that the Meeting House was no longer a place of worship at that time. The perceived intrusion alienated some Members and Attenders from their spiritual life and from their use of the Meeting House outside of weekly worship meetings. These opinions were not voiced in the business meeting, where a decision or formal statement would be recorded, and where the more enthusiastic festival participants might take offence. The resulting silence in the business meeting and lack of statement in the minutes, suggested that there was no conflict of opinion, but the occasional comments in the stairwell or over soup told a different story. Offstage comments do not go unheard, and they are factored into decisions at the various formal settings on and offstage as they are taken to business meetings and committee meetings where the issues are managed formally. Making comments in this arena of performance enters the process, but they are not an officially recognised voice in decision making. Even though the comments are unofficial, they are informally incorporated into the decision-making. This is an effective method for managing conflict situations, and maintaining relationship within the meeting. When the appropriate committee was aware of the sense of alienation that was voiced offstage, they managed the issues by creating a space in the Meeting House during the festival where meeting participants

felt welcome, and encouraging the sense that participating in the festival was an act of worship and outreach.

The place of children in the meeting, and theological concerns were managed in a similar manner. The numerous opinions about children and the value of silence often conflicted, so the issues relating to children were given to the Children's Committee, where informal concerns could be addressed in a less formal manner that did not include the drafting of a minute. The conclusions that the committee sought to implement would then be taken to the formal, onstage business meeting.

Finally, an aspect of the offstage aspects of the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident was revealed in the one of the focus groups. An informant revealed that one of the issues relating to the conflict was due to an early attempt at offstage management. The MfS Clerk urged QPS to make a decision about the training request. The Clerk was not asking for a recommendation for MfS to decide upon.

The Clerk of MfS obviously expected a lengthy debate, and tried to shorten it by putting this item at the end of the agenda and telling the clerk of QPS that he or she would like QPS to decide the issue and not just make a recommendation. Now that strictly is not the proper procedure. QPS is there to advise MfS. I think, well... QPS did that. They had a lengthy discussion on it with people speaking for and against; although, in the end they achieved unity in letting it go ahead... Well then, [laughs]the Clerk had intimated that we had been asked to decide this and so that was how it went to MfS, and I think there... Friends who knew the procedure better than we did, perhaps [laughs], were upset at it having gone the wrong way. This exacerbated the conflict situation, and of course, what it did was it introduced a four or six month delay, because they couldn't deal with the special agenda. They had to postpone it to the next meeting.

The offstage attempt to manage the difficult agenda backfired, and established more debate throughout the Society. The breach in procedure illustrates the control placed on the Clerk, who in this instance challenged the integrity of the social contract by implementing a form of individually welded power in an offstage arena.

*Onstage, but away from the theatre*

In this context, Friends are publicly enacting their belief, and they are recognised by others as Quakers in a non-Quaker setting. Wherever Friends are acting on behalf of the Society or visibly enacting their religious understanding, they are acting onstage, but away from the theatre.

Television and radio interviews, political demonstrations, and Quaker literature provide a public space for discussing particular conflicts and general comments about the experience. Here the language of conflict avoids much of the Quaker idiom for clarity when speaking to a non-Quaker audience. However the performance retains enough 'Quaker Speak' to mark the presentation as being uniquely Quaker. The intended audience will also suggest the type of conflict to be discussed. When the Quaker position on violent conflict is being expressed to the wider public, unique Quaker language is avoided or explained. In *The Friend* the conventions in Quaker speaking are retained. The challenges that arise from theological diversity, or new implications arising from the testimonies, will typically be discussed in the Quaker press, onstage, but away from the theatre. Quaker Home Service regularly publishes pamphlets and books that outline issues and the approaches to resolving tensions in the Society. Television and radio interviews are typically aimed toward an audience that is unfamiliar with the Society and their testimonies, so the opportunity is used to inform people on these aspects. The repercussions of the testimonies are then explored. Political demonstrations, like the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 demonstration proposed at Faslane, will involve Friends who are expressing their belief while the form of their expression may not conform to the stance of the Society. These situations are viewed by the Society as individual

expressions of faith, and not representative of the entire Society. This was the conclusion of the Meeting for Sufferings minute in the narrative of Chapter 3.

The above examples are the most dramatic and visible cases, which do not reflect the entire arena. Practising belief will occur in numerous conflict situations away from the Meeting House in subtle and overt forms. Conflict in these situations can be expressed from a non-Quaker idiom, since there are fewer constraints imposed on the individual by the community of Friends. I had little access to the most private realms at home and work, so it is inappropriate to speculate on Quaker behaviour or conflict discussions in these areas. However, it is important to acknowledge here that some Friends would not consider home life as being onstage (or offstage) and away from the Meeting House. As has been repeatedly stressed, Friends aim to eliminate the distinction of sacred and secular in their practice, so in these instances there may not be a distinction to consider. Some Friends are always onstage. (Brutz's research on domestic violence amongst Friends in the Midwest United States does suggest a clear distinction in the American context (1982).)

#### *Offstage, and away from the theatre*

Participants interact most openly in this realm; they are not simply performing roles that meet for an hour once a week. This context is the most distant from the Quaker community. Participants are able to discuss conflicts without the restricted idiom needed to maintain the unity of the Society. These are private occasions where undisciplined expression is possible without the possibility of gentle recrimination or even castigation. This communication occurs amongst people who are *friends*.

making this realm the most intimate in many respects, and the most informal. The space has no specific location, although it is most probably away from the Meeting House in situations where participants can speak informally, at home or at events where private conversations can be held. Often the space is more an occurrence: a time when participants will speak out of the Quaker patois or in deference to the general will. The audience in these circumstances is the important criterion of the realm of performance.

This is where conflict can be at its barest expression. The prohibitions on emotive expression, naming disputants, and gossip found in the other arenas are no longer as constraining for the speaker. A speaker has greater freedom to express their frustrations with particular participants and with certain issues. The rules that apply in this context are those expected in normal British middle-class society, depending on the degree of intimacy between the interlocutors. Rudeness and mocking humour are more likely between intimates, and the exchange can suggest recrimination for the breaches without the threat to the relationship.

I stress again, the ideal sought by Friends is the practice of Quaker sociability in all situations. Conversations in this arena should be no different than those onstage. Comments that do not acknowledge this ideal could be viewed as engaging in an un-Quakerly behaviour even though the speaker is away from the 'theatre'. Friends recognise their transgressions from the testimonies, and as the journey trope suggest, these transgressions indicate their location on their journey. The person viewed as having 'weight' will demonstrate their ability to employ Quaker discipline in this arena. When this practise is encountered so far away from the theatre, the effect on social interaction is considerable on conversation and conflict.

The division of Quaker behaviour into these arenas of performance, where there are greater and lesser constraints on the participant, is not to suggest that these people become more belligerent the further they move away from the Meeting House. Friends may become more likely to be open about disputes as they get away from the community, yet other constraints may be placed on them from the expectations of the given setting away from the Quaker theatre.

### *The Benefits to the 'Theatre'*

By dividing the experience of Quaker discussion about, and within, conflicts we can elicit certain facts about their 'conflict' schema, and its relation to the broader Quaker schema. Friends are willing to discuss only particular forms of conflict (interpersonal, intra-denominational, national or international) within culturally appropriate realms of activity. Interpersonal and intra-denominational conflicts should not be topics of ministry, and Friends require deference to unity and community when issues are raised in business meetings. This is conveyed in the idioms used to suggest conflict. When Meeting House participants interact communally, but informally, they continue to practice this defence to the community, but the language is informal with some freedom from the Quaker idiom of plain speaking, or Quaker speak. Conflict discussions require tact and civility. As Friends come into contact with other people outside the Society, their language that describes conflict will use enough idiom that conveys their uniqueness. In private discussions amongst Friends, talk about conflict relies less on conformity to the group and more to the person's own sense of Quaker discipline.

As the formality of the Quaker gathering increases, greater constraints occur on the participant in meetings. In formal conditions where there are fewer constraints on the language, or the near taboo placed on using specific names within the conflict is lifted, the constraint of confidentiality is implemented, like in the Overseer's committee, or in conversations that are, 'just between you and me'. These conditions facilitate the workings of the community, and give the appearance that Friends avoid conflicts. The tensions become veiled, or silenced, giving the impression to others that no strains exist.

The 'out of theatre' forms of speaking illustrate extremes in a dichotomy. The onstage, public presentation is the most essentialising form conveying the testimonies to a non-Quaker audience. At the other end of this dichotomy, the 'offstage, and out of theatre' talk is the form that is least constrained by Quaker idiom and rules for discourse. The one is public and Quaker and the other is private and non-Quaker. The closer and more intimate the relationship that exists between the speakers, the greater likelihood these individuals interact at the 'offstage, out of theatre arena'. Therefore, they are more likely to engage in non-Quaker forms of discourse. This is particularly the case with the inexperienced Friends. Participants who are lax in their sensitive expression in any of the arenas described would be considered not being at the point in their spiritual journey where they can recognise the inappropriateness of these behaviours. Those who witness this expression disapprovingly may correct (or Elder) the person through example, by redirecting the conversation into a more conciliatory tone, and through the observance of disciplined expression. If this is unsuccessful, the speaker not abiding by the rules of discourse

may receive a dose of ‘plain speaking’, whereby they are told the proper form directly – sometimes sharply.

I have described the theatre, so now we need to turn to the lines memorised and expressed by a Quakerly actor when acting out and discussing ‘conflict’. The discussion will now turn to the cognitive constraints on Friends. The rest of the chapter engages the specific idioms used in conflict situations to illustrate the above stages. Through the Quaker humour about conflict and the tropes relate to the phenomenon. Finally these cognitive constraints on conflict are viewed in relation to the wider Quaker schema.

### **‘Conflict’ in Quaker Idiom**

To maintain the unity of the meeting, conflict is contained to particular spaces including specific people and using specific language. The idiom that conflict takes in these spaces continues an avoidance of direct confrontation through displacing the responsibility for the situation, and aiming to maintain the relationship. When a threshold is crossed the idiom can be more direct in the form of ‘plain speaking’. Three Quaker phrases are considered to reveal how conflicts are expressed in the Quaker idiom.

‘Man, through not understanding, makes his world’ (Vico 1976: x). This aphorism informed the way I conveyed my understanding of conflict to my informants, evoking ambiguity and create, in a sense, misunderstanding. I hoped that people would then fill in the blanks by inserting their own understanding and implement their construction of the category. Occasionally, informants in interviews would compensate for the ambiguity by producing a definition, resembling the

operationalised definitions found in social science. A common response to my vagueness was, 'conflict is a divergence of interests'. Friends also attributed emotional states to conflict situations like: unpleasantness, sadness, and violence. Some Friends also associated the situation with notions of enriched relationship, personal growth, and greater understanding. The interview process objectified the concept for the informant, while away from the interview context Friends were more metaphorical about intra-denominational conflicts. The metaphors suggest that Friends consign conflict to the domain of physical violence like the wider population suggested in Allen's joke and our appreciation of it.

Often the idioms conveying disagreement or conflict occur onstage in the Quaker theatre during the business and committee meetings. They are the remnants of 'plain speaking' that separated the Religious Society of Friends from the rest of society. Today plain speaking signifies direct, unadorned comment that people outside of the Society may view as rude, particularly when the comment is not favourable. As was suggested above, the business meeting is the proper forum for overtly discussing conflict. The business meeting is also the space where the idiom is most fully practiced, particularly when the issues addressed in the meeting are contentious. In situations of conflict these idioms provide a language that indicate the troubled situation. When ministries/opinions in business meetings, which were historically believed to arise from a divine source, are contradictory, the unity is challenged. In these situations, reverting to Quaker idiom also reflects the discipline encouraged by the context, the relationship that exists between Friends, and the history from which such language is a remnant.

The following examples demonstrate the use of particular idioms in conflict situations, and aim to support the assertion that idioms are used to manage conflicts. ‘Friend,’ ‘the Friend does not speak to my condition’, ‘That name would not have occurred to me’, are examples of conflict management idiom.

### *‘Friend’*

In Chapter 5, I discussed the tropic properties of ‘Friend’. In that discussion I suggested this trope is a metonym where Friends are a subset of the general social relationship, and the distinction between ‘friend’ and ‘Friend’ is a religious one. The changes continue in meaning as one moved through the different circles of Members, Attenders and non-participants in Quaker meetings. In the context of internal conflict the meaning and use of ‘friend’ changes once more. On several occasions during fieldwork ‘Friend’ was used with a tone of displeasure, conveying a disagreement while emphasising the awareness of the relationship, and the Inner Light possessed by the individual. ‘Friend’ in disagreements is also a feature of relationships between participants and non-participants in the Society. There was an instance where a joiner was hired to work at the Meeting House, and the quality of the work was below standard. A Member of the meeting said, ‘It looks as though our *Friend* needs to spend more time on his work’. The speaker was demonstrating frustration with the poor craftsmanship, while still acknowledging the craftsman’s Inner Light.

In business meetings the continual use of ‘Friend’ enhances the effectiveness of the trope when conflicts may arise. Other groups using a signifying title will use

this title during conflicts in the same manner. 'Comrade' amongst disagreeing Communists is a similar appellation. The relationship is emphasised, while the frustration and a likely threat to the relationship is communicated. The 'right honourable gentleman' in Parliament, is in many ways analogous. The decorum of the parliamentary proceedings maintains relations in the highly contentious setting, maintaining communication, no matter how overtly belligerent the relationship is between interlocutors. In one sense using such titles is ironic as the sentiment of the word is counter to the spirit of the relationship. This illustrates the formality of the Parliamentary and Quaker settings placing constraints on how conflicts are conveyed, and making the setting itself a form of conflict management, especially while on stage.

When the word 'Friend' is used with this tone of displeasure, it reminds the speaker and the addressed of the relationship of the Inner Light that exists between them, based on a commitment to truth and an aim to address the divine within each person. Usually 'Friend' in conflict situations is used with other idioms (as we will see in the next example) that stress the tension in the situation and indicate a subtle play of meaning. Conflicts amongst Quakers are anathema to the sense of community and threaten the disputants' identity as Quakers. The situation creates a need to be seen as acting on principle, so stressing the relationship is an important form of control, and strategy. Prefacing an assertion of one's view in the dispute with 'friend' suggests the speaker is not simply speaking from their own interest, but from a concern for the group. Often this is successful, but as we will see in the next example, the use of 'Friend' can be transparent.

*'The Friend does not speak to my condition'*

'The Friend does not speak to my condition,' is a phrase which is an alteration to 'speaking to one's condition,' which is attributed to George Fox at his revelation from the Inner Light as it first spoke to him: 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition' (Fox 1997:11). The revelation occurred after Fox's search for religious truth amongst clergy, which he found unsatisfying. The altered phrase occurs in business meetings, being directed to the Clerk in reference to a ministry on a particular issue. It asserts the relationship between the speakers, while standing firm on a point. The challenge presented to Friends lies in this situation. When people, speaking from their conviction of the Inner Light, are in opposition to each other, they enter a dispute. A Friend recalled the difficulty when the Society was considering revising the now abandoned testimony to temperance. Two entrenched proponents for both sides refused to accept a compromise: One held the position of abstinence and the other preferred moderation. The Clerk at the meeting broke down in frustration trying to find unity in the two firm views.<sup>v</sup> When the phrase is spoken with a sharp tone, the speaker is indicating a disagreement that threatens the relationship, and implies that one or the other person is not 'walking in the Light.' The phrase is distinctly Quaker, showing the speaker is well versed in 'Quaker speak' (Heron 1997), and suggesting that he or she is a seasoned Friend. If the disagreement is irresolvable, the disputants can be viewed as inexperienced Friends, since they are unable to set aside a personal agenda, remove their ego from the concern, or seek the truth in the opposing view. The statement is an attempt to assert a personal view, or interpretation of the Inner Light that counters the ministry or position of another participant in the meeting. It responds to the threat of

disagreement by suggesting the person lacks the appropriate experience, or weight, to disagree. A seasoned Friend should be able to employ any of these.

This example is another instance of Quaker idiom conveying disagreement. It was originally spoken by a participant in a business meeting, who disagreed with a previous speaker. The expression of disagreement came out, 'The Friend does not speak to my condition.' The retort made by another meeting participant was, 'Perhaps you are not in a condition to be spoken to' (Heron 1997).

There are two generative tropes being employed here: the Inner Light and the Journey. The emphasis of 'Friend' addresses the relationship between the disputants as the spiritual one in the Inner Light. The journey trope is used in the word 'condition' as it indicates the personal location on the spiritual journey. The speakers sense of the Inner Light, based on their life experience, is opposed to the other speaker's statement, illustrating they are in different locations on the journey. During fieldwork the phrase was uttered jokingly in a business meeting.

*'That name would not have occurred to me.'*

In business meeting where the gathering are trying to select a person form a particular post, disagreements can arise over the appropriateness of the person nominated. The statement, 'That name would not have occurred to me' suggests a disagreement on these occasions. The ethos of sensitivity to a person and their life experience of the Inner Light may be at odds with the needs of the meeting. When a formal position is vacant, Friends in the business meeting will nominate people that may be able and willing to perform the task. As names are spoken, people may be

viewed as not being a good choice for the position. On these occasions, Friends often focus on the better selection from the list, and avoid mentioning the less favourable option. If the less regarded candidate is continually mentioned, a plain speaking Friend may utter, 'that name would not have occurred to me'. This phrase is usually used in the person's absence.

The individualism and detachment reflected in the comment shows that the speaker is trying to address the Inner Light of the person under consideration, while balancing their own interpretation of the candidate's qualities and the needs of the role. Referring to 'name' and not directly stating the person's name is detaching the criticism from the person. The phrase also allows for other interpretations of the person under consideration to exist, accepting that their understanding may not be accurate.

Again, this idiom is well known in the Society, but it was jokingly used only once during fieldwork. In a business meeting a nomination was made for a position, and the person nominated was present. This particular person was reluctant to fill the role, so he used the phrase much to the amusement of the meeting participants.

### **'Conflict' in Humour**

I want to reiterate that the times that I heard, 'That name would not have occurred to me' and, 'The Friends does not speak to my condition' were used in jest. The functions of humour are well documented in anthropology. It is typically associated with notions of, easing tension through catharsis (Hammond 1964), and serving as conflict management (Radcliffe-Brown 1940, Shore 1978, Kneubuhl 1987, and

Sinavaiana 1992). While humour is employed by Friends to ease tension, this section focuses on the cognitive repercussions when this method is used.

‘Conflict’ is placed into appropriate arenas of the Society by encouraging constraints on how division is conveyed through Quaker idiom, and by minimising the impact of the conflict by stressing unity. Humour was a regular occurrence amongst Friends, breaking the stereotype that Friends are so sombre. There were occasions where comedy was welcome, and others where comical talk is inappropriate. Onstage and off, Friends enjoy wit, particularly when it makes a point. The humour expressed was often directed towards American or British government policy, but most regularly it was directed towards Quaker peculiarity. Here again the stage metaphor is useful for understanding where this humour was employed and to what end. In this section the use of humour is analysed to show how it, with the other cognitive devices described, works as a conflict avoidance technique.

Humour was regularly used to ease tension in the long meetings I observed. Often this tension arose from fatigue caused by a long agenda. The level of concentration required could be daunting. The Clerk usually initiated occasions of humour, but other participants were also capable. Usually the humour was topically relevant, and on some occasions the humour revealed the pressures in the meeting. Tensions discussed with a touch of wit onstage eased frustration, and worked to bring the group together through the act of laughter. Various forms of humour were used: puns, spoonerisms, irony, and sarcasm. Of these, the most interesting were the uses of irony and sarcasm, as they would continue to maintain a boundary of those ‘seasoned’ Friends, and those who were less experienced. In these instances the

understanding the humour required the listener to have a good familiarity of Quaker methods and history, typically held by ‘seasoned’ Friends. The examples from the previous section, using the Quaker idioms, ‘The Friend does not speak to my condition,’ and ‘That name would not have occurred to me’ were used with sarcasm that an unknowing novice may not recognise, highlighting their lack of experience by not including them in the joke.

Offstage humour that stayed in the theatre occurred in the informal discussions over soup or at ceilidhs. These were occasions where the novice participant could easily learn the contradictions of the Society. Scottish Friend, Geoffrey Carnall, wrote a humorous skit that was performed at a party in his local meeting, showing the diversity in the Society, and the challenges of Quaker decision-making (See Appendix B for the complete script). The skit was set in a Quaker business meeting where the assembled Friends were being asked for their guidance on a matter of whether or not the Meeting House should be let to the Monster Raving Loony Party. The author identifies the Weighty Friend, the Brisk Friend, the Earnest Friend, the Trendy Friend, The Green Friend, the Warden, and the Clerk both as characters in the play, and, in a subtle way, types of Quaker. The play parodies the diverse voices, and the decisions that these voices could create within a relaxed Monthly Meeting. The skit indicates the many perceptions and perspectives that create unity or division in business meetings. It twists the onstage and offstage Quaker by breaking many of the rules of idiom and worshipful talk used the business meetings, while giving the audience enough to suggest a Quaker meeting’s atmosphere. Silence is used, but to heighten the comic effect, evoking laughter rather than a sense of gathered-ness. Speaking is a debate, with a debate’s cadence.

It is not a ministry designed to reveal truth. The ethos of meeting is captured in the concerns used to make decisions: Quaker identity, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, and contemporary 'concerns' (animals, the environment, and openness). The performance reinforces the boundary that Friends employ with conflict: it is inappropriate in certain Quaker settings, but it does fit within the setting when it is mocking and humorous, and suggests a reflexive awareness of the tension, boundaries, and mode of appropriate behaviour.

There are other Quaker jokes that reveal the relation conflict has with the Quaker schema:

Mary was visited by an angel, and told that she would bear a child and that child would be called Jesus. To this announcement Mary responded, 'That name would not have occurred to me'.

What do you get when four Quakers argue? Five opinions.

These two jokes were told offstage while in the theatre. They demonstrate the use of Quaker experience and insider knowledge of the Society for the quips to be effectively understood and appreciated. The first joke reflects the importance of personal interpretations in the Society, and anyone who has witnessed a prolonged and tense business meeting will appreciate the humour of the second joke. They both convey the reality of conflicting opinions amongst Friends, and they do so by placing the conflict in the domain of absurd extreme.

Humour about conflict has other uses in the Society as it can also inform the listener about the appropriate means by which to manage conflict. A particularly good example of this use of humour occurred during an interview. My informant was sharing her views on conflicts in the local meeting. The conversation focused on the personality clashes with the meeting as a source of conflict, a regular theme for

Friends. In this conversation I mentioned the regularity of snoring in Meeting for Worship. The informant responded with a humorous anecdote:

There's a story about a really small meeting. I don't know – three people, somewhere in the Lake District, and one day a new person comes to meeting. One of the other three Members just snored throughout the meeting. The visitor said, 'Does he come every week? Does he snore every week? How do you cope?', because he had been distracted the whole way through. And they're like, 'Oh, we're fine. You get used to it. He has a really hard time at home, and this is the best hour of sleep he gets all week. We just let him get on with it'.

My informant was making two statements when she shared this story. It suggests that the snoring should not be viewed as a conflict in meeting, and like the visitor in the story, it suggested I should not consider the distraction a conflict. Frustration should be endured with an acceptance of the person. Eventually the frustration ideally is lost, as the conflict is no longer perceived. In this instance I should adjust my thinking to be supportive of the person who is snoring. The anecdote was a form of 'Eldering' in this respect. Humour has the potential to serve many functions, as this example illustrates, but when conflict humour is restricted to particular arenas of Quaker activity, these other functions are also muted.

Humour in this context both denies and acknowledges a reality that is troubling. Conflict is denied amongst Friends through humour, while the joke demystifies the phenomenon by simultaneously relegating it to an absurdity. Placing internal conflict in this domain allows Quakers to deny dispute as a threat to the general will, diffusing the potency of ongoing tensions in the Society. Humorous absurdity is a cognitive space where contradictions can exist together without disruption to the organisation or the model for and of the world. The implication is that thinking seriously about these absurdities is a wasted effort, or a distraction from what is important: the unity Quakers find in peace, truth, equality, and simplicity.

## Tropes Related to Conflict

When Friends described conflict situations a motif emerged though the tropes they used to convey conflict. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) show the numerous varieties of metaphor that inform our understanding the experience of argument. Friends used numerous metaphors to express conflict – ‘axe to grind’, ‘papered over the cracks’, ‘steam-rollered’, etc. However, those used most regularly revealed an association with violations to the body. Donald Levine (1994) describes the philosophical presuppositions in social conflict theories as they metaphorically relate to the body, and in so doing, he also illustrates the underlying assumptions about conflict in Euro-American and Asian thinking. ‘Its [conflict theory’s] intimate connection with the realities of physical combat, by metaphor when not literally, makes it easy to relate the discussion of social conflict to the interaction of physical bodies’ (1994: 211). This metaphorical leap to locate conflict on the physical and social body was a regular occurrence in Quaker descriptions.

A Clerk, expressing frustration with his colleagues at work, said ‘they’re on my teats’, another former Clerk during an interview stated, ‘that person gets up my nose’, and Friends regularly used the phrase ‘stepped on my toes’ when describing interpersonal tensions. Each of these metaphors reflects features of irritation or pain, suggesting modal tropic features (Friedrich 1991) of frustration or anger. In an interview, a Friend active in national and local committees used a body metaphor that shows the body is also the means of registering conflict.

A man came and ministered every week ... it seemed like he was crying for help in his ministry. He’d be quite rude about Quakers, so he wasn’t saying anything that would make people want to help him or talk to him – be nice

to him, but yea... He caused a great deal of conflict. He was making people's *hair stand on end*. [my emphasis added]

The metaphor in this instance speaks of a physiological reaction similar to a fight/flight response. Seeing this person in meeting was, for this Member, enough of an aggravation to be considered a conflict.

These examples suggested the physical form, but the 'body' can also metaphorically suggest the group. The body of gathered Friends is also described using the heuristic of 'conflict is violence'. *The Wounded Meeting* (Friends General Conference 1993) is a pamphlet about the difficulty suffered in local meetings. It was immediately recommended by an informant when he first heard about my research focus. The 'wound' metaphor in this instance reflects a violent desecration, but now the 'body' is a metaphor for the wider group, the social contract, the general will. It is little wonder that Friends regularly identify the individual as the regular source of conflict. The single person's ability to break the gathered silence with inappropriate ministry, or expressing dissent in an inappropriate location is viewed as an individual act.

This episode also recalls the Quaker historical lesson of the Naylor incident of 1656, showing the risk that the individual brings to the meeting. James Naylor brought unwanted attention to the Society when he and his followers entered Bristol re-enacting Jesus and his followers. After considerable torture at the hands of the state Naylor returned to the Quaker body. His wounds and the further threat to the Society warn the modern Quaker the risks of acting as an individual, and what is possible when the Inner Light is taken to an extreme. Naylor provides a warning that the Society cannot handle a new revitalisation movement from within, regardless of Naylor and his followers' actual intent with the re-enactment. The story appears in

the Society's literature that is available to all, but read by those who devote time to the material. It appears as a fact, and is not normally discussed, as Friends prefer to recall the more inspiring word of the historical figure.

The body metaphors also suggest the forms by which conflicts can be managed. The phrase 'digging in our heels' occurred in interviews and on the various stages of Quaker performance. The metaphor evokes images of preparing to defend or resist an oncoming assault or, as in the game of tug-of-war, when working to gain advantage while you are simultaneously defending. The body is again the locus of the conflict as it resists the affront. The disputant can 'stand firm' on a position ready for attack. This trope was unexpected in Quaker meetings as it suggests an immovability and rigidity. Friends are reputed to be wishy-washy with their practice of tolerance and general acceptance; however, Friends can become quietly defiant when their behaviour is based on truths that they sense are from the divine; are eternal; or are formed by the conviction of their experience. The 'onstage but out of the theatre' Society can be correctly viewed as tolerant, but Friends are willing to point out the areas where there is disagreement and debate particularly in politics, and many individual Friends will not budge from their position.

The most common resolution trope was 'saving face'. A Friend who worked with the Friends Ambulance Unit in China calls on this metaphor to convey the lesson he learned in one tense episode.

I'll tell you briefly about one incident in China where the lack of arms was helpful. I was returning with a convoy of trucks from the northwest to Chung King, and we were pushing on to get there as we had been on the road for a long time. We came to this village, and we were stopped by an army patrol, and they wanted to examine our cargo. Well, we were fairly well known in the routes that we ran, and this was an obstruction. Eventually, there was a bit argument with the drivers... But, I went to this army major, or what ever he was... an officer in charge of this bunch of

chaps...with one of the Chinese drivers with me, and I said 'who are you and what do you want?' And ah...he pulled out his gun and held it in front of my stomach and said, 'I'll show you who I am!' in Chinese. And ah ... I had another Englishman with me, a friend of mine... He came up and I said, 'be very careful what you say. This guy has got his gun in my stomach'. (chuckles) We stood like this, and fortunately the Chinese driver from Shanghai... He was a great guy... He went into some long explanation. So, eventually the guy stuck his gun back in his holster, and said that we couldn't go on tonight, because there's really bandits about and he was actually protecting us. (chuckles) So we all sat down around the table, and drank rice wine or God knows what, and we shook hands. When we got up In the morning, the whole lot of them had vanished. But I was glad in that case...well, if I had a gun I would have responded. You know...If I had been trained in that way. But, there was nothing I could do, but stand still, and hope that nothing happened. So this is again conflict resolution. That was a thing that I learned in China. There was a great need to *save face*. If you got in an argument or a quarrel you had to find a way for the other guy to get out of it without *losing face*. You had to find some way nobody *lost face*. But, find a way out of it. And it was...well you could crack a joke against yourself to get everybody laughing, and diffuse the situation. It was a great experience, because you had to rethink everything. (my emphasis added)

Nestled within this narrative is not only this Friend's proof that pacifism saved lives, but his generalised conclusion from the incident that one must allow another person to 'save face'. This Friend's personal journey in this convoy informs his spiritual journey as a Pacifist. Not being trained as a soldier with a soldier's reflex to attack in defence was not enough in the situation. The Chinese driver's ability to allow the army officer to maintain his authority before his men and the convoy facilitated the eventual handshake. The trope expresses the strategy of allowing disputants the opportunity to maintain their dignity after asserting their position, and not achieving their end. The body is spared the injury of losing respectability before one's constituents, cohort, or meeting.

These tropes suggest that conflict is related to violence by associating conflict to physical harm. The conflict schema and the violence schema overlap in this instance, further dissuading Friends to engage in direct confrontation. Conflict

metaphorically harms the disputants, and by engaging in conflict in the wrong context, and using the wrong idiom Friends lose face as practising Quakers. This connection could relate to the emotional pain and uncertainty that is common when conflicts occur. The comfort of friendship is threatened when confrontation occurs. The predictability of loving support may be painfully lost. This emotional association with conflict can be easily reinforced when the occasional manifest conflict divides, while the latent ones only fester. Sometimes these conflicts resolve without direct intervention as people move away, change their behaviour or their interpretation of the dispute, or one or both the disputants die. Occasionally issues of contention lose their popularity in the Society, so they are no longer discussed. In all of the instances the avoidance of dispute is rewarded, as the relationship, while strained, is maintained. The support for each other in such circumstances can be viewed as a learning experience, showing how the disputants have adhered to the peace testimony through disciplined kindness. Avoiding the emotional uncertainty or pain is rewarded and rewarding.

The opportunity to explicate these metaphors further would be rewarding, but their important feature for this discussion is their tropic associations to violations of the body. Relating conflicts to such violation, where there is little likelihood of actual physical altercation, places even the smallest disputes into forms of metaphorical violence. Quaker conflict avoidance partly arises from an aversion to violence – the physical harm inflicted on another person, another source of the Inner Light. Interestingly, when conflicts are sought outside of the Society these bodily metaphors are less restrictive on the thinking and behaviour. The Friend's 'concern' utilises other logical systems and tropes to think with. Often conflicts are nestled

with the journey trope, and, as we will see, they are attributed to growth and greater understanding.

*'Conflict's' Official Metaphors and the wider Quaker Schema*

I suggested in Chapter 2 that the introduction of the peace testimony dislodged conflict from the Quaker millennial schema. The 'Lamb's war' ended, and the peace testimony established a schema that focused more sharply on unity, and the more harmonic aspects of bringing heaven to earth. Today the Quaker schema avoids conflict through an interweaving of limits on where issues can be discussed, the idiom these discussions take, by emphasising the incongruity of conflict and Quakers through humour, and by associating conflict as an act of violence. While writing this thesis, the Society witnessed a flurry of publications in Quaker intra-denominational conflict. There was a clear effort to reorganise the thinking of conflicts within the Society. This may have been prompted by the latest version of *Quaker Faith and Practice*, acknowledging the situation in meetings and attributing an alternative metaphor to the 'conflict is violence' trope. I could also speculate that the increased use of this 'conflict is growth' trope in the conflict resolution and business management literature has an effect on the mediators and managers that participate in the Society.

At this point I will stress again that the 'conflict is violence' metaphor is the trope primarily enacted by Friends at the local level I observed. It was not the only metaphor, nor was it the one communally endorsed by the wider Society. *Quaker*

*Faith and Practice* uses an organic ‘conflict is growth’ metaphor. It suggests finding the ‘root cause’ of the difficulty (10.21).

Tension can be either the source of learning and *growth* or the cause of hostility and the breakdown of relationships. Responding to the Holy Spirit, both individually and together, we may *grow through problems* and pain as well as shared joys and interests, and find deeper understanding.

1994

*Quaker Faith and Practice*

1995: 22.47

As we try to cope with anger, the pain and grief that come through some unhappy experience, we learn a lot about the less-well-articulated, darker sides of our personality. These darker aspects should not be ignored. Although we tend to equate evil with darkness, we should remember that *in the plant world roots grow in the dark*. Darkness (and shadows) are as much a part of the natural order as light.

S Jocelyn Burnell 1989

*Quaker Faith and Practice*

1995: 22.50

Through conflict handled creatively we can change and *grow*; and I am not sure real change – either political and personal – can happen without it.

*Quaker Faith and Practice*

1995: 20.71

If we do any of these things well – naming, listening, letting go – we need to have learned to trust that of God in ourselves and that of God in those trapped on all sides of the conflict with us. And to do that well, I find I need to be centred, rooted, practised in waiting on God. That *rootedness is both a gift and a discipline*, something we can *cultivate* and build on by acknowledging it every day.

Mary Lou Leavett 1986

*Quaker Faith and Practice*

1995: 20.71

[My emphasis added in each passage.]

These passages are cases of successful management of conflict situations endorsed by the Society at its highest level, the Yearly Meeting. From this highest tier and in comparison to the local and regional levels, it is easy to distinguish informal and formal conflict managers in the Society. Those informal specialists are participants in the Society who may possess knowledge of managing conflicts, who are not

formally called upon to mediate or negotiate in disputes. They volunteer their effort through the casual comment offstage or through their effective use of idiom onstage. These people are occasionally called upon when Preparative and Monthly Meetings are unable to resolve conflicts. Quaker Home Service (QHS), a central committee, has people trained in managing conflicts who are called upon in these circumstances. Amongst this group of Quakers, the ‘conflict is growth’ metaphor is utilised most heavily. During fieldwork, Friends House conducted an outreach day to strengthen the connections between the local meetings and the central body. At this event Friends House representatives conducted sessions that described the roles of the central committees and the resources at Friends House. The QHS representative listed the resources available to meetings when conflicts were beyond local efforts to manage the situation. In the presentation the convenor listed the benefits of directly acknowledging conflicts as an opportunity for growth and a greater sense of unity.

Conflict is also being associated with being a part of the spiritual journey with entailments of the generative trope. According to Adam Curle, a peace studies pioneer and Quaker, conflict is a fight or an incompatibility, but it can also mean ‘a creative difference of opinion out of which enlightenment may grow’ (1981: 38). In *Quaker Faith and Practice* the growth and journey metaphor are also paired with conflict:

for it is only when we work through them [conflicts], using our meeting for church affairs and other appropriate methods, that we can *move forward* together.

1995: 10.21

Conflict met in ‘brokenness’ of spirit can take *a meeting a long way on its spiritual journey*, whereas unresolved it deadens the life.

1995: 10.22

Above all the meeting must try to affirm that of God which is in all of us. whatever our feelings about who is to blame. This is a time for great prayerfulness, unobtrusive caring, and gentle support. We must trust that, with grace, we may all find *paths to grow*, leading us out of the painful experience.

John Miles 1994: 10.23

We'll each handle conflict differently and find healing and reconciliation by *different paths*.

I don't mean that in the sense of giving up, lying down and inviting people *to walk all over us*, but acknowledging the possibility that there may be other solutions to this conflict than the ones we've thought of yet...

20.71, Mary Lou Leavett, 1986

[My emphasis added in each passage.]

These metaphors mix the domains of journey and growth to express Quaker understanding of spiritual life and conflict within their cognitive context. The journey and growth domains suggest processes that conform to the way Friends view the relation of individual and the group. These passages emphasise the requirement of the group as the means by which Friends discover God, who is the source of truth. Truth (Parker-Rhodes 1977) and peace (Bailey 1993) are not static conditions in the Society, but guideposts for the Quaker's spiritual life to be discovered and shared onstage at Meeting for Worship.

Quaker Home Service published a handbook, *Conflict in Meetings* (2000), outlining the approaches and resources available to Friends in dispute, using the 'conflict is growth' and 'conflict is a journey' metaphors to bypass Friends' presumed inclination to avoid conflict. These attempts to address conflict in meetings are movements toward placing internal conflicts back into Quaker discourse and into the Quaker schema, removing its association with absurdity. The conflict tropes of, 'conflict is war' and, 'conflict is violence' shift to, 'conflict is growth' and, 'conflict is a journey' when Friends rely upon the central trope of the

Inner Light. This places conflict more centrally into the broader Quaker schema with the desired effect of bringing it into the Quaker discourse. Rather than making successful conflict management a skill for the few in the Society, these publications encourage each participant to rethink their experience and imagine conflict differently.

The official 'Conflict is growth' trope dislodges the 'conflict' concept from the maladaptive associations, allowing it to reside in the Quaker schema. Conflicts are only consigned to the traditionally negative aspects when the outcome is disappointing or painful to either of the disputants. In the Quaker process of conflict management, the outcome of 'unity' illustrates growth and a coming together on the spiritual journey. It challenges the past cultural assumptions that conflict is bad due to its associations with absurdity and violence. The new associations provide Friends with a familiar, and hopeful, idiom in which they can discuss conflict.

This observation justifies my assertion that Friends are not rule-oriented in their social control. Comaroff and Roberts (1981) recognise the association in legal anthropology that a rule-centred paradigm is related to the pathological character of conflict which overarching systems of control must remedy. Undoubtedly there are formal social structures that work toward social control, particularly when conflicts arise, however cultural schema provide cognitive attributes to conflict management as well. Connectionist understanding of cognition suggests that where an anthropologist sees rules, the person is simply engaged in action based on internalised networks (Rumelhart and McClelland 1986). The official trope of 'Conflict is Growth', brings with it a particular logic, suggesting that properly managed conflict has a benefit that maintains community and reaffirms the broader

symbolic system. Weber's value-rational conduct, where the participant's faith in proper conduct is independent of any aim (1963), helps us understand Quaker notions of conflict and its management. In this instance, the tropes used to model conflict further the Quaker understanding of both conflict as a phenomenon, as it relates to the key tropes of the 'light', 'journey', and 'friend'.

## **Conclusion**

The perception that Friends avoid conflict is constructed in the cognitive context of the Society by establishing parameters in thought. The peace testimony directs the collective gaze of Friends, and the subtle regulation of locating conflict within certain onstage arenas limits the experience of conflict, permitting the assertion that Friends avoid internal conflict. The trope of the Inner Light provides the ethic of respecting others, informing the use of particular idioms within conflict situations when they occur. Friends are also disinclined to focus on conflict since the occurrence is relegated to absurdity in humour. The cognitive linking of conflict to violence through 'body' tropes suggests another motivation for dissuading a Friend from direct confrontation. In the professional realms of the Society the aversion to direct disagreement throughout the Society is recognised, so 'growth' and 'journey' metaphors are employed to encourage Friends to re-imagine the meaning of conflict.

Friends are not isolated from other groups or their domains of meaning, so asserting there is a unique Quaker schema for conflict is dangerous. Quakers are informed by social scientific research on conflict and its management, and many Friends are directly involved in this research. Legal parameters also inform this schema as laws are discussed, accepted, or flouted. When Friends choose to enter the

Society (usually as an adult), much of their understanding about conflict is formed prior to their participation. Once a participant is engaged in Quaker activities, their thinking is encouraged to conform to the Quaker way. This process can inform their existing conflict schema, using a novel discourse to justify or rebuild that schema. While other domains inform the Quaker understanding of conflict, their acquiescence of these domains is viewed with their understanding of the Inner Light. The cognitive dimension of conflict among Friends is informed by the focus on peace and unity in the Quaker imagination. Conflict as an alternative amongst Friends is avoided, favouring peace even to the point of stifling the meeting, or stalling it in its spiritual journey. Again, an absurdity can reveal this tendency. The notion of a 'conflict testimony' is initially laughable. It places the antithesis of peace into a central position of the Quaker belief system.<sup>vi</sup>

This chapter suggests that several cognitive mechanisms are employed by Friends in managing conflict, making conflict situations unthinkable. The use of metaphors to manufacture compatibility is perhaps the more surprising conclusion made. Discussion of conflict management conjures notions of recognising interests, perceiving that these are irreconcilable with another party, and developing a strategy to achieve a desired end. Such a construction suggests considerable awareness of what is wanted and how to get it, but the play of tropes and the higher structuring of thought seems less intentional, particularly when the tropes are embedded in conversation or in the midst of dispute. As we see the deliberated and corporate notions of conflict involve the other important tropes in the Quaker schema. In the introduction, I suggest a distinction between the conflict that is discussed and objectified, and conflict that occurs. The separation reveals the use of different tropes

and in different contexts within the Society, where much of the offstage discussion uses body metaphors and the 'conflict is violence' metaphor, and the deliberated and 'professional' metaphors are 'conflict is growth' and 'conflict is a journey'. Onstage, the discussion of conflict is avoided unless the disciplined language of Quaker idiom is used. This suggests that internal conflict is discussed by seasoned Friends since it is they who are typically involved in the onstage arenas where issues are discussed (business meetings and committee meetings).

These observations imply that the tropic aspects of conflict are an important analytical consideration. Not only are the social structures and the cultural rules for resolving dispute necessary material for analysis, the hierarchical structuring of tropes in the development of a schema also suggest the motivations toward particular strategies in conflict situations. The metaphors used by disputants provide insight into what informs their thought and what structures an intended outcome based on the chosen means. For Friends, the disposition of conflict avoidance aims to maintain a relationship and a communal sense of support.

The material here also suggests that the association between conflict and violence is a metaphorical one, which need not be adhered to when describing situations of divergence between parties. The emphasis in anthropology on connecting these two phenomena requires problematising if we are to understand either. Conflict is a context where behaviours are employed to achieve a desired end that appears to be at odds with the ends of another party. Violence is not an automatic outcome of conflict, and it is not the only behaviour that will inform our anthropological understanding.

In the next chapter the impact of the metaphors within the Society on Quaker behaviour is examined. Through exploring the ritualisation of value through the various stages of Quaker performance I will illustrate the methods that Friends employ in the management of conflict.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> The use of the term 'absurd' in this chapter simply suggests this incongruent matching of ideas within a mental scheme. The use should not be confused with the 'Sociology of the Absurd' that uses phenomenological and <> philosophies to investigate meaninglessness in society (Author).

<sup>ii</sup> This feature is a communal one, since it is the activities of the Quaker organisation and the inspired few who actually perform the peace testimony that are advertised to the public. Indeed, not all Friends agree that absolute pacifism is desirable, particularly Friends that are veterans of World War II.

<sup>iii</sup> Bosk (1979) uses the theatre metaphor in his sociological ethnography in surgical training hospitals. Sinclair (1997) provides the useful extension of Goffman's metaphor to outside the theatre in his analysis of medical training.

<sup>iv</sup> This may also be an artefact that I, as the interviewer, had not established the trust required for such discussions. As will be shown in the section on 'offstage and out of the theatre' forms of discourse, a high level of trust is required before Friends will disclose their opinions about particular Members.

<sup>v</sup> The Society today suggests moderation, and has removed temperance from the status of a testimony.

<sup>vi</sup> Analogous absurdities like a 'lying testimony' or an 'opulence testimony' are juxtapositions which are extremely unlikely. The logic of a conflict testimony, however, could be argued successfully within their reasoning system, and, when looking at the efforts to employ 'growth' and 'journey' tropes to convey conflict, the eventuality of such a testimony is not impossible.

## Chapter 7 - Conflict Management Praxis and Quaker Identity

Bring into God's light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in yourself which lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging your need for forgiveness and grace. In what ways are you involved in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups, and nations?

*Advices and Queries*

1995: 1.02.32

I have devoted most of the thesis to describing the contextual layers where Friends interact, using conflicts to illustrate each of these layers. The ethos of worship, the historical antecedents, the organisational structures, and the cognitive contexts are illustrated through the conflicts I observed. Each of these contextual layers to the Society establishes or reinforces a particular disposition<sup>i</sup> in its participants. The elements that inform Quaker behaviour should be reasonably established for us, so we can finally turn our attention toward the praxis of conflict management. Friends direct their living toward peace. As the above *Advices and Queries* suggest, the notion of directing their living toward conflict is imaginable only with the other concepts in the Quaker schema. Unless a participant is acting under a 'concern', and the Inner Light leads the person into confrontation with others, Quakers identify most strongly with conflict avoidance.

This chapter explores the choices Friends take in conflict situations to suggest that the ritualisation process of Meeting for Worship encourages certain actions in conflict management. To illustrate this assertion, I provide a final narrative of a situation I witnessed toward the end of fieldwork that appears trivial, but I assert the conflict has an underlying importance that goes beyond the picayune. Next, I outline the manner in which Quaker values influence the dispositions of Friends in conflict.

Finally, I conclude by looking at the hegemonic influences on conflict management in the problem-solving techniques Friends employ.

### **Appropriating the Quaker Symbol**

According to Foucault, power automatically produces resistance, and is only possible when the body is free (Rabinow 1984). Within the theological and interpersonal tolerance of Meeting for Worship, Friends share a ritual process that affords the participant considerable freedom with the theological workings of the belief system, requiring parameters to be placed on the participant to instil an appropriate sense of 'Quakerism'. In situations of internal conflict onstage, Quaker discipline will encourage particular methods of management. When Friends do not agree with a ministry's content, they are urged to refrain from voicing this opposition to avoid debate. The person that disagrees with a ministry is encouraged to maintain their silence, and look deeper into what is said to discover what is meaningful in the statement for themselves.

When words are strange or disturbing to you, try to sense where they come from and what has nourished the lives of others. Listen patiently and seek the truth which other people's opinions may contain for you. Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language. Do not allow the strength of your convictions to betray you into making statements or allegations that are unfair or untrue. Think it possible that you may be mistaken.

*Advices and Queries*  
1995: 01.02.17

In the business meeting where disagreement can be voiced, it is ideally cast in an idiom that acknowledges the ethos of community.

Subtle application of an absolutist power is employed when asserting Meeting for Worship as a Quaker event when segments within the meeting form policy that

appropriates the meaning of shared symbols. To gain a better understanding of what happened in the following narrative, I need to establish some more important features to Meeting for Worship, illustrating features of control in the setting.

The role of the Elder, conformity, and the structuring trope of the Inner Light were all used in the appropriation of the key symbolic practice of silence. Davies (1988) recognises rules governing form and content in a competent Quaker performance, stating that Friends learn specific rules for how to communicate in Meeting for Worship, making it a form distinct from mundane communication. The degrees of freedom during worship are restricted by time limits for the worship service and the ministries' length. Ministry should be infrequent in the course of a single meeting, and an individual should ideally refrain from serial ministry over the course of several meetings. Speaking in worship should not answer rhetorical questions, or ask questions requiring an answer. Insults, mundane talk, and questions should simply go unsaid, and participants should not speak more than once in the same worship period. Members develop a sense of each other by exemplifying the rules of form and content for silence and speaking; they illustrate their understanding of the Quaker field. Flawed performances (too frequent, too long, or too intimate) are not viewed as not having value, and are ideally approached with kindness during or after their performance. Davies concludes, 'while the prophetic message is open for all, the legitimacy of religious speaking is controlled through learning' (1988:135). This education process establishes the Quaker habitus by placing constraints on the participant's behaviour.

There are occasions where contributors in the worship do not adhere to the generally unspoken rules to the ritual. For these occasions Elders perform their duty

to maintain the worship service's form. The Elders encourage discipline when conformity to the structure fails. This activity, called 'Eldering', is typically a gentle reminder of the form ministry should take. Elders have the responsibility of nurturing the spiritual life of the meeting, and Eldering can take subtle forms on and offstage. The act of Eldering is a correction, but also an education in the proper form of worship. When onstage, this act can threaten the spirit for all the participants; so onstage Eldering must balance the needs of the meeting, the individual and the severity of the breach in the worship's protocol. Ideally the person Eldered should not be aware of the education they are receiving. Onstage, this nurturing can be practised by anyone in the meeting, but the Elders are formally charged to perform the specific task in the Society's organisation. During Meeting for Worship there may be several Elders present, but only one is on formal duty at a service. Eldering can occur offstage as well. In an interview an informant told a story about a person that was voicing an interpersonal conflict in worship. The resulting Eldering involved an Elder inviting the person to a meal to provide the person an opportunity to feel supported in the difficulty. The Elder sought to illustrate appropriate behaviour in the interaction offstage and away from the theatre. The Elder did not mention the problem with the person's inappropriate ministry, and provided an opportunity to discuss the problem in this more appropriate arena.

In worship the Elder is almost invisible to the visitor. Although an Elder, with an Overseer, do sit in a prominent position in the meeting room (centre circle and facing the clock and doorway), there are no other outward symbols to mark their status. This invisibility is intentional and their location during worship is described as a practicality. Elders are needed to help find a conclusion to meeting. This is

typically at the end of the hour. This responsibility requires the Elder to be in view of the clock, and to be in a position where he or she can be seen by others, when the end of meeting is initiated by the Elder and Overseer quietly shaking hands. When other people shake hands a slight amount of noise and murmurs of 'good morning' breaks the silence, and alerts others that the meeting has ended. Finally the Elder's location also provides the opportunity to police the meeting on the rare occasion when inappropriate behaviour requires intervention.

One informant who has served the meeting as an Overseer, Elder and Clerk described the responsibilities of the Elder as one of the most difficult roles supporting the meeting. When the role is properly performed, the Elder is not only addressing the spiritual needs of the meeting, she or he is also maintaining careful attention to their own. The Elders need to ensure they are themselves 'walking in the light'. In situations where discipline needs to be asserted in meeting, the Elder must weigh the needs of the individual with the needs of the meeting. The Elder cannot be too quick to assert the structure and hampering the Spirit. Most participants only witness the responsibility of watching the clock and initiating the 'close of meeting', but the Elder's actions must show the greatest discipline among those present, and model the loving care that Friends value. This emphasis on modelling the appropriate behaviour parallels the behaviours exemplified by the Clerk in the business meeting described in Chapter 4. The Elder on bench duty should exemplify the discipline both as a participant in the worship, and as a person that is sensitive to the Spirit as it shapes the meeting.

Meeting for Worship also relies heavily on conformity in its structure and practice. Elders consequently have little reason to place overt constraints on people's

behaviour, and they seldom initiate overt measures of controlling the wider meeting. When inexperienced individuals minister inappropriately, the silence of the meeting helps the person to 'save face', suggesting support for the speaker. The silence also models the appropriate behaviour by eliminating debate. Verbal correction during worship or outright rejection of any ministry may offend and spiritually harm the speaker, and hinder spiritual development for both the person and the meeting. Occasionally corrections that occur in the meeting are performed by someone other than an Elder. On one occasion in meeting a seasoned Friend interrupted a man speaking in ministry. The speaker stood with the Bible reading the beatitudes, describing how each was significant in their personal life. The ministry was hardly audible. After a considerable time a seasoned Friend stood, saying 'that's okay' and motioning for the person to sit down, which the person did. At the end of worship, the Friend went and sat with the person explaining why it was necessary to make the intrusion. They then carried on a conversation about the content of the ministry in a manner that allowed the man to know that what was said had value. The Elder's hesitation to assert the discipline can compel less patient meeting participants to step in, and assert the structure in place of the Elder. An informant told of a visitor, who demonstrated clear knowledge of the ethos of Meeting for Worship. At this particular Meeting for Worship there were several ministries that did not adhere to proper form. After these ministries the visitor stood and said, 'I have something that I would like to share'. The visitor then stood in a poignant silence, stressing the message that stillness contains for Friends.

*A Final Narrative - The Noise Problem*

During my research a concern was mentioned at the local level. Some people in the PM perceived the beginning of Meeting for Worship was too noisy and distracting. The noise created by 'latecomers' was viewed as a constant interruption as the group prepared to 'centre down'. The concern was noted in the Preparative Meeting. The PM concluded that the issue was one for the Elders to address. The Elders managed the situation by controlling the timing of people entering into worship, and with a leaflet that taught the ethos of Quaker meetings. On the surface the situation appears trivial, but the heart of the conflict highlights broader issues in conflict management, control and resistance, and methods of appropriating symbols and asserting a Quaker identity.

When I started fieldwork the arrangements for 'door-keeping' were designed to both welcome people to Meeting for Worship and secure Meeting House property. Two people greeted participants, standing at two separate doorways. One person stood at the Meeting House entrance, and the other person stood at the meeting room door. Both doorkeepers would welcome people to meeting, smiling and shaking hands with everyone as they entered. At eleven o'clock, the door attendant at the building entrance would lock the door, and join the worship with the others in the meeting room. During the meeting, the building's entrance was locked to protect the property when no one was available to supervise. The meeting had sustained property damage, and loss from opportunists who took advantage of an open front door that was irregularly supervised. People who arrived late to meeting would use an answer-phone at the front door that would sound outside the meeting room. A doorkeeper would leave the meeting room, answering the intercom and allowing the

person into the building. This late person entered the meeting room a few moments later. The process created numerous distractions in the silent worship. The intercom's buzzer, the doorkeeper leaving the room, the squeaking doors, and the latecomer arranging himself or herself were noises that some felt needed to be controlled. The person that brought this issue to the PM on one Sunday counted the number of latecomers and the times that they arrived. Some arrived with only fifteen minutes left to worship. On the average twelve people were late to meeting during fieldwork. Most of these people were in the building before eleven, but when they arrived, they would address the meeting's business, or they would begin conversing with people and lose track of time. Others were late due to parking difficulties, or bus delays. Many participants however appreciated the informal start to the meeting,<sup>ii</sup> so they did not feel obliged to arrive in the meeting room punctually.

The Elders considered the best way to address this situation. Their concerns regarded stressing the perceived problem to meeting participants, controlling the problem, and not infringing on the expression of the Inner Light. They concluded the best alternative was to place greater control at the doorways when entering the building and entering the meeting room. An Elder or Overseer would stand at the Meeting House's entrance throughout the worship, so that they were available to allow access into the building without using the entry phone. A volunteer would keep the meeting room door, closing it at eleven and asking latecomers to sit in the upstairs foyer until quarter past when latecomers would enter en masse. This did create quite a tumult the first few times it was put into practice. Fifteen to twenty people coming in at one rush was surprising.

A segment of the meeting was unhappy about the new door-keeping arrangement. They asserted the Elders went too far in structuring the start of worship. A former PM Clerk thought that they were deifying the silence, putting it over people's need to worship. He stopped coming regularly to Meeting for Worship partly due to this new arrangement, choosing to participate in another meeting within the region. Other participants left worship on Sunday morning when they were told to wait in the foyer. On one occasion when I had volunteered to stand at the meeting room door a woman refused to wait and entered the meeting room in spite of my request to wait until eleven-fifteen with the others. (I do not know if this person was rejecting authority because I, as an Attender/observer, was the doorkeeper, or if the refusal was a statement about the new arrangement.) There was a noticeable difference in the change of participation.

Elders also addressed the problem by developing a leaflet on how to approach Meeting for Worship. The leaflet, titled *GUIDANCE for the RIGHT HOLDING of MEETING for WORSHIP* (their capitalisation), was intended to guide Attenders and visitors on how to appreciate the gathering as a Quaker activity. The Elders hoped for a deeper experience within the meeting for all by reducing the number of inappropriate ministries and interruptions to the service. One Elder joked that the leaflet title should be 'HOW to BEHAVE'. The leaflet listed some of the assumptions that are employed in approaching Meeting for Worship, and guiding 'rules' for participation. When the PM Elders finished producing the leaflet, they gave it to various committees within the local meeting for their remarks and alterations. Finally, the PM gave their approval for its use. The leaflet was placed on some of the chairs in the meeting room at Sunday worship.

### *The Results of Intervention*

Two phenomena correlated with the new policies. The first was a slight reduction in the number of participants at Sunday Meeting for Worship. Many of the people holding a similar view as the one expressed by the former PM Clerk withdrew their participation. They thought that one of the benefits of meeting was its informal nature and the relaxed approach toward coming into worship. They also agreed that the Elders had gone too far in structuring the meeting, and inhibited the Spirit by deifying the silence, making it too sacred and even 'symbolic'.

The second correlation was Friends noticed a slight reduction in the number of ministries. During most of my research, a Sunday meeting would have five ministries. After the policy was implemented this average dropped to three.<sup>iii</sup> People commented on the change, and many enjoyed the deeper silence and more personally meaningful ministry. There are numerous possibilities afforded to explain the reduction in ministries. Perhaps the leaflets had an impact on those participating in meeting, and they gained insight on the meaning of the silence. Another possibility is those who no longer participated in Meeting for Worship were people who regularly ministered. Still another interpretation is that the new procedure did, as those who objected asserted, inhibit the free leading of the Inner Light.

This situation illustrates two interpretations of Meeting for Worship, and the struggle over the meaning of the gathering. After the changes to the door policy, those people that appreciated the relaxed atmosphere limited their participation or left the meeting completely. I noticed that most people who dissented were not participants in business meetings, so they choose not to use this method of conflict

management for their voice to be heard. They chose to leave, yielding to this local meeting and its new policy, and going to another meeting or church. The other interpretation was that the silence was indeed a Quaker activity, and the meaning needed assertion. The structures that inform the silence as a Quaker activity regardless of any personal theology are projected by the individual participant.

The awareness of the noise and the implementation of the door policy resulted in a political struggle where differing interpretations of Meeting for Worship vied for control over the structure of worship and the interpretation of the key symbols. Ritualisation theory helped my interpretation of these events. The setting of Meeting for Worship establishes a location where the participant is able to contemplate the values that he or she is trying to unravel and incorporate into an understanding of the world. Members and Attenders are able to gather and share a worship experience that is typified by its contrasts of being vague and deeply meaningful for the group and the individual. Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994) highlight the near meaninglessness of ritual, providing the ritual participant an opportunity to be meaningful which I echo in my description. Friends enjoy their reputation for being a theologically 'woolly' group, advertising their Christian history and the contemporary theological diversity, and their quiet worship reflects these features. The silence and speaking have a unique form that allows the individual the opportunity to voice their understanding without worry of ridicule, because the compulsion toward tolerance in the face of ignorance is encouraged in the ethos of Quaker practice.

I agree with Humphrey and Laidlaw's assertion that ritual is a meaningless occasion where participants can be meaningful to their own understanding. I

describe the silence in Meeting for Worship as a Rorschach inkblot, echoing their assertion, but we see in the above example that the personal opportunity to be meaningful does have its limits, and the limits are managed by structures of authority. The Quaker emphasis on the Inner Light and the use of silence to gain access to this source of truth are symbolic forms with a history that shows their disputed importance, particularly in American versions of Quakerism. The contrasting interpretations of symbolic forms vie for the trajectory of practice. The door policy was implemented to control entry into the meeting room, allowing the participants in the room to continue their access to the Inner Light. A segment of the meeting interpreted the free leading of the Inner Light as something that did not dictate the set schedules for participation. For this group the private interpretation of the symbols of silence and the Inner Light lost currency and the ability to inform the structure of the hour of worship. The groups described each other in terms that were 'Un-Quakerly', making accusations that the opposing side was inhibiting the Inner Light. While there is room for variety and diversity in Quaker meetings and the Society at large, there are limits to vocalising this diversity.

The noise problem is a reflection of the differing interpretations of worship's form and symbolic content, and the group that maintains control over these dimensions also manages to influence what is ritually internalised by giving prominence to particular values. The policy enforced a version of Quaker understanding and the people who disagreed with this interpretation either silenced their opposition, or withdrew to alternative forms of worship where their private meaning could continue to be meaningful. The outcome controlled how people move in the Quaker space of the meeting room, and it controlled the values which were

being internalised in these actions. The contrast between Quakerly and Un-Quakerly behaviour places particular actions into a scheme that actually establishes a distinction that Friends attempt to disguise in popular discourses. Imposing a particular model of silence is generalised into other situations, and the Elders wanted this silence to be a Quaker one.

The ritualised values encouraged in Meeting for Worship are taken into conflict situations. I have already stressed how values structure the places where conflict is addressed and I have explored some of the Quaker tropes that inform the participant's understanding, so now I would like to show how the ritualised behaviour can inform the Friends in the conflict setting. The noise problem highlights many strategies that Friends employ in the maintenance of conflicts. Unique practices like Eldering are excellent examples of how the human phenomenon of conflict management has context dependent variations. The urge to teach behaviour without force is a sublime feature of Quaker conflict management. In the next section I will illustrate how Friends utilise this quiet force.

### **Strategy and Tactic and the Quaker Disposition**

One Sunday, I was in a conversation with some Attenders and Members about the political character of the Society. One reasonably new Attender asserted that the Society was a democracy based on the equality he witnessed in Meeting for Worship. A Member who had served on several committees, and served as a Monthly Meeting Clerk chuckled and said, 'Well, actually we're a theocracy'. This assertion surprised the Attender, but with further consideration he agreed. The group discerning the Inner Light is a group looking to God's truth to govern their behaviour. The

comment would stir debate, since Friends find it difficult to agree on just what is meant by 'God', or 'theocracy', and because many view theocratic religion as hierarchical – an adjective that most Friends would not acknowledge as a part of their egalitarian structures. The political setting, bound with the other layers in the Quaker context, does create interesting possibilities when attempting to resolve conflicts.

Friends are encouraged to come to worship with 'hearts and mind prepared'. This is not to suggest that participants should come to meeting with a ministry prepared for presentation. Meeting for Worship is supposed to be a gathering that is prompted by the Inner Light. If a person is compelled to speak from this source, then it is their responsibility to act on the impulse. Not speaking when the Inner Light prompts the participant denies the group access to the truth. Interviews showed that coming to meeting with 'heart and mind prepared' is understood to mean advising the participant to come with a willingness to accept the Spirit. It is the ideal approach to worship and the business meeting. The business meeting slightly changes the intent of 'hearts and mind prepared'. In this setting the participant is also encouraged to prepare by searching for information on the issues that are set on the agenda. The caveat is that this search should not lead the participant to a personal decision before the meeting. The decision is for the group's discernment of the Inner Light as it guides the group toward a unified decision.

I want to reiterate that Quaker decision making is an exercise that requires the individual to dispose of personal agendas and emotional reaction to the issues. This ideal is sometimes lost in dispute. Personal interpretations of the Inner Light, of Quakerism, or of silence can divide the group when the interpretations of the symbols become the focus of discussion over the issues being considered. Coming to the

meeting with the 'heart and mind prepared' are metaphors urging sociability by not allowing emotion or even thought to weigh too heavily in the interaction. The heart, as a source of emotion, can lead to insensitive and reactive behaviour, and acting solely from the mind, the location of intellect, directs action in ways that are just as insensitive to the directive capabilities of the Inner Light. Since these are problematic capacities, they are subjected to the discipline needed for sensitivity to the Inner Light and that 'still small voice'. The unchecked heart and mind in conflict situations are opportunities for not addressing 'that of God' in others. The relationship that is challenged in dispute is not only one between individuals, but also from the source of reliable truth.

In the midst of an intra-denominational conflict, Friends are confronted by not only an opposing party, but they also face choices in how to manage the situation. Given that the onstage areas of decision-making are not supposed to involve personal agendas, the notion of strategy and tactics appears out of place among Friends. This is certainly not the language that they would apply in the description of their interactions. However, considering the strategic options available from the 'dual concern model' of conflict (Blake and Mouton 1964; Filley 1975; Thomas 1976) we are offered a language that can describe the possible behaviours to manage Quaker conflicts.

The dual concern model of conflict is a simple rendering of dispute situations that describes conflict behaviours according to the sensitivity that two disputing parties demonstrate towards their opposing party's interests. Using this model shows that there are various behaviours in conflict beyond the specific contentiousness of litigation which predominates in legal anthropology. When each party demonstrates

a high regard for each other's interests, their behaviours in the conflict situation are demonstrating problem-solving strategies. Situations, where one or both of the parties are more interested in their own interests over the other's interests, are utilising contentious strategies. There are five possible strategies in this model: withdrawal or inaction, yielding, contending, compromise and problem-solving. Each of these strategies is considered in the Quaker context. The Quaker habitus will cast these options as appropriate in particular areas of the onstage or offstage practice, and inform the manner in which they are performed.

The difficulty with using these notions of strategic options, however, lies in the nature of conflict in ongoing relationships. Conflicts that appear to be resolved in a group can resurface; therefore, the phrase 'conflict management' is preferred rather than conflict resolution. Parties that were quiet on an issue for the sake of the general will may regain their voice when issues re-emerge, so to describe a conflict as resolved is inappropriate. The strategy and tactics directed to a desired outcome are not completely discontinued. Describing a conflict as resolved is also difficult due to group fluidity. Some participants may not be aware of an issue being discussed, and when they do perceive the problem a decision may have occurred without their participation, and the conclusion discovered by the meeting may not be personally satisfying. New people come to participate in the meeting and long-time participants leave, involving new interpretations to enduring problems. Some debates in the Society are never completely resolved. Many of the issues that are highlighted throughout the thesis are under continual negotiation, and are manifest in different forms. The location of children in the life of the meeting is but one example. Some view children's participation in Meeting for Worship as a distraction, and others view

the children as central to the community. The debate moves through the many ways to manage the issue by considering the degree of participation children should have in worship.

For the rest of this section I will focus on how the Quaker disposition influences strategic and tactical choices in conflict situations. The stress on community and its egalitarian structures, the orienting tropes of 'Inner Light', 'Friend', and the tropes associated with conflict establishes a unique setting for sociability among Quakers. The primary strategies available in dispute taken from conflict studies literature will serve as section headings, and the way Friends employed the tactics under each of these strategies are discussed. Entering this discussion are comments on the identity Friends enact as a part of their behavioural creed and how they incorporate particular forms of strategy and tactic into their understanding of themselves as a collective.

### *Withdrawal and Inaction*

Conflict avoidance is withdrawal or inaction from conflict where the disputants resist addressing the issues. Friends identify most strongly with this form of conflict management. They reported being bad at resolving conflicts, because they do not directly address their problems as they develop. *Advices and Queries* encourages this disposition by recommending a self-discipline that monitors disagreement between meeting participants; giving the appearance that conflict is avoided. The passage cited in the previous section is an example of how Friends are encouraged to avoid conflict: 'Avoid hurtful criticism and provocative language', and 'Think it possible you might be mistaken'. By encouraging sociable behaviour and shaking self-

certainty, these advices establish a disposition that discourages direct confrontation. Earlier I described that when there is disagreement, the Friend should reflect on their behaviour and their position. When in Meeting for Worship, the appropriate action is the inaction found in silence. When there is a difference in interpretation, the Friend should keep silent until an appropriate statement can be made or until the some degree of acceptance is realised. The ritualised setting facilitates the values of sociability and tolerance to be embodied. The cognitive features in the Quaker schema of the 'Inner Light', the 'journey', and the 'friend' also promote this sociability. Friends do not want to inhibit the person's sense of the spirit – the person's individualised understanding. The participant that knows there are variations in understanding and witnesses the toleration that others practice in the worship is being provided as a model for correct behaviour. While the person withdraws from a potential conflict, they can act according to their belief that will be similar to the performance that they witness in the person with whom they disagree.

Before exploring the forms withdrawal and inaction take, it is important to consider how and why Friends identify so strongly with this form of conflict management. Friends are discouraged from direct confrontation within the Society through the ritualization of Quaker values, maintaining a social contract. The cognitive features of this tendency were described in Chapter 6. Since conflict is associated with physical harm, and Quakers in conflict is associated with absurdity, Friends are disinclined to discuss conflict. Quaker identification with conflict avoidance is also facilitated by the locations of where conflict is discussed. Discussions of conflict are confined to particular areas, so the people that are not involved in the dispute perceive the integrity of the social contract. I was surprised

by the number of participants in the PM and MM that were unaware of the Trident/Ploughshares incident. Several interviewees were unaware that there was a problem when I asked them for their opinion regarding the situation in interviews. Since they were not active participants in the business meetings, they did not know that Meeting for Sufferings had intervened in the activities of Turning the Tide. For these people their ignorance allowed them to perceive harmony. Also, they were not exposed to the integrated solution that the MM urged. The Quaker practices of constraining the areas where conflict is permissible, and limiting the form that conflict language can take, creates a perception of harmony that needs to be separated from the actual events and methods of conflict management.

Onstage and offstage activity creates a mythology that Friends avoid conflict, particularly intra-denominational conflict. As Friends focus on the peaceful aspect of their faith, other practices in conflict situations are passed over, receiving lesser prominence in the construction of their identity. This encourages focusing on withdrawal, even though other forms of conflict management are regularly employed throughout the various areas of performance. Offstage, Friends will discuss the conflicts that should not be mentioned in formal areas, adding to their perception that conflicts are not managed effectively, or they are avoided by not taking the issues to the business meeting. Conversations occurring offstage and away from the theatre were the rare times for gossip. Informal gossip was witnessed only seldom, and only after I established a more personal relationship with some of my informants. The nature of this form of talk was treated as though the behaviour was inappropriate. Even when it occurred, gossip avoided harshness and personal smears about people, and the speaker typically avoided names in these situations. I realise that my

observation of gossip will be skewed since my informants were aware of my status as an anthropologist researching conflict. In Chapter 6, I stressed the distinction between gossip, worshipful talk and the rules for speaking. During interviews many informants demonstrated reluctance in discussing conflict, perceiving the conversation on particular conflicts as gossiping. In these circumstances the informant would only talk about conflict in general terms, displacing the situation from the people involved – yet another form of creating an identity of conflict avoidance.

As problems become manifest to people offstage often the appropriate venue for airing the concern is established. Adept seasoned Friends consult with each other to decide if the problem should be taken to PM, MM, Elders Committee, or Overseers Committee. Clerks consult with other Clerks, Overseers, or Elders away from the wider meeting to identify the correct manner to proceed, and how to present the issues on the agenda. Sometimes the situation can be managed offstage without formal intervention by directing the disputants to the appropriate resource. These practices maintain the veil of harmony for the rest of the meeting, and facilitate the construction of the conflict avoidance identity.

The practice of withdrawal and inaction took several forms. Dissent is a part of the life of the meeting, taking the forms of avoidance, gossip, silence, statements of protest, threats, and non-participation. The most common of these is avoidance. Avoidance takes several forms ranging from evading people with whom one has a quarrel, not acknowledging the issue at hand, or evading the forums where issues are discussed, like business meetings. Using these actions, the participant can continue worshipping without disrupting the communal aspects of the meeting, or the fragility

of Meeting for Worship. Silencing dissent through personal editing quietly supports the relationships and the ritual environment. During interviews an informant revealed that her recent absence from Meeting for Worship was to avoid feeling hypocritical. Rather than engaging in the focus of the worship, she reported sitting in the room thinking about the people present that she did not like. She opted to express her Quaker identity by participating in central sections of the Society.

Meeting participants would withdraw from interactions with some meeting participants, because they did not get along. Withdrawal is, however, usually an expression of faith conveying differing interpretations on which symbols and practices are appropriate. When the door policy was altered, participants withdrew from the local meeting because they perceived the silence was deified. This is not the only form of withdrawal from the Society. The theological ambiguity in the Society was troublesome for a few Friends in the local meeting that I spoke to in the early days of fieldwork. They wanted greater emphasis on the Christian origins of Quakerism to be conveyed in the local worship and the wider Society. They stopped participating with a sense of loss, because they sensed the Society moving too far from its Christian origins. These acts of withdrawal were assertions of agency that resisted the dominant ideology and appropriation of the Quaker symbols between those who created a 'deified' Quaker silence, and those who left because the silence was not Quaker enough. Friends would also withdraw by avoiding particular business meetings where there were issues that they personally did not want to address due either to their frustration with the topic, or due to their disinterest. One Friend admitted that she did not want to go to PM because they were discussing how to manage the children in meeting. She withdrew from the discussion, because she

was aware that the meeting would not find a satisfying conclusion. Her admission of her withdrawal was shared with me offstage, because she knew I was interested in conflict, otherwise she would not have mentioned the avoidance, keeping her dissent silent.

Withdrawal can also result from a sense of alienation in the meeting. The reflexive nature of Quaker worship leads some participants to recognise the frailty of this construction of Quaker identity. However, when this is acknowledged onstage, the admission is punished with marginalisation. These people, who 'don't get it', or who are less adept at the Quaker game and reveal their ignorance or disregard of the rules of performance, are subtly marginalised. They people become objects of 'concern', since they challenge the general will, and suggest an internal subversion. Yet, if this recognition is spoken in the proper arena and leads to changes in the participant's understanding and action during conflicts, the speaker is rewarded with improved status. The latter situation is demonstrating knowledge of the Quaker game, and being adept in the internalisation of the Quaker values, and awareness of appropriate arenas of performance.

Perhaps the most notorious withdrawals in Quaker history were the splits among Friends in the United States, and the separation of Fritchley Meeting from the London Yearly Meeting in Britain. The divisions among American Friends creating the distinctive branches in the Society described in Chapter 1, were withdrawals from meetings over the source of authority in the Bible and the Inner Light. In Britain, the followers of John Sargent in 1870 objected to the Society abandoning the peculiarities and the movement toward evangelical theology. They rejected the

structural authority of the London Yearly Meeting and withdrew from participation until 1967 (Punshon 1984).

Quaker behaviour in conflict does utilise an avoidance strategy as is shown. Either in interpersonal relations, or between meetings and the different tiers of the organisation, particular tensions are not mentioned for the sake of maintaining a sense of unity. The Society readily identifies with this strategy because conflict is cognitively antithetical to peace, and as I stress in Chapter 6, there are other cognitive structures that facilitate this myth. This cultural focus hones into withdrawal and inaction in the interactions among Friends, even though they deploy other strategies in the life of the community. This identity, with the establishment of proper areas for the acknowledgement of conflict, directs communal action toward the unique Quaker form of collective bargaining – the Meeting for Worship for Business. This form will be discussed later.

### *Yielding*

Yielding, or conceding to the needs or wants of another party at the expense of one's own needs, can be an invisible response to conflict contexts. In the Quaker cultural logic of yielding, silence is employed by the participant to allow other people to achieve their needs without disruption. The yielding party does not consider their needs to be as important as maintaining the relationship with the other party. During business meetings this type of strategy can also be the result of time pressure. Long business meetings fatigue the participant, facilitating a yielding strategy. The MfS Clerk in the Trident Ploughshares incident sought to eliminate, or minimise consideration of the issues by deliberately exploiting this tendency. The QPS report

was placed at the end of a long agenda, and the added time pressure for the Members at the meeting to get their train home, moulded a situation where people would not be inclined to debate the breach in protocol. In an interview, a former Clerk said, 'Its nearly impossible to control a business meeting. Many of the people in the meeting have been Clerks, and they're all watching what you are doing'. Ideally, the Clerk aims to avoid these occasions by deferring a decision to a later meeting before a poor outcome is reached through people yielding to pressure. In these circumstances the yielding approach can be viewed as a lack of discipline, since the goal is unity through the discovery of the Inner Light's intentions. By not finding the unified outcome the general will is not discovered and the social contract could be jeopardised in the future.

A clear and vocal statement of yielding occurred in the early days of fieldwork, a man stood at Meeting for Worship, stating he was ending a self-imposed, year of silence. He was Eldered the prior year for ministering too frequently. The Eldering was done offstage, but without the sensitivity that normally accompanies the disciplining of participants. He was offended by the harshness of the statements, but yielded to the Elder's assertion of worship form. This onstage statement of his position acknowledged proper form, but the arena where his comment took place shocked the meeting, as it was stated onstage and in the theatre. During the rest of my fieldwork this man ministered regularly to the appreciation of most participants in meeting. An Elder in an interview suggested that even though the offending Elder maintained the aim of safeguarding the form, all the Elders were Eldered to take more care in how they advise the meeting. The Elders in turn quietly yielded.

The Quaker disposition suggests yielding is inappropriate when the position comes from the Inner Light's truth, yet it is better to yield rather than falter on what in the end may be personal convictions. In the latter situation a Meeting for Clearness may be needed to discern the difference. The truth established as coming from the Inner Light is one worthy of confrontation and stubbornness. Continuing revelation compels Friends to seek God's guidance, or from a more secular interpretation, to discover a universal truth. Ignoring the truth is nearly to sin. After discerning truth Friends are compelled to abide by their discovery in acts of integrity even if this leads them to confront established law. I will discuss the expression of contentious tactics later.

Other situations in the meeting create difficulties for yielding behaviour. In an interview, one Member confided that particular personalities are difficult to accommodate in meeting.

Usually personalities will disrupt the meeting. A person will repeatedly step on people's toes, but the meeting won't do anything until a point comes when someone lashes out and Elders need to intervene.

The tendency for the meeting is to yield to the needs of a difficult individual, hoping that the person will come to 'see the light' (the informant's phrase), and recognise the way Friends practice their manner of interacting and worship. If the person refuses to assimilate the meanings and practices, and their breaches persist, particularly onstage, then Elders and Overseers will try to manage the situation, abandoning the yielding the approach. In these circumstance the meeting may continue to yield, and even withdraw from interacting with the person, who transgresses the appropriate form. The result can alienate the person in question, through a passive process of marginalisation.

### *Contending*

Contentious behaviour is nearly antithetical within the Society today, if we assume, as many Friends do, that the avoidance of conflict is the primary feature of Quaker practice. A contentious strategy is satisfying one's own needs with disregard for the other party. George Fox's confrontational tactic of standing in the 'steeplehouse' congregation to declare the parish vicar a fraud appears to be long past. Contentiousness conjures images of bellicosity and its negative associations, but this rendering excludes the less heavy-handed approaches of ingratiating, and persuasion. When considering the various tactical options in a contentious strategy, the irony of 'contentious Friends' is less ironical, and reveals the Quaker identification with conflict avoidance as mostly a feature of their construction. Among contemporary Friends, contentious behaviour does not usually take so obvious a form as George Fox's resistance to the established church, but the style does have its place in Quaker practice.

Many social activities inform the participant that contention is inappropriate in Quaker meetings. During fieldwork, I observed that Friends do not communally engage in games that involve competition where a winner and a loser are declared. At ceilidhs, an 'offstage' area of performance, Friends would engage in games that involved getting to know each other, as a form of introduction or re-familiarising with each other. One game involved two circles of people, an inner ring, and an outer ring, where the people in the two rings faced each other. A caller not in the ring would call out a command or question: 'Describe your favourite feature'; or 'What was the last book your read?' etc. After the command each facing person

would respond, sharing information about themselves to the person they were facing. Even when the facing people are quite familiar, they may discover something new. After the question was answered, one circle would rotate so the people were now facing someone different, and the questions would resume. At one party where this game was played, one of the tongue-in-cheek questions was 'Are you a leg person or a breast person?' To this a woman asserted her individuality by laughingly shouting for all to hear, 'I'm a vegetarian and a feminist'. Everyone laughed at the evasion of categories.

These activities facilitated the individualism and group unity by developing familiarity among the participants, rather than establishing a division that is possible with win-lose games. These games of introduction and unity are a common feature with young Friends gatherings, creating a closely-knit group that maintains their relationships over great distances and well into adulthood (Bellars 1996). From the list of contentious options: ingratiation, gamesmanship, persuasion, threats, promises, and irrevocable commitments (Pruitt and Rubin 1986), Friends rely little on gamesmanship in the traditional sense. Their emphasis on egalitarian structures creates activities where groupings of winners and losers are avoided, aiming to create 'win-win' opportunities where the games are aimed to experience community. The non-competitive environment encourages further involvement, and through this encouragement the other persuasive forms are initiated.

Friends rely heavily on ingratiation and persuasion, yet the Quaker habitus informs these tactics in particular ways. These less aggressive contentious forms facilitate a docile image. The notion of 'support' is not only a source of sustenance to the community, but it also ingratiates the visitor to the Society. The welcoming

handshake when entering the Meeting House for worship and at the end of worship encourages an atmosphere of community and suggests what is offered to the participant. It brings into favour the ideas that Friends seek to embody, and initiates the sense of being 'at home'. I mentioned in Chapter 2 my own sense of being a Quaker through participating in the community. This was also partly due to their acceptance of my involvement as a researcher, which gratified my intellectual curiosity, and also from their deliberate attempts to welcome people in the community. Soon after I had been introduced to the local meeting, I received invitations to dinner and to participate in arenas offstage and away from the theatre, establishing relationships that continued the process of integrating into the community.

Friends practice their belief as the key form of persuasion, demonstrating its effectiveness as a manner of living and enjoyment of life. Aversion from overt proselytising and evangelical zeal to persuade membership and the Quaker lifestyle is due to its perceived threat to the favoured means of persuasion – personal 'convincement'. This is a process of self-persuasion, where the participant recognises the testimonies, and acknowledges the implications of these truths on their lifestyle, leading to membership in the Society. The agency of the participant is the most persuasive means to gaining membership for Friends, and is one reason for the relatively small number of convinced Friends. The internalisation of the Inner Light trope becomes a process of gradual significance structuring the life of the believer. In Meeting for Worship the participant is informed that the fragile activity is not a venue for debate, but this does not suggest that it is not a venue for persuasion. Participants are encouraged to control their response to ministry; silence their

opposition; discover common themes; or consider what lies behind a person's statement. Internally Friends persuade themselves, cutting and pasting from the differing ministries to invent their own Quaker understanding.

The Quaker phrase and practice, 'let your lives speak', is an act of resistance to the norms of contemporary living, and is itself a persuasive, contentious assertion of the correct way to live. It suggests that persuasion comes from doing rather than through rhetoric. Some Friends acknowledge that their lifestyle is their choice, and others can do the same if they so choose. Still other Friends will be more passive-aggressive with the correctness of their life decisions, wearing their deliberated lifestyle as an emblem of their peaceful defiance against the trappings of their constructed notions of the unreflexive believer. Their actions suggest that people should follow their example, because they are morally correct. In this instance the body becomes the concentration of the method of persuasion through action, the form of contentious tactic, and, as I stress in Chapter 6, the metaphorical domain commonly used to understand conflict. In conflict situations the 'letting one's life speak' suggests engaging in sanctioned behaviour by discussing the issues in the proper venue, using the proper idiom, and acting in a Quakerly manner. This disciplined approach models behaviour to fellow participants and provides status in the meeting, or 'weight' as a person living the peace testimony. The Clerk in the business meeting and the Elder in Meeting for Worship, when properly performing their duties, become the persuasive models for the proper approach to Quakerly behaviour, particularly in conflict situations.

The Quaker use of promises is another important contentious tactic that takes a unique twist in this setting. Many religions and, certainly most Christian

denominations, persuade their believers to abide by a particular lifestyle by promising everlasting life in paradise or a release from worldly concerns, if particular commandments are obeyed. There is a political promise that if one acts according to the rules delivered by Moses, Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, or any other faith, that the adherent will not need to worry on their death. Among Friends there was little mention of heaven or escape, and there were no promises about an afterlife. The subject index to *Quaker Faith and Practice* has no heading for heaven. The book and Friends' practices do not ignore death. They are very practical about its reality, encouraging people to plan for the inevitability. Friends do not use the promise of heavenly comforts upon death. They offer support to the dying and the bereaved living. The adherent to the Quaker behavioural creed does receive a promise, however. Participants are promised that abiding by Quaker practices toward truth will allow the person to enjoy their lives among the living. People are encouraged to:

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.

George Fox, 1656  
*Advices and Queries*  
1995: 1.02.43

This quote uses the journey trope to suggest the reward that adherents, or the convinced, will obtain when living properly. It concludes the *Advices and Queries* section in *Quaker Faith and Practice*, and it is a commonly quoted instance of abiding by the unwritten rules of Quaker practice promises a rewarding life that is among the living. The passage's popularity today is not surprising given the theological diversity that allows participants to engage in Quaker belief without believing there is a heaven.

Within the theatre, both on and offstage, heavy-handed contentious behaviour is avoided for the community. This is not to suggest that these tactics are not used. When division occurs the proper response is to bring the 'concern' to the appropriate business meeting, where the growth and journey metaphor can be employed within the Quaker idiom. Often a division is not realised until the business meeting where an issue is raised in the protection of Quaker process. (The resulting problem solving will be discussed below.) At the higher tiers of the Society there is an increased possibility of contentious tactics. In Meeting for Sufferings a single person can impose their view on the entire Society, even if for only a brief time as the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident illustrates.

Away from the theatre contending is most visible. Onstage, but away from the theatre, personal views on the troubles in the Society are regular feature in *The Friend*. Here Friends are able to state their demands and issue threats. The example of Paul Honigman's article, mentioned in Chapter 3 is relevant. His opposition to the training of Trident/Ploughshares 2000 was so adamant that he threatened resignation from the Society. The Trident/Ploughshares 2000 demonstration intended to use contentious, violent tactics to achieve their aim of bringing an end to the Trident system and supporting international law. Friends opposed to the training of the protesters found the direct and violent confrontation objectionable, regardless of how transparent their intentions were. This situation brought contentiousness into the local levels where in this meeting the discipline was strongly and successfully asserted by the Clerk. In this situation the needs of maintaining the Quaker process (sharing information and concerns using Quaker form) to produce a minute were asserted above the needs of the individuals wanting to 'win' on their personal agenda.

The Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident also provides an example of where contention, in its heavy-handed manifestation, is acceptable. Like the general notion of ‘conflict’ as an outward phenomenon, away from the Society, contentious strategies are also more acceptable when they are targeting non-Quaker opponents. This recalls the Rousseau’s assertion that the general will requires an enemy. The earlier example of George Fox’s confrontation of church clergy at the beginning of this section was a disagreement directed at the established church by using assertively contentious tactics. The demonstration against the Trident programme was direct action opposed to government policy. Honigman’s point was Trident/Ploughshares 2000 did not allow any other option other than their demand, and that unilateral action even when directed against non-Friends was un-Quakerly, and should not be supported by the Society (1998). Such direct action against a policy implemented at Friends House would be objectionable to Friends.

‘Speaking truth to power’ is an important phrase that characterises both the Quaker identity and the outward directing of contentious behaviour in Quaker consciousness. Confronting the people who hold power, namely those in established positions that society recognises as charged with the formation and implementation of public policy, is acceptable for Friends because it confirms the myth of powerlessness in collective Quaker identity.<sup>iv</sup> The formation of this relationship in power relations hinges on the Friend perceiving their possession of a greater good. *Advices and Queries* reassure this for the Society’s participants.

Respect the laws of the state but let your first loyalty be to God’s purposes. If you feel impelled by strong conviction to break the law, search your conscience deeply. Ask your meeting for prayerful support which will give you strength as a right way becomes clear.

1995: 1.02.35

If the situation arises when a person's conviction does contrast the legal system the journey and light tropes are implemented with 'a right way becomes clear'. On occasions where a person decides to act against the law based on an urge from the Inner Light, they are described as acting under a 'Concern'.<sup>v</sup> When the person decides to proceed with their concern they can seek the discernment of their meeting in a Meeting for Clearness. This process tests the repercussions of the proposed course of action, and in the process the person gains 'prayerful support'. After this process the person is then 'acting under concern' with the endorsement of the community. The result of this process takes the Quaker general will and asserts it outside of the Society.

The Meeting for Sufferings was established as a meeting to support Friends who were 'acting under concern', and 'speaking truth to power', and then to be imprisoned and victimised for their actions. This gathering of Friends then sought to provide support, economically and spiritually, to the imprisoned Friend's family. Meeting for Sufferings eventually became the deliberative body for the Society, however the original function of the meeting is still available to Friends. The use of 'Sufferings' melds the physical suffering that these past Friends endured into the structure of the Society, providing historical substantiation to the 'conflict is violence' metaphor and the Quaker identity of powerlessness, non-violence, and dissenters of injustice. During fieldwork Friends considered revising the name of this meeting, because it appeared to be obsolete, requiring too much explanation to people that were foreign or newly participating to the Society.

‘Acting under concern’ is contentious, revolutionary behaviour, and it links to the millennial beginnings to the Society where Ranters, Muggletonians, and Fifth Monarchy Men found haven in a silence that did not require oaths. Today Trotskyites, Eco-Feminists, and disarmament activists of different ilk participate and project support for their views into the silence. Their participation in the Society offers a setting for the ritualization of Quaker values, which translate into their revolutionary ambitions. Contentious, revolutionary actions are muted, but their ambition is still to change the world. The Friends I am acquainted with direct this outward sense of conflict through participation in the system, and enact their revolution quietly. Purchasing the items that their testimonies allow impacts the economy. The more affluent Friends that believe the tax system is too lenient on their prosperity voluntarily contribute to a charity that supports the needy. The Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident involved Friends that aim to change the British military by strengthening international law. During Meeting for Worship one Sunday, the silence was frequently jarred by the sound of jackhammers outside the Meeting House, prompting a ministry about building the New Jerusalem. In subtle and obvious ways Friends seek a new regime.

### *Compromise*

Compromise is a tactic that requires both parties to yield on some of their interests to arrive at a solution. The business meeting and the use of silence establish an opportunity for compromise when individuals silence their dissent to a minute or a ministry. The *Advices and Queries* will disguise the strategy by encouraging the participant to reconsider their own needs for the sake of the relationships that provide

access to understanding the Inner Light, or the social contract. Compromise on the surface is an unattractive option in the business meetings since yielding on an issue is an eventual threat to the social contract and the unity sought in business meetings.

Continually negotiating where children fit in Meeting for Worship is an exercise in compromise for Friends. The various conclusions reached by the meeting brought children into worship at the beginning to leave fifteen minutes into worship, entering worship at the end of the hour, and holding an 'All-age Meeting For Worship' once a month. A portion of the meeting find children a distraction during silent worship, many value their participation, but do not believe the children are capable of sustaining silence for a full hour. Earlier I explained the issue re-emerging as some families move from the meeting and children growing and no longer participating in worship, but this only partly describes the situation. The challenge that arises with compromise is that through the partial yielding of interest both parties are partially dissatisfied. The various arrangements for the children left all parties slightly frustrated with the outcome. The issues are continually managed because there is a continual dissatisfaction with the compromise. Couched within this issue lies the Quaker construction of personhood that stresses individual personality. In interviews my informants all judged the appropriate time for children to participate in silent worship depended on the individual child. Some children are capable of an hour of worship at an early age, while others may never manage to appreciate the hour. This logic arises from the journey trope where each person is on a different location on the journey, and some choose not to take the Quaker way.

The challenge of managing the issues relegated to the Children's Committee, which was comprised by anyone who had an interest in supporting the children in the

meeting. Participants included parents, retired teachers, and people who participate in the Society's central work with children and young people. The committee balanced the needs of the children to learn the values of the Society, allowing them to feel a part of the community, and instilling in them key Quaker values with the needs of the meeting.

### *Problem Solving*

Problem solving is a strategy of conflict management that is discussed throughout the thesis. It is a management procedure that seeks to identify problems that divide disputing parties to discover an outcome that satisfies all of the disputants. The breakdown of Quaker process in the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident illustrates this strategy well. After the conflict arose where some people in the Meeting for Sufferings opposed the decision that the protesters be trained by Turning the Tide, the Monthly Meeting used the Quaker business method to recognise the issues and create a minute that unified the disputing parties. This was an integrated solution where both sides of the debate left the meeting satisfied that their concerns were addressed and their integrity was intact. As Friends focus their identity toward conflict avoidance and regulating the locations where conflict can be openly discussed, they funnel the issues toward the business meeting where they employ problem solving to create integrated solutions. Throughout the discussion I have illustrated the requirements that the Quaker problem-solving process, in the business meeting, incurs on the participants. The disposition encouraged by participating in Meeting for Worship is an internalisation of the testimonies, the *Advices and Queries*, Quaker history, and the Quaker social contract.

The Quaker business method is the primary implementation of the problem-solving strategy, where integrated solutions are sought using a ritualised process. It not only structures the participant's behaviour, it also restricts the choices that are available in conflict management. The process has the force of historical precedent, and pragmatic expedience illustrating to Friends that there is no reason to alter the procedure for a new means of managing disputes. Problem-solving in settings away from the Society requires considerable discussion on the logistics of how to make a decision. In the circumstances each party's interests need to be discovered, requiring self-analysis before they can disclose their aims. These aspirations then call for clarification between parties in the process of creating integrative solution. An effective conclusion to a problem requires rigidity on the aspirations and flexibility on the means by which the ends are achieved (Fisher and Ury 1981), and an agenda that manages the order of the issues (Pruitt and Rubin 1986). All of these characteristics to effective conflict management are met in the Quaker business meeting. Friends manage these requirements for decision-making through the maintenance of the business method. Friends do not debate the structure of business meetings. The roles of the participants are decided without negotiation, and the manner, in which issues and opinions are presented go-without-saying. The testimonies are the agreed ends for Friends, and the journey trope suggests that the means to these ends are numerous. With all of these procedures established Friends need not invest time into making these decisions, allowing attention to address the issues they encounter.

The business method effectively achieves integrated solutions, but the important aspect to the process is that the participant needs to believe in its efficacy.

One Member shared that he tried to use the method at his work. He appreciated how effective the method was at creating solutions to problems among Friends, so he sought to bring this effective style to the workplace. During a review of his department, he was shocked when the reviewer suggested that he had a dictatorial management style during meetings. This was counter to his understanding of his intent. While he sought to bring the egalitarian structures and novel process to his workplace, his co-workers were not familiar, or convinced, with the method. The co-workers viewed sharing their responsibilities as a threat to their position in the workplace, so they were not convinced. They went along with the process to placate this Friend in a leadership position. This is helpful in showing that not only is belief in the system important for Friends, but it also shows how their participating in the hegemonic structuring of their behaviour is a matter of choice. Those Friends that decided on membership after a convincing session in a business meeting illustrate both points. The occasion becomes a conclusion of belief in a decision-making system, an acceptance of a religious system, and an incorporation of practice into a unique identity.

A reason for the apparent oversight, or minimisation of problem-solving as a part of the Quaker identity is that the form goes-without-saying, at monthly intervals at each tier of the Society. While Friends do recognise the importance of the business method as a feature that makes the Society unique, they do not readily acknowledge this as a part of their abilities as managers of conflict. The immediate answer to why this is the case could allude to the sociable trait of modesty, but their aversion to hegemony suggests a more compelling answer. Once in a conversation, I suggested to a Friend that Meeting for Worship required considerable amounts of

conformity, and he took offence. He quietly insisted that, Friends choose to be silent'. In spite of my explanations using evidence from social psychology, and suggesting that there are Quaker structures to the silence, he insisted that participants in meeting act as a matter of choice. His reaction, along with the notion of personal conviction, suggests a dislike for the idea that there are limits on freedom among Friends. The orthodoxy in business meetings is not recognised as being rigidly practiced. A hegemony that is freely selected no longer is viewed as hegemonic.

The people who protect the structures, symbols and behaviours as uniquely Quaker are doing so as a ruling class in a hierarchy that denies itself by limiting its ability to control overtly. Returning to the door policy issues in the narrative we see the issues arising in PM where the group decided that the issue was one for Elders to consider. The Elders' decisions were then taken back to the PM for their ratification through the process of discernment. Since the participants in business meetings are typically Members, the process becomes egalitarianism among Quaker specialists – seasoned or weighty Friends. This prospect would be troubling for people who cherish their efforts toward equality. The Attender, by not participating in the business meeting, not only strains the resources from the few people that do become Members, they also contribute to the formation of a governing class. The inaction in decision-making defers power to the few who do participate regularly in the Society's business. The appreciation of the egalitarian structures in the silence, and the efforts to not impose on the individual are at risk by the Attender's lack of involvement in the structure. Likewise, the constraints placed on discussing problems in Meeting for Worship, and the enjoyment of this by all who understand the ethos of this setting, prevents openly taking the problem to people who participate only in that activity.

Elders, protecting the structure of worship, prevent themselves from addressing the issues with the people who may not be aware of the problem.

The slightest alteration to the door policy also changed the meeting's composition, creating a more homogeneous group of people, Members and Attenders. The policy selected people who accepted sacrificing some freedom (losing the casual start to meeting) for 'a more meaningful experience of silence'. The policy that used Quaker problem-solving to create an integrated solution did so with in a selected class of participants. Even though the intent was to create an integrated solution, the result was a contentious decision to create an environment that strengthens the social contract among decision makers by appropriating the key symbols in worship. The process left out the interests of the other party through that group's lack of participation in the business meeting. The people who were not contributing to the contract were given the option to contribute, or select a new meeting, although Friends would never make such a statement overtly. Those who dissented to the policy could have brought their frustration to the business meeting where they would be incorporated into the social agreement. These dissenters either preferred to remain silent or leave to find another contract.

The problem solving employed by Friends is a system for discovering integrated solutions that allows each participant an opportunity to voice their opinion. For an opinion to be viewed as competent, it must adhere to the forms of speaking and comportment in the proper areas of performance. Conversations and interviews have indicated that Friends place their identity with conflict avoidance. I have described their internalisation of the social contract through the making of a minute as the process that 'convinces' many people into membership. I would suggest that

this phenomenon of ‘convincement’ tells another tale about the Quaker identity than their reported propensity toward avoidance.

## **Conclusion**

This final chapter sought to bring together the contextual layers described in earlier chapters to illustrate the constraints informing Quaker conflict management. The Quaker disposition directs intra-denominational conflicts into business meetings and committees where Friends can contain the dispute. This practice, with the cognitive structures of ‘conflict is violence’ and ‘Pacifist conflict is absurd’, dissuades other forms of conflict management and promotes a Quaker identity that suggests Friends avoid conflict. The exploration of the other forms of conflict management covered in the ‘dual concern model’ of conflict reveals that Friends utilise all forms of conflict management with a Quaker logic. Friends withdraw from dispute on and offstage in Meeting for Worship when disagreement occurs over ministry or when avoiding fellow participants with whom there is a strained relationship. Yielding is enacted in business meetings when Friends quietly step aside on issues for the sake of unity, or when in Meeting for Worship particular personalities repeatedly breach appropriate behaviour and no one Elders the person. Contentious strategies are common and take unique forms with Quaker specific idiom. Eldering, convincement, ‘let your life speak’, and ‘speaking truth to power’ are persuasive forms that aim to educate people into the Quaker way. Other heavy-handed tactics are typically behaviours reserved for the activities away from the theatre. Friends issue threats in Quaker publications and enact ‘non-violent’ direct action over interpretations the Inner Light’s intent for personal and communal action. Problem-solving strategies, like compromise and

integrated solutions, are common activities onstage. Compromises are not ideal outcomes in business meetings, since the ambition is to achieve unity in discerning truth. This form of management is more common in committees where enduring problems are managed as an ongoing concern. The unique form of integrated solution, the Quaker business method, is where the multiple contextual layers are at their most concentrated and controlled, and where Friends most fully enact their belief and identity.

Interestingly, the business method does not factor as strongly into the popular Quaker identity as avoidance. This is partly due to fewer meeting participants are involved in the decision-making process. Yet, the people who are involved in the decisions of the Society, become convinced in the community and incorporate it more strongly into their commitment more deeply than this notion of Quaker avoidance acknowledges.

The Trident/Ploughshares 2000 incident illustrates how the Quaker process can find stalemate, escalation, and settlement. The power structures were detailed in Chapters 3 and 4, giving a detailed account of the practices in the tiers of the organisation and the practices that facilitate the contractual approach to the distribution of power. Chapter 3 also detailed Trident/Ploughshares incident, the central focus of this thesis. Onstage discussion of conflict typically results in effective and clear decisions, but this episode challenged the entire organisation. When the Meeting for Sufferings questioned the decisions of QPS and Turning the Tide, the actions of the entire Society stalemated into a dispute about the intended actions of the committee and the legal and symbolic repercussion of these actions. The time pressure occurring at the meeting forced them to table the resulting debate.

so the issue quickly escalated to the rest of the Society. The process included the discernment of people who wanted to get involved in the MM minute in a specially organised meeting to consider the issues and make a decision. The resulting minute from this meeting created a sense of community for many in a situation where this appeared unlikely. The conclusion, allowing TTT to train the Trident/Ploughshares 2000 organisation, came from Monthly Meeting letters, ignoring the individual and Preparative Meetings comments, and the MM representatives.

The issues relating to the door policy at the local meeting reveal the tension between the free leading of the spirit and the requirement for structure to maintain the event as a Quaker one. The local meeting PM and the local Elders controlled worship by manoeuvring the meeting participants' involvement by eliminating the casual entry to worship. The policy and the pamphlet that instructed participants on the meanings for worship were acts that controlled the key Quaker symbol – silence. This confrontation between interpretations of the worship was a re-enactment of the continual tension between the panopticon and the social contract, or utilitarian and contractual arrangements, found throughout Quaker history. The meeting's participants as a result of the new policy used various methods of strategy and tactic to achieve this outcome. An integrated solution among seasoned Friends was discovered that arranged for Elders to consider the situation. The Elders committee then discerned that the door policy and more education were needed to maintain their meaning of Meeting for Worship. Resistance to the policy resulted in concerns being mentioned both on and offstage. Some people withdrew after issuing offstage threats, and one participant contentiously entered worship ignoring the policy.

These narratives have illustrated the Quaker habitus and the logic of Quaker conflict management. The primary tropes of the 'Inner Light', the 'journey' and 'Friend' are not only structure Quaker understanding of the world, they are cognitive aids informing the conflict logic. Within the domain of Quaker understanding and meaning, conflict sits in a unique position that lies in practice but is avoided and denied in the Quaker imagination. Conflict is a context ideally suited outside of the Society when enacted towards policies and people. These people are not a part of the social contract that Friends share, bringing some Friends in direct confrontation with the law. When conflicts do occur in the Society, Quakerly strategies are employed to contain the problem both on and offstage.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> I use this term in the Bourdieuan sense which states, 'The habitus is a set of *dispositions* which incline agents to act and react in certain ways' (Bourdieu 1997: 12). [The author's emphasis] The ambition in this chapter is to illustrate the Quaker use of particular strategies and tactics in conflict situations that Friends would recognise as being 'Quakerly'.

<sup>ii</sup> This in the US is referred to Quaker time, as I stated in Chapter 2.

<sup>iii</sup> I need to reiterate that this policy was implemented toward the end of my taking fieldnotes. No statistics are available to indicate the long-term influences of the policy.

<sup>iv</sup> The sense of relative powerlessness was a dominant feature in the focus groups where Friends denied their power in both within the Society and in wider society. Friends contrast their political structure with other religious organisations to illustrate their egalitarian ideal.

<sup>v</sup> This condition of 'Concern' need not always result in acting against the law. In fact the Friend Adam Curle, acted under concern and with the support of his Preparative and Monthly Meeting he established the first peace studies department at Bradford University.

## Conclusion

This chapter ties up the interweaving of the ethnographic experience, and the theoretical themes that I described in the Introduction by briefly describing the Society based on these themes. The primary goal in this project was to contribute to the ever-expanding awareness of conflict, and its implications in people's lives. The anthropological approach to this awareness is exceedingly fruitful, and our appreciation of conflict continues if we dislocate the pursuit from a legal-centred heuristic. Litigious behaviour is just one of a whole plethora of opportunities in the management of conflict situations. I sought to show how the power relations, the higher order and concept specific schema among Friends, and the culturally informed context impact the cultural logic of conflict management. By placing legal practices into its own form of logic in the cultural repertoire, we can recognise other forms of strategy and tactic in a conflict context, and how the 'Quakerly' disposition influences these behaviours. This look at dispute suggests that the courtroom, the battlefield, the business meeting, or the meeting room are areas where power relations encourage the enactment of value-laden dispositions, which provide the agent with particular choices in particular settings.

My epistemological foundation was conveyed in the introduction as themes that ran throughout the writing. These themes can now be condensed into statements about Friends and their cultural logic in conflicts.

### *Community*

Friends once were an inwardly focused community with stark boundaries maintained through dress, speech, and endogamy. Today they continue to maintain a sense of

community without these overt symbols to mark their boundaries (Collins 1996). They mute the separations between themselves and others through their attempts to accommodate the individual by 'addressing that of God' in others. The local meeting regularly worked to establish a sense of community, and they did this through sharing meals, egalitarian structures, and a gathered silence. A social contract was formed among the participants who worship in silence and gather to make decisions based communal understanding of the truths arising from 'Inner Light'.

An internal boundary, between Members and Attenders, was managed in such a manner that it was apparent to only the Members or long-standing Attenders in the Society. The distinction reflects a power discrepancy between the Members who are committed to the organisation, serving as Overseers, Elders, Clerks, Seasoned and Weighty Friends, and Attenders who choose not to be as involved in the decision-making, and maintenance of the organisation. The resulting tension between these statuses in the Society challenges the integrity of the social contract, since some people do not participate in the discernment of the general will. The ethos of tolerance, and the practice of allowing the Attender to 'convince' his or herself to the Quaker way, veils the concern to the Attender.

### *Conflict*

Conflict was once central to the Quaker cultural model, as Friends sought to bring a new millennium through a 'lamb's war'. When Friends established the peace testimony, 'conflict' was no longer central to their engagement with the world for the Quaker interpretation of the world. Today, unity dominates the Quaker imagination

particularly in the process of decision-making as Friends form minutes, which reflect the general will of the decision-making body. Quakerly dispositions enact particular strategies and tactics in the management of conflict situations. Withdrawal and avoidance are typically recognised as the primary means to manage conflicts within the Society, using silence and self-questioning to forestall overt dispute. Yielding is common when Friends aim to lay aside their needs for the sake of the social contract, or the wider body. In these situations the relationship is viewed as more important than the personal need. Contentiousness, in its heavy-handed manifestations, is best directed toward non-Quaker disputants. Friends utilise promises, persuasion, and ingratiation with a habitus that makes the actions 'Quakerly', and disguises them as contentious activity. The act of Eldering is the best example of a contentious tactic in the Society, as Elders seek to train participants about the proper form and meaning of Meeting for Worship. Compromises are managed by committees who are given the responsibility to manage questions that are difficult to resolve for the wider decision-making bodies. While my informants did not tout it as the primary form of conflict management, the Quaker business method is a unique form of discovering integrated solutions that aim to satisfy the needs of all the participants in the decision-making process.

My interpretation acknowledges different 'onstage' and 'offstage' areas of Quaker performance to assist our understanding of where conflict is most appropriately enacted. This approach suggests that the 'onstage' Quaker business meeting is the location where the group most appropriately manages conflicts, and Meeting for Worship is the least appropriate. The unofficial routes of conflict management, which occur 'offstage', allow conflicts to occur without threatening the

efficacy of the official methods, and promote an identity that Quakers avoid intra-denominational conflict. Occasions where the informal, 'offstage' attempt at conflict management are brought to the attention of the broader group, threaten the egalitarian power structures and the integrity of the social contract.

### *Cognition and tropes*

Tropes inform the participants on how to appreciate the world. The central trope to the Quaker cultural model is the 'Inner Light' from which their key values, or testimonies, and the organisational structures arise. Because of the theological diversity in the Society, tensions have arisen about the lack of common language among Friends. The Inner Light is no longer interpreted with a Christian understanding alone, allowing other religious schema to inform the Quaker interpretation of the trope. Theological diversity is managed by the 'journey' trope, which allows participants to value their own spiritual experience and the experience of others in the face of such diverse religious understanding. 'Friend' is a polytrope that changes meaning as one moves through the Quaker contexts, and also serves to unify diversity, particularly when disagreements occur.

Within the Quaker schema today, conflict is interpreted as 'violence' in the local contexts; whereas, the 'growth' metaphor is encouraged as the ideal heuristic for Friends. The 'conflict is violence' metaphor motivates conflict avoidance behaviours, and encourages the reported notion that, 'Friends are bad at managing conflicts'. The 'growth' trope vies for prominence in the production of the conflict context. *Quaker Faith and Practice* endorses the view that conflicts should not be avoided, but accepted as an opportunity for relationships to deepen and develop:

therefore, conflicts should be accepted as an opportunity to improve the contract. The challenge for Friends is to develop the conflict context into situations where community is maintained, and needs are met, as they are able to reinforce their cultural values. This brings conflicts to an 'onstage, and in the theatre' arena for conflict management, where constraints are placed on proper performance

### *Power*

The Quaker emphasis on communal power and individual experience establishes tensions in the organisational structures of the Society. The social contract Friends employ contextualises power relations suggesting Friends seek to employ communal, 'communicative' (Arendt 1986) power as they place constraints on people in positions of responsibility: Clerks, Elders and Overseers. Weighty Friends are people who are attributed a special informal status in the Society, based on their ability to live within the parameters of the testimonies.

Ideological constraints on behaviour in situations perceived as conflict are non-confrontational within the Society. The focus is on self-discipline by restraining emotional expression and personal interest, particularly in the ritualised decision-making process. Clerks in business meeting refrain from personal involvement with the topic at hand to maintain the service as 'Servants of the Meeting'. Elders avoid hasty and insensitive attempts at 'eldering' in Meeting for Worship. Participants in business meetings quietly reflect the issue at hand, supporting the more vocal people with their quiet presence. These activities promote conformity to Quakerly practices onstage and offstage, serving as a model in other contexts. Finally, the practices that dissuade Members from overtly inviting Attenders into membership also disinclines

them from encouraging them to participate in business meetings, creating a subtle hierarchy in the Society where there is a decision-makers and people who are not. The people who do not attend business meetings may resist decisions that are unpopular, and attempt to regulate the 'Spirit'.

### *Ritualisation*

Among Friends we witness the ritualisation that promotes the Society's ideals, and establishes the mode through which adept Friends should interpret and interact with the world. Peter Collins refers to this as 'plaining' (1996). The ritualised setting is a place where the Quaker discourse establishes, and interprets the generative tropes to be internalised. Friends knowingly embed their meetings with the values encapsulated in their testimonies: equality, simplicity, integrity, and peace. The ritualisation process also establishes the internalisation of the Inner Light, which informs the logic of most Quaker actions. Since the Inner Light is interpreted from numerous models within the Society, it is difficult to maintain that Friends are internalising the values of 'carceral architecture' (Carrette 2000) implied with an omnipresent internal God. This context suggests that participants are internalising the values of a Rousseauian-styled social contract. In conflicts Friends ideally address the Inner Light of their disputant, or disputants, employing the proper idiom that emphasises the relationship based on common spiritual understanding, or the Inner Light.

## *Identity*

The endeavour in worship is to establish a Quaker identity that endures away from the Meeting House, where the Friends behaviour should be a pattern or model for sociability. Theological diversity is a problematic basis for forming a Quaker identity, since Friends do not use creedal statements of belief. The stress on a 'behavioural' creed (Dandelion 1996), on the experience of community, and the pursuit of meaning informs the 'Quakerly' identity. The process is a personal one for participants as they undergo a process of being 'convinced'. The non-conformity encouraged in lack of creeds can challenge the social contract when people actively participate in the community and identify with the ethos of the Society, yet choose not to commit to the organisation.

There is an interesting relationship between the Quaker identity, and their attempts at managing conflicts. While Friends identify with conflict avoidance, they also utilise a unique method of forming integrated solutions. One of the most efficacious forms of 'convincement' was participating in a business meeting where challenging issues ended in unity. The activity is circular where the Quaker identity informs the decision making process, and the integrated solutions helps create Quakers. Finally, the Friends who are 'onstage, and away from the theatre' help develop a picture of the Society for non-participants. George Fox's words are provide the ambition and the reward for the Quaker identity,

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, Islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sort of people. and to them; then you will come to walk peacefully over the world. answering that of God in every one.

George Fox 1656  
*Advices and Queries* 1995

## Appendix A – Introduction to the Focus Group Draft

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your interest and effort in reading this draft. I have prepared it for your perusal for two reasons: to fulfil a promise and to discover your opinion. Before initiating the study, I requested permission to observe and participate in meetings for worship and business meetings with the PM and the MM. The Preparative Meeting granted permission based on the understanding that I would protect the identity of the meeting. I assured Friends that I would write the dissertation in such a manner that the identity of individuals, the PM and the MM were disguised as much as possible, and that I would allow the meeting to see a draft to insure I had achieved this goal. While you read the draft, you may want to consider if I have achieved this ambition.

There are several devices I have used in the attempt at anonymity. Firstly, I have not used any names in the document, nor have I used pseudonyms. These are generally traceable to a particular person when you are familiar with a group, so I have chosen to give just a brief description of the person when it helps the reader understand the context from which the quote was taken. I think there are enough ‘retired university instructors’, ‘civil servants’, or ‘teachers’ within the meeting that the person referred to is able to maintain their anonymity. I have quoted many people in this draft. You may recognise anecdotes that you or others have told. Ideally, you will recognise your voice in the document, but the quote may not actually be from you. In these situations, you will find that the quote is selected because it is a common ‘voice’ within the meeting, reflecting the attitude and opinion of several other members and attenders in the meeting.

Next, I give the reader considerable detail about the experience of going to meeting for worship to provide a sense of the experience and a description of the building where the bulk of the research was conducted. My attempt was to give an accurate account of the building, but describe it in such a way as to lead the slightly knowledgeable reader into thinking that the text could be describing Glasgow or Edinburgh. I do not use any photographs to protect your identity.

Finally, I want to warn the meeting that anonymity is rarely one-hundred percent. Anyone who is curious enough will find where a particular field site is located. Many people in anthropology and in the Society are aware of the work I have conducted and where the field site is situated, simply because I have been here and discussed the work with visitors, members, and colleagues. In conversations about my work, I endeavoured to tell the enquirer that my field site was Scotland and the many meetings that I have visited here. This is in fact the case. Yet, people within the Society are able to deduce that my being a warden at this particular meeting house privileges this site in the work. Given this, it is impossible, and perhaps even undesirable, to completely disguise this particular field location beyond these efforts.

Your comments and concerns about anonymity will be acknowledged. If I have used a quote that you have supplied, and you sense that my description of the speaker is too easily traced to you, and you do not want this identification, I will alter the description. If we are unable to disguise your voice in the writing, and your concerns cannot be met with such an alteration, we may decide to omit the quote. In these circumstances, I will find another quote or a different anecdote to illustrate my point.

I need to stress that editorial control of this document is negotiable only in areas where anonymity is concerned.

When I agreed to allow access to the document before it was submitted to my examiners, I realised that opinions may form on the content and the conclusions in the work. This is the second reason for providing you access to the draft. The situation is a terrific opportunity for an anthropologist. Anthropologists usually do not write in the language of the people we observe, and seldom do these people want to read what we have written. (Perhaps equally seldom would an anthropologist want this situation.) Rather than ignore your opinions, I seek them, so the future readers will understand your appreciation or criticism of the work.

While I do control the content of the thesis, this does not suggest I will ignore your concerns about the content. I aim to add your conclusions about this work to be included in the text to provide the work with a qualitative validity through allowing you to agree or disagree with what is stated. The forum for the expression of your views will occur in a series of focus groups, where we will discuss the writing. This does not relinquish editorial control over the document. The interpretation of my experience remains my responsibility, so the text, as you read it here, will be what I submit to my examiners. I will include your opinion in the dissertation's conclusion, and I will encourage the reader to note that my interpretations in particular locations of the thesis are refuted or supported by your observations.

You may be surprised by the conclusions that I have expressed. You may even be surprised at my ability to state the obvious. These are common reactions to the work done in the social sciences. The importance lies in the fact that these phenomena are examined so others can understand them. My experiences and research in many ways divorce the phenomena from your experience, by placing the statements and situations into a different professional language and means of interpretation. I hope you find this informative.

There are particular details that have changed since I ended the data collection and began writing. This may appear strange as you read. The names of the central committees have changed, and the issues raised over the support for Trident/Ploughshares 2000 seem a long time ago. Conclusions were made and people have gone to prison since I stopped taking fieldnotes. This is an encounter with what anthropologists call the 'ethnographic present'. It gives the illusion that our informants are frozen in time, but it is necessary to allow the anthropologist to describe the context that informs their writing. This was a challenge as I wrote. There was a real desire to write on the further changes to the Society since fieldwork, but this would delay an already tardy end to the research.

These observations and conclusions do not suggest changes need to be made in the Society. When I choose to describe what was said or performed during my observation in an anthropological idiom, I do so for analytical reasons. As an anthropologist I deliberately avoid making statements which suggest Quaker belief and practice are right or wrong. The initial reaction of the reader may be defensive when I suggest that there are strategies and tactics employed by Friends in conflict situations, to give just one example. This is simply an interpretation, placing Quaker behaviour into a language that is not commonly used in regular discussions at the meeting house. Clearly, what Friends do with this information is a matter for your discernment, but the thesis is not intended to be urge changes are required. This is very much contrary to my intent.

### *The Thesis Layout*

The thesis is organised to inform people unfamiliar with the Religious Society of Friends. I intended to convey the Society using the descriptions that I received through interviews or in ministry and casual conversation. This attempts to privilege your understanding of participating in the Religious Society of Friends. This prioritising of your description appears most heavily in the early chapters of the book, and as the writing progresses I apply greater anthropological analysis to your words and actions.

Introduction – is yet to be written. It will show the theoretical underpinning of this description and interpretation of your beliefs and practices. I will also describe my entry into the field, and the methods that I used to obtain my data.

Chapter 1 – provides a basic background to the history and organisation of the Society.

Chapter 2 – establishes that Meeting is not about conflict the emphasis of the thesis is in many ways antithetical to the ambitions of Friends and why people gather for worship.

Chapter 3 – explores the structures of the Society in greater detail, suggesting the impact these structures have on the participants behaviour. This exploration is laid out through the description of a particular conflict that occurred during the participant observation phase of this research.

Chapter 4 – delves into the issues of managing power in the Society by describing the Society as a social contract among participants.

Chapter 5 – establishes the key metaphors that Friends employ in their religious understanding and looks at the relationships amongst these metaphors.

Chapter 6 – shows the relationship that ‘conflict’ has with the key metaphors described in Chapter 5. By looking at the areas where conflict is discussed, the idiom that Friends use in these situations, and the metaphors that people associate

with conflict, I suggest the unique mental construction of conflict that Friends employ.

Chapter 7 – discusses the strategy and tactics that Friends use within the context of the structures, cognitions and practices of the Society.

Conclusion – is yet to be written as the information that will determine what is said by you, the reader of this draft. You are invited to participate in a focus group that will consider the issues that this thesis explores. Your opinion on any aspect of this draft is welcome.

Appendix A – is a copy of a skit that was written by a Scottish Friend which is used to illustrate humour and its relationship to conflict.

Appendix B – is a copy of this introduction to show my examiners the method employed in gaining your opinion on the thesis.

### **Appreciation**

A regrettable feature of protecting the identity of the all those who patiently participated in this research is that I am unable to personally thank you in the thesis. This MM and PM have given more than I imagined necessary to complete this research. The support has gone beyond simply being patient while a researcher takes notes and asks silly questions. I have been accepted as an employee, a potential member, and most importantly as a friend and a fellow explorer on our spiritual journey. My learning in this research goes beyond that of a professional and goes beyond understanding conflict. In ways that I could not have predicted, I have learned about myself with your loving support. My appreciation goes beyond words. Through the course of the fieldwork I hope that I have expressed my gratitude to everyone who has contributed in personal ways through interviews, a sympathetic ear, or by commenting on my conclusions.

Finally, I want to thank you for the opportunity to share with others how you manage the experience of conflict. I hope that my observations and conclusions will go on to inform others in similar experiences, so that peace, growth and greater understanding is possible.

## Appendix B – A Quaker Skit

The following skit was written by a Friend attending meeting in Scotland, Geoffrey Carnall. It is used in Chapter 6 to illustrate the offstage and in the theatre humour, used by Friends, revealing the manner in which conflict is humorously conveyed in the Society. Here it is reproduced in full because the skit will also enlighten the reader on issues within the Society that are highlighted elsewhere in the dissertation.

Extract from Transcript of Tape of Monthly Meeting  
By Geoffrey Carnall

*Clerk:* We've received an application to hold a meeting here from the Monster Raving Loony Party. The Wardens thought some Friends might consider the application controversial, and it seemed best to bring it to Monthly Meeting.

*(Murmurs of assent.)*

*Weighty Friend:* Do they say who will be the speaker?

*Clerk:* Yes, the meeting will be addressed by Screaming Lord Sutch. They would like facilities for musicians too.

*Brisk Friend:* Is anything known about the *policies* of the Monster Raving Loony Party?

*Trendy Friend:* Well, in the last General Election they fought a spirited campaign for free access to concerts and theatres, and a plan to ensure that every child should learn to play a musical instrument. Also free glasses and hearing aids for pensioners, so that they could enjoy the play and concerts.

*Earnest Friend:* It sounds quite an enlightened programme.

*Trendy Friend:* They want a Minister for Pets –

*Green Friend:* That would appeal to Quaker Concern for Animals.-

*Trendy Friend:* - and greater public investment in public lavatories.

*Weighty Friend:* That implies more Central Government funding for local authorities. What is their line on taxation?

*Trendy Friend:* Reductions all around, I'm afraid. They wouldn't appeal to Jonathan Dale.

*Earnest Friend:* It seems to me that Lord Sutch is not a serious participant in the political process.

*Trendy Friend:* Well, Bernard Shaw did say that all revolutionary ideas begin as jokes, and Screaming Lord Sutch has certainly had *some* influence.

*Clerk:* I think we must not prolong this discussion, but really, what influence has he had?

*Trendy Friend:* In the last election he proposed that Parliament should be put on wheels, and move around the country: 'first stop Aberdeen. Give the Jocks a treat.'

*Green Friend:* That at least shows an awareness of the Scottish identity.

*Trendy Friend:* And Michael Forsyth has put the idea into practice with the Scottish Grand Committee. Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow – We're all getting it.

*Warden:* It sounds to me as though in this instance we could certainly charge the full commercial rate.

*Earnest Friend:* But should we allow that to affect our decision? We have a grave responsibility during this General Election.

*Brisk Friend:* We need at least to work towards a balance. Are any other parties likely to apply?

*Clerk:* I understand the Referendum Party plan to have a rally in the Usher Hall, with 84 overflow meetings throughout the City. That might include us.

*Warden:* Full commercial rate plus a premium, in that case.

*Weighty Friend:* But should we be encouraging billionaires who can break into British politics just because of their inordinate wealth?

*Brisk Friend:* We mustn't stifle legitimate debate. I think we should invite all parties to an Open Forum.

*Warden:* But then we shouldn't get any rent at all!

*Clerk:* May I remind the meeting that what we have before us is an application from Screaming Lord Sutch.

*(A distinct pause. Friends bow their heads thoughtfully)*

*Earnest Friend:* I suppose he would be quite a draw. Think of the opportunity for outreach. We could have extra posters and leaflets on display.

*Trendy Friend:* Yes, and we'd have plenty of media coverage. The Terrace would be packed with TV cameras. Lord Sutch could scream down Upper Bow, and

the Clerk could be interviewed to explain the differences between the Old Quakerism and the New.

*Clerk:* The Clerk feels he might look slightly ridiculous.

*Earnest Friend:* Ah, but remember *Advices and Queries* 38: 'Do not let the fear of seeming peculiar determine your decisions.'

*Weighty Friend:* Surely the Clerk's business would simply be to follow the injunction of *Faith and Practice* 15.16: 'Ensure that any publicity makes a clear distinction between those organised by a Quaker body and those for which other groups are responsible, in order to avoid confusion in the public mind.'

*Brisk Friend:* Would any confusion be likely to arise between the Society of Friends and the Monster Raving Loony party?

*Weighty Friend:* Nothing more possible. People have the strangest ideas about Friends. I have no wish to be critical of well-concerned members of our Meeting, but some of their activities would have been altogether unacceptable forty years ago.

*Green Friend:* I find this timidity quite disturbing. We should be willing to take risks. Remember *Advices and Queries* 27: 'Live adventurously.'

*Weighty Friend:* Yes, but the *Advices* go on to say, 'When decisions have to be made are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness?' Now it is clear to me that we are far from being clear.

*(Another distinct pause. Heads bowed, etc.)*

*Earnest Friend:* Perhaps we should follow the advice of *Faith and Practice* 13.11 'The option of a special monthly meeting and/or a meeting for clearness to help work through the issues should be considered.'

*Brisk Friend:* By the time we'd done that, the election would be over.

*Clerk:* Not necessarily. We could have such a meeting before the 9.30 a.m. meeting this coming Sunday morning.

*Trendy Friend:* Can Friends really be expected to come to a business meeting at 8.30 on Sunday morning?

*Earnest Friend:* We could have a bring-and-share breakfast.

*Weighty Friend:* If we are serious in our concern to be rightly guided, we should surely be willing to get up a little earlier than usual.

*Brisk Friend:* But I should miss Alistair Cooke.

*Green Friend:* And could anyone get here by public transport at that hour on Sunday Morning? Friends mustn't assume that everyone has a car. And those who have cars should keep their use to a minimum.

*Clerk:* This would be the moment to work out a car-sharing scheme. If Overseers were to confer after this meeting over tea, I'm sure something could be arranged for all those without a car. And I dare say Catering Committee would be happy to organise tea and coffee to accompany the bring-and-share breakfast?

*Green Friend:* And organic porridge, perhaps?

*(Enter Co-Warden)*

*Co-Warden:* I've just had a phone call from Screaming Lord Sutch's office. Profuse apologies. He wants to withdraw his application because the University is willing to allow him the use of the Playfair Library. Oh, and there was a message on the answering machine.

*Clerk:* Yes?

*Co-Warden:* It was an inquiry from the International Workers of the World. They would like to have a meeting to expose the election as a capitalist fraud.

*Warden:* Oh dear, we could only charge them the rate for community organisations. It's hardly worth the hassle.

*Trendy Friend:* I think it's rather a compliment that they should have thought of us at all.

*(Murmurs of dissent.)*

*Clerk:* Their songs are very good. It might be a better musical occasion than Screaming Lord Sutch. But Friends, we have another 34 items of business on the agenda. I think we still need that special meeting next Sunday. Sorry about Alistair Cooke. Perhaps Overseers would meet as suggested.

I suggest as a Minute: 'The Wardens have asked us to advise them on whether it is acceptable to allow the use of the Meeting House by the International Workers of the World. We refer the matter to a special Monthly Meeting to be held on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> March at 8.30 a.m.'

*Weighty Friend:* As our discussion was entirely concerned with the Monster Raving Loony Party, have we really agreed to the substitution of the International Workers?

*Clerk:* I gather the Meeting is equally unclear about both organisations. Anyway, the Catering Committee is longing to make organic porridge.

*Green Friend:* And I've just found that Lothian services 1, 6, and 27 all operate before 8.30 on Sunday morning. So we *don't* all have to use our cars.

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