

CHRISTIAN BELIEF IN THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS):
A RESPONSE TO THE CLAIM THAT BRITISH FRIENDS ARE POST-CHRISTIAN

By

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INTRODUCTION

In 1996 British Quaker Pink Dandelion published his PhD thesis, an extensive sociological survey of British Quakers. In his thesis Dandelion claimed that the Religious Society of Friends in Britain had become post-Christian.

In response to Dandelion's claim that Quakers are post-Christian, in 2005 and 2006 I conducted a short survey of the same population: the approximately 25,600 Members and Attenders of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) who are affiliated with Britain Yearly Meeting (the British national Quaker body). 1,035 of the 1,578 Quakers I approached responded to my questionnaire. Of these, 863 or 83.4% indicated that they believe in God. 751, or 72.6% of those who took part, indicated that they consider themselves to be Christian. 833, or 80.5% of those who took part, indicated that they would answer that they are Christian on an anonymous survey. Fewer than 5% of those who took part in the survey are clearly not Christian. This research suggests that the majority in the Religious Society of Friends in Britain still considers Quakers to be Christian.

In the first chapter of this dissertation I examine the background of the debate about whether Quakers are a Christian group. In the second chapter I examine other surveys into Quaker belief. In the third chapter, I give the results of my survey and analyze some of the answers. In the fourth chapter, I introduce the three types of Christians that emerged from my results. In the fifth chapter I also look at some of the questions and, more importantly, the answers, giving examples from written comments. In the sixth chapter, I consider the concept of Toxic Language, the nature of belief within the Religious Society of Friends in Britain, the theories of Gay Pilgrim and also of Rex Ambler, and consider the importance of 'Truth' to Quakerism. Finally, I point to other areas of further research before giving my overall conclusions.

x.1. Introductory Definitions

x.1.1. Definition of Members and Attenders

Each person who received my survey was included in the list of names and addresses of each Monthly Meeting that participated in the survey. British Quakers have two distinctions. Members have made the decision to be Members, have applied and been accepted by a Monthly Meeting into Membership. Attenders take part in the life of the Meeting, but have not come into Membership. Britain Yearly Meeting, the national body, is not the membership holding organisation. The Monthly Meeting holds that role.¹

Members and Attenders make up a Preparative Meeting. These are the local ‘churches’ within Quakerism. I refer to these as ‘Meetings’ throughout this paper. Whilst the membership resides with the Monthly Meeting, most Friends associate first with their Preparative Meeting and the rest of the ‘congregation’ of Members and Attenders of that Meeting.

Clerks are Members who are ultimately responsible for leading the business meetings, called Preparative Meetings, and also for ensuring the smooth running of the administration of the Meeting. This role exists at the Monthly Meeting level as well.

When I was conducting my research, I contacted Preparative Meeting Clerks and Monthly Meeting Clerks so that I could gain access to their databases of Members and Attenders. The various Monthly Meeting Clerks all interpreted the Data Protection Act the same way, insofar that each person who agreed to be on the mailing list for that Monthly Meeting had *de facto* agreed to receive anything that the Monthly Meeting decided was Monthly Meeting business.

¹ The names of these organisations have changed. Monthly Meetings are now known as Area Meetings. Preparative Meetings are now known as Local Meetings. However, when I conducted my research they were still known as Monthly Meetings and Preparative Meetings. I continue to use the old names since they were correct at the time.

The Members and Attenders had all elected to have their names included on the Monthly Meeting database or directory as per the following entry in *Quaker Faith and Practice, Second Edition*² (hereafter *QF&P*) (1999, pp.11.44 – 11.46),

Each monthly meeting shall maintain an official register of members and shall appoint a suitable Friend to have care of it. (See 4.47 about data protection). No alteration shall be made to the register save in accordance with decisions minuted by the monthly meeting. The official register of members shall be examined annually and checked with the monthly meeting minutes by the Friends appointed to prepare or check the tabular statement....Each monthly meeting shall maintain a list of attenders and of children not in membership associated with its several meetings for worship or shall arrange that such lists be kept by overseers. An attender is one who, not being a member, frequently attends a specific meeting for worship.... Respecting the essentially private nature of such lists, meeting should exercise care to limit their availability and guard against the risk that they might be put to undesirable use.

x.1.2. Comments on Insider Research

I am an Active Member of Poole Quaker Meeting and a Quaker Christian. Consequently, this was 'insider research'.³ In writing my questionnaire, I used definitions that I felt Quakers would understand. For example, I intentionally left out references that might seem paramount in other Christian Faith Groups, such as to the Virgin Birth, Resurrection, and the Trinity, since they are not in common use in *QF&P*. I started from a Quaker perspective on Christianity, which can be very different from other faith groups.

From the beginning of my research I tried to overcome the complications with insider research. Inger Furset and Pal Repstad (2006, p.206) explain that,

The main objection to the notion that religious people make the best scholars of religion is, of course, that everyone who lives

² *Quaker Faith and Practice: The book of Christian Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain* is the main reference guide for matters of church practice as well as a reference tool questions about the religious faith of Friends in Britain.

³ I am using Dandelion's (1996, p. 36) definition; 'The term 'insider research' is used in this book to refer to research undertaken on a group or constituency by a member of that constituency (Becker 1963, Polsky 1967, Ianni and Reus-Ianni 1972, Krieger 1985, for example).'

wholeheartedly inside a religious tradition is unable to create the distance deemed necessary to conduct a reliable and valid analysis....A religious attitude can also blind a scholar to possible connections between the religious experience and their social context.

However, as Furseth and Repstad also argue, ‘Another argument often used to support an insider perspective is that neutrality in research is an illusion.’

In researching and writing this dissertation I have tried to be as neutral as possible in understanding what the participants are saying. I have also tried to explain all non-traditional language that might be exclusive to Quakerism. And, I have tried to be as transparent as possible about my motivations as an insider conducting research.

CHAPTER ONE: QUAKERS AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY: ORIGINS OF THE CURRENT DEBATE

1.1. Background of Quaker Theology

The Religious Society of Friends in Britain is not similar theologically to other Christian denominations in Britain. Within Quakerism, the experience is described in positives, not negatives, but for those who are of other Christian denominations, it is helpful to know that British Quakers do not recite the Nicene Creed (nor do they have any outwardly spoken creed). They do not recite the Lord's Prayer as a group. British Quakers do not necessarily read from the Bible during their Meetings for Worship, indeed the Bible is not considered universally to be the word of God. British Quakers do not consider God as part of a Trinity, because the Holy Ghost is not a part of Quaker understanding of Christianity.

Quakers, as expressed in *QF&P*, do believe in direct and personal revelation from God to the individual. Quakerism is a mystical faith that defines itself in words that can be hard to unpick, such as Inward Light, which can be used to refer to the Inward Light of Christ or the Inward Light of God or indeed in other ways as well. Meetings for Worship are predominantly silent. Quakers speak out of this silence without prior preparation; there are no pre-written sermons. Communion, as with the other sacraments, is inward and does not involve an outward ceremony.

The historical background that led to Quaker practice is interesting and finds its origins in the time of the English Civil War. At its beginning in the 1650's, the first Friends attempted to re-create the Christianity of the original Christians, without the many layers of practice and argument that had become a part of Christianity in the intervening 1500 years.⁴

⁴ Consequently, for example, the Nicene Creed is not important for a group of people who wish to worship in the manner of Christians before the Council of Nicea.

Quaker historians, such as Rosemary Moore, describe the origins of the Religious Society of Friends as revolutionary and personal. In her book *The Light in Their Consciences: The Early Quakers in Britain 1646-1666*, she writes the following about George Fox, the founder of Quakerism and the first Friends (2000, p.7),

Fox's Journal for the years 1647 to 1649 gives a picture of growing numbers of Friends in the East Midlands, presumably small, do-it-yourself religious groups, having no need for any ordained minister or prescribed ritual, and led by what they felt to be the power of God in their meetings.

John Punshon, another Quaker Historian, gives the following account of the beginnings of Quakerism in the 1650's in his book *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers* (1999, p35),

There can be no doubt that the generality of Christians were clear that they were living in a time of grave crisis. Most were content to let others worry for them, but for those who felt a personal responsibility there was a heavy burden as they contemplated a Church that fell far short of what it should be. They saw disunity and a persecuting spirit, a clergy which often displayed worldly ambition rather than religious achievement, and a prevailing theology that confirmed and worsened the sense of sin and inadequacy from which they desperately sought relief. They suffered a deep spiritual disturbance....Restoration, true redemption would come, but not yet.

So how could such a condition be reached? Catholic confessors might have diagnosed the condition of accidie, or spiritual sloth. They might have prescribed a spiritual shock to jerk people back from their path of resignation to a renewed involvement with present realities, to face again the possibilities within themselves that over-concentration on the future permitted them to ignore. A sense of *personal* crisis was required, and it is this that the Quaker preachers provided...

From its very beginnings, the Religious Society of Friends has been different from other Christian denominations, with a uniquely Quaker slant on what it means to be Christian.

1.2. Official Quaker Documents

Official and current publications from the Religious Society in Friends in Britain continue to present Quakerism as a Christian sect. For example, the popular and oft-quoted *Advices and Queries of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain* (1997, pp.5-6) begins with,

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Do you try to set aside times of quiet for openness to the Holy Spirit? All of us need to find a way into silence which allows us to deepen our awareness of the divine and to find the inward source of our strength. Seek to know an inward stillness, even amid the activities of daily life. Do you encourage in yourself and others a habit of dependence on God's guidance for each day? Hold yourself and others in the Light, knowing that all are cherished by God.
4. 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 the 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 your relationship with God challenge and inspire you?
5. Take time to learn about other people's experiences of the Light. Remember the importance of the Bible, the writings of Friends and all writings which reveal the ways of God....

Furthermore, *QF&P* includes many references to Quakerism as a Christian sect including these three from the section on 'Friends and the Christian Church.' (1998, pp.27.12-27.14),

27.12 The unity of Christians never did nor ever will or can stand in uniformity of thought and opinion, but in Christian love only. Thomas Story, 1737

27.13 Even in the apostles' days Christians were too apt to strive after a wrong unity and uniformity in outward practices and observations, and to judge one another unrighteously in those things; and mark, it is not the different practice from one another that breaks the peace and unity, but the judging of one another because of different practices...

And oh, how sweet and pleasant it is to the truly spiritual eye to see several sorts of believers, several forms of Christians in the school of Christ, every one learning their own lesson, performing their own peculiar service, and knowing, owning and loving one another in their several places and different performances to their Master, to whom they are to give an account, and not to quarrel with one another about their different practices (Rom 14:4). For this is the true ground of love and unity, not that such a man walks and does just as I do, but because I feel the same Spirit and life in him, and that he walks in his rank, in his own order, in his proper way and place of subjection to that; and this is far more pleasing to me than if he walked just in that track wherein I walk. Isaac Pennington, 1660

27:14 What, then, is the focus for Christian unity? It must be Jesus, who calls us not into structures but into discipleship and to follow him in his way. Can we not know that we are one in him when we are faithful to his calling and when we exercise towards one another that greatest gift of love? Can we not rejoice in our diversity, welcoming the opportunities to learn from one another? Can we not seek a recognition of each others' ministries as the work of the same Spirit? That Spirit can, if we are ready to adventure, lead us into ways we have not known before. London Yearly Meeting 1986.

1.3. The Modern Debate

Dandelion's survey, which led me to working on this dissertation, is part of the ongoing discussion into the nature of Christian belief amongst Quakers. This debate, which began in the late 1970's and raised a concern about the loss of Christianity within the group, is summarised in Alastair Heron's book, *Quakers in History: A Century of Change 1895-1995*. Heron (1995, p.75) explains that in the late 1960s Quakers in Britain 'still held a distinctive Quaker Christian position'. However, by 1980 the position had changed. Heron

(1995, p.96) draws attention to Janet Scott's 1980 Swarthmore Lecture⁵, a lecture which he considered to be 'a significant event' because it raised a debate about whether Quakers had left Jesus behind in creating a new theology which was more monotheist.

Dandelion's results, which were the result of his survey in the late 1980's, seemed to provide evidence to support the claim that Quakers had moved away from their historic and unique Christian identity. His results were not universally accepted, but they may have 'fanned the fire' of the debate.

The debate, and claims about the non-Christian and Atheist nature of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain continues today in the pages of the weekly British Quaker magazine, *The Friend*. Nearly every issue contains some discussion on this topic and letters and articles on both sides of the issue have been titled: 'Do Quakers Need God?' (2006, pp.10-11), 'Time to Lay the Society Down?' (2006, p.7), and 'Are Quakers Christian?' (2006, p.14), 'The Living Spirit' (2008, p.9) and 'Will the Real Jesus please stand up?' (2008, pp.10-11). Without outward sacraments or a creed, the answer does not seem clear and yet the official documents and the history all point to Quakerism as a unique Christian sect.

Considering this, how can Dandelion's, and then Rutherford's research have produced results that seem to so clearly refute established Quaker writings? Is it possible that the articles published in *The Friend* that agree that Quakerism is post-Christian are the views of a minority? Or, has the Quaker connection with Christianity actually been lost since the 1980's as Alastair Heron suggested?

To consider these questions, I began by examining Dandelion's and Rutherford's research in more detail. In the following sections I consider the way 'Christian' was defined

⁵ The Swarthmore Lecture is given annually at Britain Yearly Meeting.

by Dandelion and Rutherford, their question choice and question phrasing, the questionnaire design, the number of questions, and question order and transparency.

CHAPTER TWO: ACADEMIC ATTEMPTS TO UNCOVER THE NATURE OF QUAKER BELIEF

2.1. Surveys of Belief

Dandelion's survey, conducted in 1989, was the first sociological attempt to understand the nature of belief within the Religious Society of Friends in Britain. Rutherford conducted the second major survey in 2003, using Dandelion's research as her 'pilot study' with which she could compare her results fairly directly. I conducted my survey in 2005-6, which although answered by approximately 4% of the total British Quaker population, was much more limited in scope.

Dandelion (1996, p.xv) asserted from his survey, participant observation, and interviews that 'the group has become post-Christian in the sense that so many Friends use non-Christian language to describe their religious experience that it would be intellectually dishonest to claim the group as Christian'. In his survey Dandelion (1996, p.146) found that

only around one in two claim Jesus as an important part of their spiritual lives. Whilst this could rise to two in three at any one time, by adding those in certain sub-samples who gave a positive response to the question with those for whom it varies...this figure could reduce to less than 1 in 6 for those with less than three year's participation within the group.

His research also showed that only approximately two thirds (66.2%) of the respondents felt that Jesus' ethical teachings were an important part of their spiritual life (1996, p.147).

Dandelion (1996, p.176) concluded that,

The concept of the liberal Quaker belief culture is supported by the diversity of opinions and views and it is apparent that Quaker Christianity is no longer the dominant framework for Quaker belief. Furthermore, the numbers of those who do hold Christian or Quaker-Christian beliefs are lower than their counterparts in other groups.

In 2003, Rutherford tested Dandelion's results and conducted a rigorously sampled survey of 48 Quaker Meetings across Britain, using Dandelion's questions as well as her own. This survey was conducted for a PhD, which unfortunately Rutherford did not write up or complete. In asking her question about identity, Rutherford gave each respondent the option to choose as many from the following as possible: Quaker, Christian, Universalist, Pacifist, Atheist, Buddhist, Agnostic, Humanist, and/or a spiritual person. Only 46% of Rutherford's (2005) respondents ticked the box to indicate that they 'think of themselves as' Christian.

2.2. Dandelion's and Rutherford's Questionnaire Design

Dandelion's (1989) 'Quaker Questionnaire' was in the form of a 15-page booklet. It included 72 questions with 436 response categories, along with a cover sheet, a letter, a response slip, and two additional unnumbered pages for comments. Because they contain so many questions and response categories, both Dandelion's and Rutherford's questionnaires represent a major undertaking on the part of the respondent. Dandelion (1989, p.2) estimated that his questionnaire would take 'up to an hour to complete'.

2.3. Dandelion's and Rutherford's Aims

In his introductory letter, Dandelion (1989, p.2) explained that,

many of us within the Society of Friends are interested in trying to build up a picture of what Quakers in Britain really believe and how we pass on these beliefs to enquirers....you will find questions not only directly about yourself and your religious background and beliefs, but also more generalised questions on your ideas about the world, about other churches, about moral issues....the results will be useful in compiling a comparative picture of Quakers today.

Dandelion's aims were much broader than mine in so far as he was looking for a 'comparative picture' as opposed to discovering whether Quakers consider themselves to be Christian.

He (1996, p.29) strove:

- a) to identify the normative belief system of Quakers;
- b) to construct a model of Quakerism in terms of its patterns of belief and investigate the consequences of this model for the sociology of religion;
- c) to investigate the process by which this belief system is imparted and the effectiveness of the process, coupled with an analysis of the system of authority within Friends.

Consequently, his question choices about Christian belief and Theism cannot be taken as distinct units. They form part of a larger endeavour.

Rutherford intended to compare her answers directly to Dandelion's. Consequently in her research she did not substantially change the questions.

2.4. Dandelion and Rutherford's Definition of Christian and Question Phrasing

In considering Dandelion's and Rutherford's definition of Christian, I examined three distinct elements used in determining the conclusions. First, I consider Dandelion's use of a minimum definition of Christian. Second, I consider the way in which his direct question about Christianity was phrased. Third, I look at how Rutherford defined and asked this question.

2.4.1. Dandelion's Use of Unique

Dandelion (1996, p.178) had a minimum definition of Christian that he did not disclose to his participants. In discussing the question of Christianity within Quakerism, Dandelion (after Hampson), used belief in *Jesus as unique* as his minimum definition of

Christianity. He used the question on self-identification as a contributory part of the overall definition of Christianity.

2.4.2. Dandelion's Direct Question about Christianity

Although Dandelion did ask his participants to self-identify as Christian, his question phrasing is indirect. Question 37 (1989, p.13) asks, 'Would you describe yourself as any of the following?' one of the choices for which was 'Christian'. He (1996, p.60) writes,

The question was coined in the subjunctive to elicit frequencies of self-description, as opposed to the potential self-description of a 'could you...?' question. In this example, both the question and the response items were ambiguous.

Dandelion (1996, p.61-62) reflexively noted this as a problem with his survey question, 'Would you describe yourself as a...Christian?',

Various hesitations were expressed about this question either in interview or in note-form at the end of QQ. The main problem was the lack of a definition of the word 'Christian'. Some Friends claimed they were Christian, but would not tick the box because they were not Christian in the sense that the question might mean.

I do not know what 'Christian' here means – I do not believe in Christianity as most people seem to speak of it.

Others claimed they were Christian, but not Christian in the sense that the data analyst might understand the term. A third group claimed that they were Christian, but that, while I would understand the sense in which they described themselves as such, they were concerned that non-Quakers who might read the results would not understand the sense in which the respondents had called themselves 'Christian'.

When I'm filling in a questionnaire I am mentally addressing two sorts of audience: a)the researcher, and b)the reader for whose benefit the researcher may try to transmit some interpretation of what my responses meant.

A fourth group claimed they would not normally call themselves Christian, but that they followed the teachings of Jesus, which is how they perceived the meaning of the question. The reaction to the term 'Christian' highlights the difficulties of ambiguity within survey design.

2.4.3. Rutherford's Questions

Rutherford did not have a fully developed definition of Christian when she started her survey (personal communication). Following Dandelion's (1996, p.69) example of placing 'The most sensitive, and potentially threatening, questions on individual belief...in the middle of the questionnaire', Rutherford (2005) placed her Christian question in amongst different kinds of questions concerning, for example 'To what extent do you agree with the idea that Quakers can be helped in their spiritual journey by hearing about the religious experience of...' and 'Has your Quaker life affected the way you use your vote in general elections?'. Unfortunately Rutherford did not write up her work after completing the survey and as a consequence, we do not have her analysis of her research.

Interestingly, both Dandelion's (1996, p.61) and Rutherford's (2005) participants responded to the question whether they consider themselves to be Quaker at the same rate, 86%. And, both groups of participants were just as unlikely to choose that they consider themselves to be Christian. In Dandelion's (1996, p.61) sample 50.7% answered that they 'would describe' themselves as Christian and in Rutherford's (2005) sample, 45.5% answered that they 'think of themselves as Christian'.

2.5. Distribution

Dandelion (1996, p.72) sent his questionnaire to thirty Preparative Meetings, each of which had agreed to participate in the survey. The clerk of each meeting left them in a public place to be taken and filled in by those interested. Dandelion also distributed his questionnaire to Meeting for Sufferings in 1989 and to members of the Young Friends Central Committee. He distributed approximately 1,000 questionnaires and achieved a response rate of 57.6%.

Rutherford (Cary and Dandelion, 2007, p.146) refined Dandelion's distribution method. Rutherford listed all the Meetings in Britain Yearly Meeting in order by size. She divided this list into groups of Meetings that have roughly the same number of members, which gave her six groups. From each of the five groups of Meetings that had the most members, she chose eight Meetings to approach. From the remaining group of Meetings, those with the smallest Meeting memberships, she chose ten Meetings. As a result Rutherford contacted 48 Meetings.⁶

In each of the 48 Meetings, Rutherford asked the Clerk to help distribute the questionnaire to twenty-two people by counting off everyone present and using a random number generation table to give random participants a survey form. If the Meeting did not have twenty-two people, then fewer people could fill it in. Only people who attended the Meeting for Worship on the distribution day could fill in a survey. Visitors and enquirers were not allowed to complete the questionnaire. The participants were given a questionnaire, asked to take it home to fill it in, and then asked to return it to Rutherford as soon as possible by post. From this method, she achieved a response rate of 63.5%.

2.6. Summary

I suggest that Dandelion ordered his questions and chose his wording provocatively to ensure that he received the fullest possible range of answers from all participants to help him create a very broad understanding of belief within Quakerism. Evidence of this is found in his introductory letter in which he asks for multiple responses to create a 'comparative picture'. Further evidence of this is found in the length and scope of his survey, which contained 15 pages and 72 questions. Whether Quakers are Christian or not was not a

⁶ This method would have produced 50 Meetings. Unfortunately, since Rutherford did not write up her Thesis, I do not know why she only contacted 48 Meetings.

specifically stated aim for his research. He had a minimum definition of Christian that enabled him to come to a conclusion, but his goal was to create a varied montage of belief. Following Dandelion's lead, Rutherford had similar success with her survey and was confronted with a similarly wide range of beliefs.

Their surveys were extremely well thought out and exhaustive. But, neither convinced me that my personal experience that the Religious Society of Friends remains part of the Christian church is incorrect. Further, their research does not provide a compelling argument to re-write *QF&P* or the *Advices and Queries*. Rather, I was persuaded that their results were affected by their aims of trying to gather interesting material for their PhD thesis. Consequently, I choose to do my own survey, fully understanding that I, too, was adding my own aims and intentions for the outcome.

CHAPTER THREE: SURVEY METHODS

I began my research with limited ambitions. My original intention was to conduct a relatively small-scale survey among the 80 or so members and attenders of Poole Meeting to provide the results for one 4,000-word paper as coursework for my MPhil. My target audience, and my familiarity with them, informed many of the decisions I made about Definition, Question Choice, Question Phrasing, Design, Order and Transparency. Additionally, I made decisions about distribution methods based on sending to this initial small group, such as sending the questionnaire to everyone, rather than exclusively to those who are active and/or experienced Members and Attenders.

As mentioned in the Introduction, I relied heavily on Dandelion's and Rutherford's research questions to provide the groundwork for devising my own questionnaire and determining my methods.

3.1. Questionnaire Design and the Number of Questions

My Questionnaire, included as Appendix 1, is two pages long, printed on the front and back of one sheet of A4 paper. It includes twenty-two 'Yes' or 'No' questions. I did not leave room on the page for comments. I chose quantitative rather than qualitative research methods for my survey, which is reflected in the design. I anticipated that my questionnaire could be completed in fewer than five minutes.

Each questionnaire included a brief explanation at the beginning of the questionnaire about who I am and that I was conducting the research as part of my coursework. The brief instructions also explain that the respondent could skip any question that he or she did not understand.

I offered the participants anonymity and I enclosed a self addressed stamped envelope. Because I wanted the questionnaire to be answered quickly, I asked respondents to return their completed questionnaires within four weeks.

My design reflects my original intention for the questionnaire. I thought I would only send it to Members and Attenders of Poole Meeting. However, the results I received were startlingly different from Dandelion's and Rutherford's. 91% of the sample from Poole Quaker Meeting indicated that they consider themselves to be Christian and 96% indicated that they believe in God.

However, rather than accept these answers as indicative of all British Quakers, I decided to test the results further by sending it to other Meetings. I chose those local Meetings with which Poole has the closest affiliation, the other Preparative Meetings in the Bournemouth and Swanage Monthly Meeting. I sent the same survey so I could compare the Monthly Meeting data directly to the Poole responses. At the Monthly Meeting level, I also had very different results than Dandelion and Rutherford. 92% of the sample replied that they are Theist and 84% indicated that they consider themselves to be Christian.

In order to test my results fully, I chose to distribute the questionnaire nationally to other Monthly Meetings. In doing so, I used the same questions and the same distribution methods in order to facilitate comparison with data already collected.

In sum, I originally designed my questionnaire to send it only to my local congregation. I did not want to change the survey and skew my earlier data when I widened my survey area. Consequently, I sent a questionnaire designed for small sample to a large one.

3.2. Question Order

I anticipated that the data from Members and Attenders might be different. Consequently, I place the two questions to determine whether the respondent was a Member or an Attender first. They were not the most important questions, rather I felt that in reading the rest of the answers it would be helpful to know whether the respondent was a Member or Attender.

Next, I asked ‘Do you believe in God? (you can use your own definition of God)’ and then ‘Do you consider yourself to be Christian? (you can use your own definition of Christian)’. These were my two most important questions, since I did not want to build a comparative picture, but rather wanted to know whether British Quakers consider themselves to be Theist and/or Christian.

The following eighteen questions were in a nearly random order. I included them because I thought I would have to use those answers to make my own claims that Quakers are implicitly Christian. The ones that were most relevant to me were the six following the question “Do you consider yourself to be Christian?” I chose these in particular to help me make my claim. That group of six questions concludes with a paraphrased version of Dandelion’s minimum definition of Christian, ‘Do you think Jesus was unique?’.

On the second page, I included the question ‘If you had to answer a Census question that asked whether you are Christian or another faith, but did not allow you to choose unsure, would you choose Christian? (if you had to choose something)’. I placed this question in the middle on the back to try to reduce its importance for the respondents by ‘burying’ it. I hoped that three types of respondents would answer this question:

1. Those who had already said ‘Yes’ to question 4, which asked whether they consider themselves to be Christian.

2. Those who had been unable to say to 'Yes' to question 4 because they did not necessarily trust that I would understand the answer.
3. Those who had been unable to say 'Yes' to question 4 because within Quaker circles they would not call themselves Christian, whilst in non-Quaker circles they might.

Since I hoped to achieve a higher rate of Christianity than either Dandelion or Rutherford, I hoped that this 'buried' question would provide even more Quakers with an opportunity to self-identify as Christian.

3.3. Aims

I intentionally, and I believe transparently, phrased the questions to try to get a 'Yes' answer to the participant's Christian identification. Because of Dandelion's and Rutherford's results, I believed that at least half, if not most of the respondents would answer 'No' to the Christian question. Therefore my aim was to use other questions to prove that Quakers would either:

1. self-identify as Christians if given a flexible definition of Christian that is in keeping with modern Quaker writings, or
2. be shown to be Implicit Christians due to their answers to other questions.

Consequently, in phrasing the questionnaire, I chose:

1. to make the wording as inclusive as possible,
2. to ask the participants directly if they consider themselves to be Christian, but provide backup questions in case they answered negatively, and
3. not to give multiple choice answers.

I also restricted the number of alternatives to Christianity by giving few non-Christian references. I wanted to be as clear as possible that I was not looking for a comparative picture, but rather a reflection of one topic.

I believe that my aims were transparent to the participants. For example, Bewdley 21 added a note to the bottom of the questionnaire, ‘I have answered some questions, but this is hardly a neutral questionnaire. Seems to be a lot of underpinning bias!!!’

3.4. Definition of Christian

When referring in this chapter to whether or not someone is Christian, I use my definition, namely that if a Quaker calls him or herself Christian then I do too, no matter what their definition of Christian might be (Explicit Christians). It is important to note that I do not use any particular definition of Christian. The participants were free to distance themselves from any mainstream definition of Christianity and to use a peculiarly Quaker definition of Christianity if they wanted. In my opinion, the single factor that contributed most to my receiving such a high incidence of Christian responses was that Quakers were able to use a Quaker definition of Christianity.

In my analysis, I use the term ‘Christian’ to describe a person who answered affirmatively to the following question:

- i) Do you consider yourself to be Christian?

Those who answered ‘yes’ to this question I called ‘Explicit Christians’.

I use the term ‘Implicit Christian’ to describe any respondent who answered at least two of the following questions affirmatively:

- ii) Do you believe that Jesus’ ethical teachings are meaningful to you?
- iii) Do you believe that Jesus’ spiritual teachings are meaningful to you?

- iv) Do you use Jesus' teaching or example to help guide the way you live your life?
- v) Would you identify yourself as Christian on a census?
- vi) Are you a 'Humble Learner in the School of Christ'?

And who answered the following question negatively:

- IX) Do you follow another faith, such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Zen, etc.?

My definition is therefore based on an undefined low-Christology framework.

3.4.1. The Use of Unique

Through personal experience, I rejected Dandelion's minimum definition of Christian as someone who considers 'Jesus to be Unique'. I did include the question 'Do you believe Jesus was unique?' so I could test it. Contrary to Dandelion and Rutherford, I did not have a minimum definition other than self-definition.

3.4.2. Question Design: Direct Questions

I derived my questions from the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1957), from *QF&P* (1999), and from personal knowledge drawn from my recent participation at Poole Meeting in the workshop *Hearts & Minds Prepared*, a study programme designed by Woodbrooke Quaker Study College to examine the elements of Quaker faith. I incorporated

parts of Dandelion's questions.⁷ I also included suggestions from members of Poole Meeting.⁸

I chose questions that were as direct as possible but at the same time gave the respondent maximum scope for definition. I did not want the participants to give me partial or qualified answers; consequently the questions could be answered only with 'Yes' or 'No'.

3.5 Distribution Methods

3.5.1. Local Meetings

As described briefly above, my survey started with a very small sample that included only the Members and Attenders of Poole Meeting. I had access to the Directory of Members and Attenders because I owned a copy. I asked the Poole Meeting Clerk if I could send my questionnaire to those who were listed in the directory. She brought the matter before Preparative Meeting (the business meeting) and those Members present gave their approval, using established Quaker business methods.

On receiving approval, I sent a copy of my questionnaire and a self-addressed stamped reply envelope to everyone listed in the Poole Directory. I included those Quakers who are Members, but come so rarely that their membership is tertiary (non-active Members). I did that because I did not want to risk offending any of the Members or Attenders who might want to be included in my survey, so I included everyone regardless of their attendance or participation record.

When I decided to expand my survey to the other Meetings in the Bournemouth and Swanage Monthly Meeting, I asked permission of each of the local Meetings. Swanage,

⁷ I referred specifically to Questions 22, 24a, and 24c in Dandelion's 1989 Quaker Questionnaire and his definition of Christians believing that Jesus is Unique.

Bournemouth and New Milton Meetings approved my request at their business meetings. I sent off the questionnaire directly as before.

In the case of the fourth meeting, Lymington, the Clerk of the Meeting did not understand my request. I sent sample surveys to be reviewed by the business meeting attendees. He distributed those questionnaires to the business meeting, after it was approved, and asked the people who received a questionnaire to fill it in and return it to him. He volunteered to forward them to me. In misunderstanding my request and choosing a different technique, he changed my collection methods. Consequently, I was unable to include that data.

I was determined to get answers from all the Meetings in Bournemouth and Swanage Monthly Meeting, therefore to overcome this problem, I waited six months and approached Lymington Meeting again. During this interval a new Clerk was appointed. On the second occasion, I explained to the new Clerk that I had received approval to distribute the questionnaire and that I could not use the data that had been collected for me. I asked if I could send the questionnaires directly and she agreed. I sent the questionnaires again using my original methods.

3.5.2. The National Questionnaire

Once I received the results from Bournemouth and Swanage Monthly Meeting, I wondered if my answers might reflect the national opinion, rather than a local one. In order to test this theory, I needed to send the questionnaire nationally.

⁸ One Member in particular indicated a strong belief in Christ, but as a non-historical figure. I included this option on his suggestion. Another Friend suggested that I include the "Humble Follower in the School of Christ" question since it had particular meaning to her and is part of Q F + P.

One of the challenges of this further research was the Data Protection Act, which precluded me from using the directory of any Monthly Meeting of which I am not a Member.⁹ For each Monthly Meeting I approached, I had to have a Member in place who was willing to assist me by addressing the envelopes. Therefore, before I approached the Monthly Meeting Clerks to seek permission, I assembled a small group of Members who were willing to help me with envelope labelling. These Members were in the following Monthly Meetings: Brighouse (in Yorkshire), Colchester and Coggeshall (in Essex), Hampstead (in London), Marsden (in Lancashire), and Worcestershire and Shropshire.

The geographic distribution of these Monthly Meetings is spread across England.¹⁰ Although it was what I wanted, this was by chance rather than design. I had to choose Monthly Meetings where I had a contact; consequently the ones I chose were based on having a local contact rather than my choosing a location and then looking for a contact.

Having found a local Quaker who was willing to help me with my research, I approached each Monthly Meeting Clerk (in two cases they were the same person) and asked if they would bring my request to their next business meeting. Using this method I received permission very quickly from Worcestershire and Shropshire, Hampstead, Marsden, and Brighouse.

Hampstead MM asked me to enclose a short letter with my questionnaire, which read:

To Members and Attenders of the Constituent Meetings of Hampstead Monthly Meeting
At a meeting on 16th March 2006 we were asked if names on our contact list could be given to a member of Bournemouth and Swanage Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends who is undertaking some research as part of an MPhil diploma course in Quaker Studies at Woodbrooke and the University of Birmingham. It concerns the nature of belief within the Society, particularly Christian

⁹ Quakers are Members of their Monthly Meeting not their local Meeting or the national body, Britain Yearly Meeting.

¹⁰ My Dissertation is about Friends in Britain. The national body is Britain Yearly Meeting, therefore I have used that terminology even though I did not survey Friends in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

belief. The Meeting agreed to this request provided I made it clear to all receiving the survey that there was no obligation that it should be completed.

Rod Harper, Clerk of Hampstead Monthly Meeting

Brighouse Monthly Meeting also decided to use a cover letter, which read,

Dear Friends,

You have recently seen the article in the MM Newsletter addressing the affects of spiritual diversity in Monthly Meeting, and noted it is something that the meeting wants to think more about.

During March Monthly Meeting an opportunity to do this was presented, in that we agreed to take part in a research project that addresses precisely this issue. This project is being carried out by Kate Mellor from Poole Meeting and is supervised by the Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre.

We agreed that questionnaires will be sent to all adults listed in the recent Yorkshire General Meeting Book of Members, and some young people after advice from their meetings – hence this is being sent to you. We hope you will take part, but it is anonymous and there is no compulsion.

As well as helping the research project it will also help the Monthly Meeting, as has promised us feedback by September. The feedback from the questionnaire may give us some idea of the extent of our spiritual diversity; do we really believe lots of different things?

We hope you enjoy this, and look forward to considering the findings in the Monthly Meeting.

With good wishes,

Susan Robson and Jade Smith

Clerks of Brighouse MM

Marsden Monthly Meeting and Worcestershire and Shropshire Monthly Meeting

asked me to revise the heading on the top of my questionnaire to be specific to those groups.

At the business meeting for Colchester and Coggeshall Monthly Meeting one Member was vehemently opposed to sending my questionnaire. She was personally responsible for the database and she felt that she had given a personal promise not to send anything that was not Monthly Meeting business. The business meeting decided to allow me to distribute the questionnaire by way of Meeting Houses. Their suggestion was that I post the questionnaire to each Meeting House and that someone in that local Meeting would point out my

questionnaire and invite people to take one home and fill it in, a method not unlike Dandelion's original method.

Unfortunately I was unable to accept their offer because it would change my data collection for one of the groups of participants. I spoke at length with the Clerk who explained that many Friends did want to participate. He brought the issue to the next business meeting and this time suggested that they make my survey Monthly Meeting business. This method worked and it was approved at the next business meeting.

In each case, having gained the Monthly Meeting's approval, I had to forward to my designated contact the questionnaires stuffed into blank stamped envelopes. The envelopes were either sealed so they could be quickly labelled and posted or unsealed if the Monthly Meeting requested that the person labelling the envelopes include an additional explanatory letter.

3.6. Reflections on my Initial Data Analysis

I initially entered my data onto an Excel spreadsheet for each Monthly Meeting. The Members and Attenders of each Preparative Meeting had their own worksheet with the collated results on a further worksheet. The results for the whole Monthly Meeting were collated on a further worksheet. I entered each of the data points as part of a group from that Preparative Meeting. For example, all the Members who answered 'Yes' to the question 'Do you believe in God' were included as one group data point on the Members worksheet for that Preparative Meeting.

This method gave me the answers that I had initially hoped to achieve from this research. I was able to total the number of each 'Yes' or 'No' answer for each of the questions and determine how each Preparative Meeting responded as a group to the questions.

Once I had my totals for each of the Preparative Meetings and also Monthly Meetings, I compared my data to find any differences in the results.

3.6.1. Data Analysis: Rural and Urban Meetings

The Monthly Meetings I surveyed can be loosely defined as urban or rural. The rural Meetings were Marsden, in the Northwest of the country, Worcestershire and Shropshire, on the English border with Wales, and Colchester and Coggeshall, located to the East of London. The urban meetings are Hampstead, in central London, Brighouse, in industrial North Yorkshire, and Bournemouth and Swanage, which although in rural Dorset and Hampshire, is in a conurbation of approximately 600,000 people (in Bournemouth, Poole, and Christchurch).

I compared the data between these Monthly Meetings and found that there is no noteworthy urban and rural divide in the answers to the questions about belief in God and whether they considered themselves to be Christian.

3.6.2. Data Analysis: Northern and Southern Meetings

The Monthly Meetings lend themselves to an approximate North/South divide, with Brighouse, Marsden, and Worcestershire and Shropshire in the North and Colchester and Coggeshall, Hampstead, and Bournemouth and Swanage in the South.

I compared the data between the Monthly Meetings and found that while there is some difference between the Monthly Meetings, the differences cannot be attributed to a North/South divide.

3.6.3. Data Analysis: Small and Large Meetings

Within each Monthly Meeting, the Preparative Meetings have different sized congregations. For example, the smallest Meeting that answered my survey was Wem in Worcestershire and Shropshire Monthly Meeting, which returned 4 questionnaires. The largest number of responses I received was from Colchester Preparative Meeting, which returned 88 questionnaires.

I compared the Meeting size and their answers to the questions about belief in God and whether they considered themselves to be Christian. Although there were differences between different individual Preparative Meetings, I was unable to conclude that the size of the congregation is a factor.

3.6.4. Data Analysis Methods: Members and Attenders

Lastly, using my Excel data, I examined the answers that Members and Attenders gave to the questions about belief in God and self-identity as Christian. I examined them by Monthly Meeting and as a whole group and was able distinguish a difference between Members and Attenders.

In doing so, I found that Members were more likely to answer that they do believe in God and that they consider themselves to be Christian than the Attenders.

3.6.5. Data Analysis Methods: SPSS

After I completed my Excel data analysis and handed in my dissertation for examination, in Autumn 2007, I was called to a Viva in February 2008. One of the items that was examined in my Viva was my use of Excel for the data analysis. One examiner asked me to re-enter my data so that I could examine each item individually rather than as a Monthly

Meeting or Preparative Meeting. He asked me to use the data analysis programme SPSS for this purpose. Consequently, in 2008, I re-entered the 22,770 data points into SPSS for further analysis.

When I examined the data in SPSS, I performed different types of analysis to see what kinds of differences I could find. As with the Excel data, the most interesting differences were in the answers given by Members and Attenders. Consequently in Chapter Three, the chapter that examines my findings, my data comparisons focus on the answers given by Members and Attenders.

3.7. Reflections on My Methods

3.7.1. Sending to Non-Participatory Members

With the benefit of hindsight, I would not send the questionnaire to Members and Attenders who were no longer actively attending Meeting for Worship. It is possible they were no longer attending Quaker Meetings because they no longer considered themselves to be Quaker or that they had lost their faith. It is possible that many Members and Attenders who are no longer active took part in my survey. It is also possible that the results from the non-Active Members and Attenders would be very different from active Members and Attenders. I wonder if the non-active Members and Attenders who took part in my survey lowered the incident of belief in God and self-identity as Christian and because of the design of my questionnaire I cannot find that out. I should have followed Rutherford and distributed only to those who attended Meeting for Worship. If I were to do the questionnaire again, I would send it only to active Members and Attenders.

3.7.2 Questionnaire Design

I used only 'Yes' or 'No' answers in my questionnaires in order to force the participants to take a stand. I was afraid that they would answer 'maybe' or 'sometimes' to my questions, whereas I wanted a definite answer. In designing the questionnaire this way, I did get the answers I was hoping for in that the majority of the participants did choose an answer. I also had a good response rate, which is examined more closely in the next section. However, the answers were very limiting because I do not know more about why they answered the way they did. If I were designing the questionnaire again, I would ask each participant to give me his/her definition of Christianity as well.

In my design, I did not add a space for comments. However, the comments that the participants sent in either in the margins or on separate pieces of paper proved very useful to me in understanding the results of the questionnaire. In chapter four, I develop the comments that the participants sent in and suggest three designations: Explicit Christian, Implicit Christian, and Atheist and Christian. Therefore, if I were to do the questionnaire again, I would add space after each question for the participants to add comments should they wish.

There were two major errors on the questionnaire that I would fix if I were to do the questionnaire again. First, I used 'American' Evangelist churches instead of the 'English' Evangelical churches. Second, I also mis-quoted the 'Humble Follower in the School of Christ' question, which should have read 'Humble Learner in the School of Christ'.

Additionally, I would not have included two questions. I would not have included either 'Do you believe that Jesus 'existed, but maybe not as a historical figure?'' because it was confusing and unnecessary. I also would not have included the Census question. I thought that I needed the answers, but I was mistaken.

Finally, it would have been very interesting to know the age and gender of the participants. Consequently, if I were to re-do the questionnaire then I would add in those questions as well.

3.8. Response Rate

I received 1035 responses from the 1,578 questionnaires sent, which was a response rate of 65.6%. My rate of response was similar to Dandelion's (1996, p.79) response rate of 57.6% and to Rutherford's (Cary and Dandelion, 2007, p.146) response rate of 63.5%.

3.9. Summary

That I designed my questionnaire to go to a relatively small local sample familiar to me affected the questionnaire itself as well as the distribution methods. The questionnaire was effective and I received a good rate of return with clear answers, but it could have been greatly improved by streamlining the questions and by including space for comments after each question.

My distribution method could also have been improved. I should have excluded those people who are not currently active Members or Attenders within their Meeting. I have no way to know how many of them responded to the questionnaire and therefore cannot be sure how much their answers might have affected my results. Because I cannot analyse the questionnaire answers more closely, I cannot know how much the answers of non-Active Members and Attenders affected my results. If I had started my research with the foresight to realise that I might take it any further or with any sense of how the larger sample would answer, I would definitely have made different decisions.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Following are the results of my survey in two forms. First, I give the percentage detail for each question. Second, I examine the answers given by Members and Attenders more closely to identify some of the differences.

4.1. The Data

The following table includes the collated answers of Members and Attenders. The percentages take into account everyone who returned the questionnaire, even if they left all the answers blank. Those who left it blank might have been trying to give me a message in their passive refusal to answer, but the result was that I included theirs as a non-answer.

Table One: Questionnaire Answers as Percentages

Yes	No	No Answer	Question
70%			Are You a Member?
30%			Are You an Attender?
83.4%	9.8%	6.9%	Do you believe in God? (You can use your own definition) <i>93.1% Answered</i>
72.6%	20.1%	7.4%	Do you consider yourself to be Christian? (You can use your own definition of Christian) <i>92.7% Answered</i>
88.8%	4.3%	6.9%	Do you believe that Jesus existed as a historical figure? <i>93.1% Answered</i>

15.2%	37.7%	47.7%	Do you believe that Jesus "existed", but maybe not as a historical figure? <i>52.3% Answered</i>
93%	3.7%	3.3%	Do you believe that Jesus' ethical teachings, as you understand them, are meaningful to you? <i>96.7% Answered</i>
81.8%	9.6%	8.6%	Do you believe that Jesus spiritual teachings, as you understand them, are meaningful to you? <i>92% Answered</i>
83.1%	10.3%	6.6%	Do you use Jesus' teaching or example to help guide the way you live your life? <i>93.4% Answered</i>
42.3%	45.6%	12.1%	Do you believe Jesus was unique? <i>87.9% Answered</i>
31.5%	60.2%	8.3%	Would you generally use the title Christ? <i>91.7% Answered</i>
17.8%	65.8%	16.4%	Do you believe Jesus died for Atonement (in other words to save your soul)? <i>83.6% Answered</i>
31.3%	46.4%	22.3%	Do you believe Jesus was or is the Son of God? <i>77.7% Answered</i>
29.9%	33.1%	37%	Are you a Universalist? <i>63% Answered</i>
33.1%	29.9%	37%	Are you a Christian who might also be Universalistic? <i>63% Answered</i>
16.9%	67.5%	15.6%	Are you Agnostic? <i>84.4% Answered</i>
11.6%	81.1%	7.3%	Do you follow another faith, such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Zen, etc.? <i>92.7% Answered</i>

80.5%	13.7%	5.8%	If you had to answer a Census question that asked whether you are Christian or another faith, but did not allow you to choose unsure, would you choose Christian? (if you had to choose something) <i>94.2% Answered</i>
44.7%	32.1%	23.2%	Do you think the Evangelist ¹¹ churches have hijacked the word Christian? <i>76.8% Answered</i>
48.7%	25%	26.3%	Are you a 'Humble Follower of the School of Christ'? ¹² <i>73.7% Answered</i>
60.4%	22.8%	16.8%	Does George Fox's (the 'founder' of Quakerism) famous quote "There is one, even Jesus Christ, who can speak to thy condition" ring true for you? <i>83.2% Answered</i>
70.6%	20.7%	8.7%	If you were describing Quakerism to someone who knew nothing about it, would you describe Quakerism as a Christian Faith (as you define Quakerism)? <i>91.3% Answered</i>

My questionnaire shows that 72.6% of the respondents consider themselves to be Christian and 83.4% indicated that they believe in God. This is in contrast with Dandelion's (1996) results that showed 50.7% declared themselves to be Christian and 74% declared that they believe in God. My results are also in contrast with Rutherford (2003), who had 45.5% declare themselves to be Christian and 73.5% declare that they believe in God.

The answers I received about the use of the word unique are not very different from Dandelion's, which may indicate that the definition of Jesus as unique is not a good minimum definition of Christian for the Quaker population.

¹¹ The question should be 'Evangelical Churches'.

¹² The question should be are you a "Humble learner in the school of Christ" as per *Quaker Faith and Practice* 11:18.

4.2 Data Comparisons

4.2.1 SPSS Summary

The following chart shows that the SPSS dataset used for this data comparison is comprised of all 1035 surveys received.

Table Two: SPSS Case Processing Summary

SPSS Statistics - Case Processing Summary

		Do you believe in God?	Do you consider yourself to be Christian?
N	Valid	1035	1035
	Missing	0	0

4.2.2 Friends' Belief in God

The following dataset shows how many of respondents replied that they believe in God. 83.4% of the total sample replied that they believe in God. 9.8% of the total sample replied that they do not believe in God. 6.9% of the total sample either did not answer the question or circled both answers.

The percentage of positive answers that I received are greater than Dandelion (1996, p.159), who had 74% for a similar question.

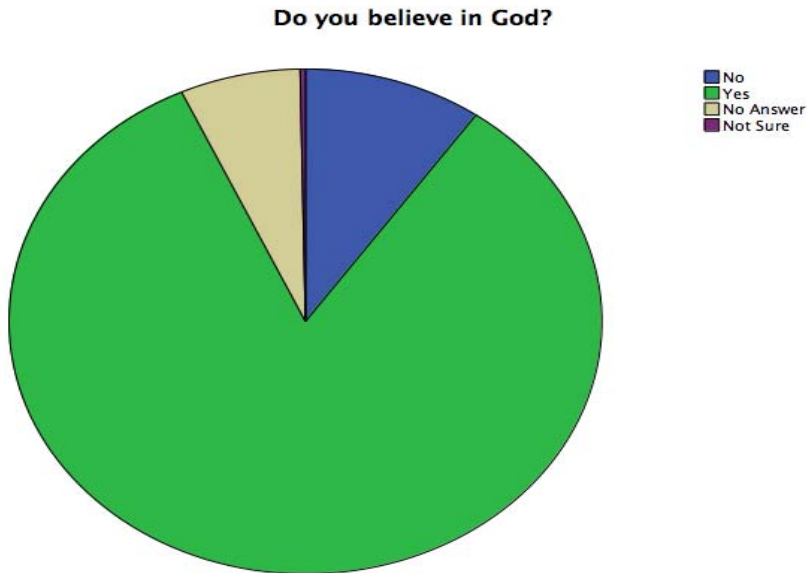
Table Three: Full Sample's Belief in God

Do you believe in God?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	101	9.8	9.8	9.8
	Yes	863	83.4	83.4	93.1
	No Answer	68	6.6	6.6	99.7
	Not Sure	3	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	1035	100.0	100.0	

The dataset above is also displayed below as a pie chart, which helps show the scale of the positive answers (in green) as opposed to the negative answers (in blue).

Table Four: Full Sample's Belief in God as a Pie Chart



4.2.3 Friends Who Consider Themselves Christian

The following dataset shows how many of respondents replied that they consider themselves to be Christian. 72.6% of the total respondents replied that they consider themselves to be Christian, if they can choose their own definition of Christian. 20.1% of the total respondents replied that they do not consider themselves to be Christian. 7.4% of the respondents either did not answer the question or circled both answers.

The percentage of positive answers that I received to this question is greater than both Dandelion (1996, p.61), who had 50.7% for a similar question, and Rutherford (2005), who had a 45.5% positive rate for her question.

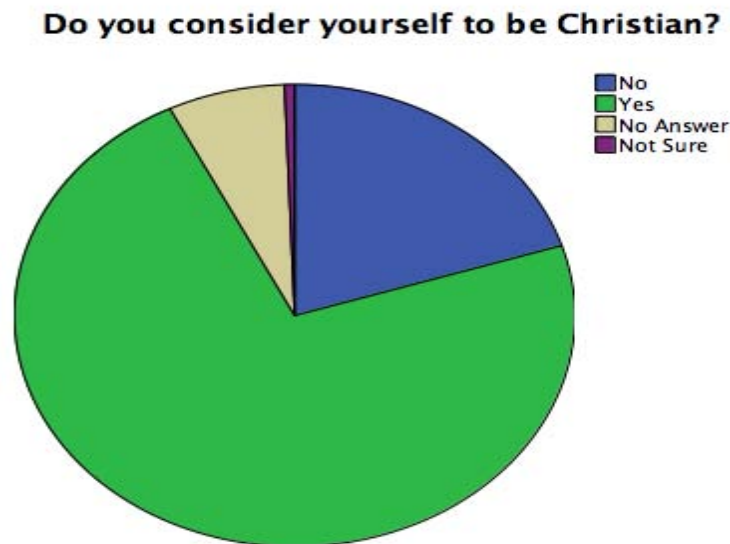
Table Five: Full Sample’s Christian Identity

Do you consider yourself to be Christian?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No	208	20.1	20.1	20.1
Yes	751	72.6	72.6	92.7
No Answer	70	6.8	6.8	99.4
Not Sure	6	.6	.6	100.0
Total	1035	100.0	100.0	

The dataset above is also displayed below as a pie chart, which helps show the scale of the positive answers (in green) as opposed to the negative answers (in blue).

Table Six: Full Sample’s Christian Identity as a Pie Chart



4.2.4 The Relationship between Membership and Belief in God

The following dataset looks specifically at those who are in Membership and also believe in God. It also conversely shows those who are Attenders and whether they believe in

God. Interestingly, nearly 11% more Members answered that they believe in God than Attenders. It is also interesting that nearly twice as many Attenders did not answer the question about their belief in God. These two sets of statistics may indicate that Members are both more likely to believe in God and more likely to be able to answer the question about whether or not they believe in God.

86.9% of the 727 Members of the Religious Society of Friends (as opposed to 83.4% of the total sample) said that they believe in God. 7.8% of the Members replied that they do not believe in God (as opposed to 9.8% of the total sample). 5.2% of the Members either did not answer the question or circled both answers.

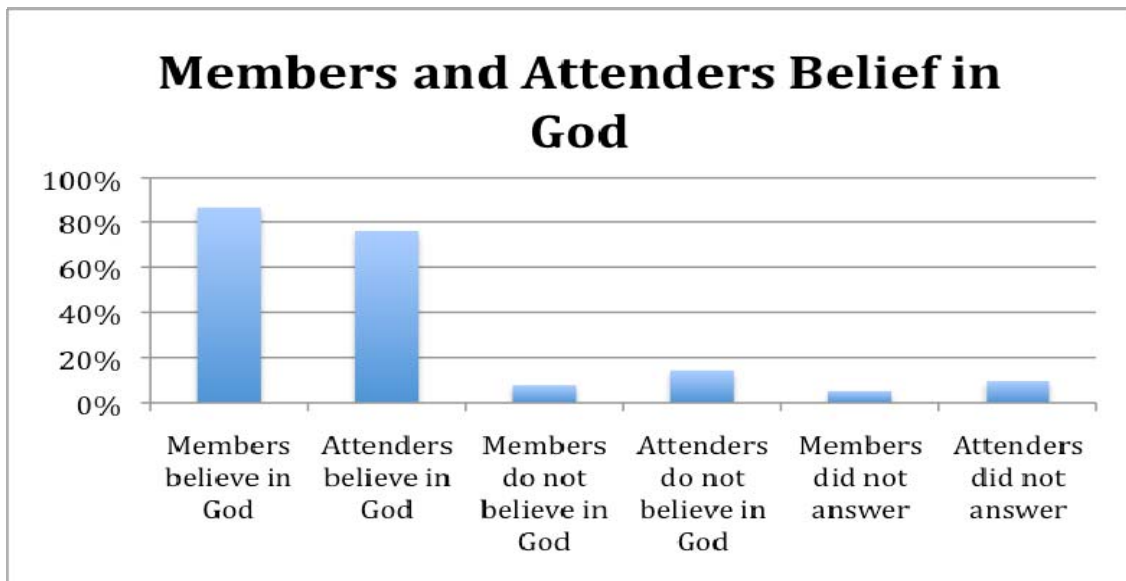
In contrast, 76% of the Attenders who responded to the survey said that they believe in God. 14.3% of the Attenders said that they do not believe in God. 9.6% of the Attenders either did not answer the question or circled both answers.

Table Seven: Members' Belief in God Crosstabulation

		Do you believe in God?				Total
		No	Yes	No Answer	Not Sure	
Are you a Member?	No	44	230	28	1	301
	Yes	57	632	36	2	727
	No Answer	0	1	4	0	5
		101	863	68	3	1035

The following bar chart illustrates the contrast of the Members and Attenders answers to the question, 'Do you believe in God'.

Table Eight: Members and Attenders Belief in God Bar Chart



4.2.5. Those in Membership who Consider Themselves to be Christian

The following dataset looks specifically at those who are in Membership and also consider themselves to be Christian. It also conversely shows those who are Attenders and whether they consider themselves to be Christian.

75.1% of the 727 Members of the Religious Society of Friends said that they consider themselves to be Christian. 17.6% of the Members replied that they do not consider themselves to be Christian. 7.3% of the Members either did not answer the question or circled both answers.

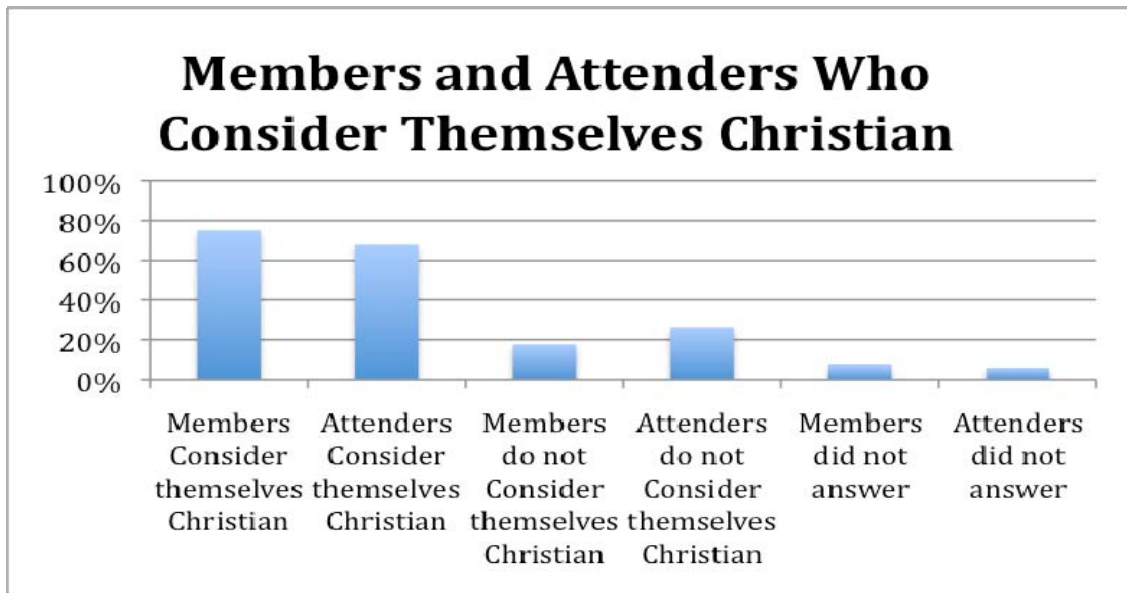
In contrast, 67.8% of the Attenders who responded to the survey said that they consider themselves to be Christian. 26.3% of the Attenders said that they do not consider themselves to be Christian. 6% of the Attenders either did not answer the question or circled both answers.

Table Nine: Members who Consider Themselves Christian Crosstabulation

		Do you consider yourself to be Christian?				Total
		No	Yes	No Answer	Not Sure	
Are you a Member?	No	80	205	17	1	301
	Yes	128	546	49	4	727
	No Answer	0	0	4	1	5
Total		208	751	70	6	1035

The following chart illustrates the contrast of the Members and Attenders answers to the question, ‘Do you consider yourself to be Christian?’

Table Ten: Members and Attenders Who Consider Themselves Christian Bar Chart



4.2.6 Those who Believe in God and also Consider Themselves to be Christian

The following dataset shows those who both believe in God and who also consider themselves to be Christian.

Only 66.5% of the 1035 participants answered that they consider themselves to be

Christian and also that they believe in God. However, only 6% of the sample answered that they do not consider themselves to be Christian and do not believe in God.

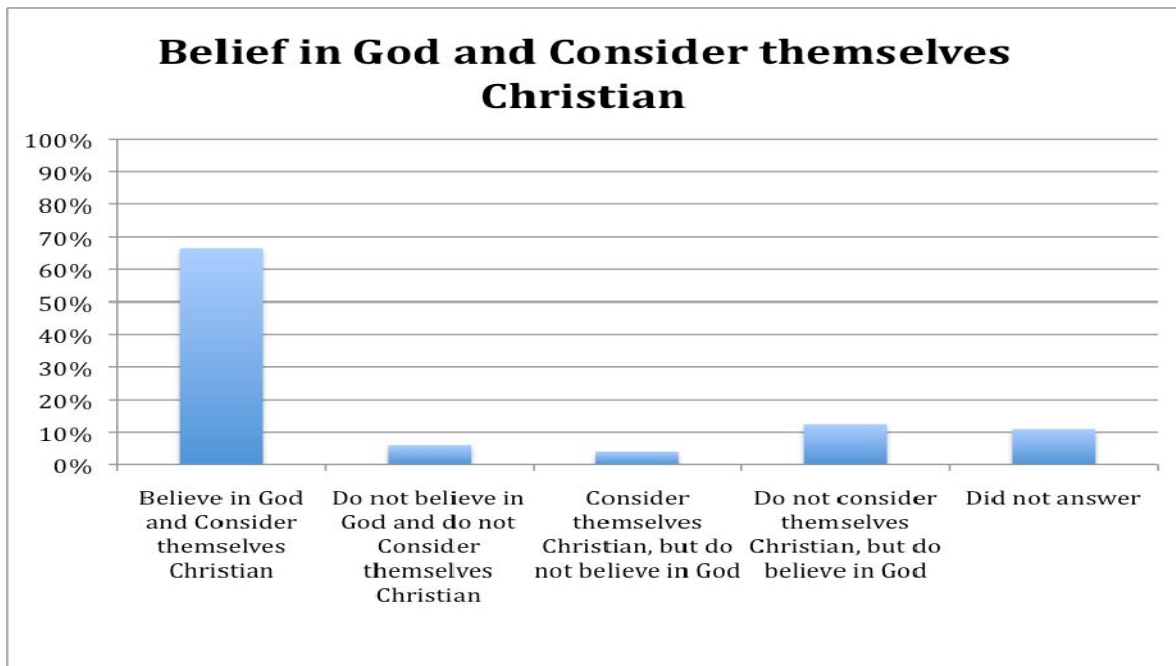
Of the remainder, 4% of the sample answered that they consider themselves to be Christian, but do not believe in God (Christian atheists). And, 12.5% answered that they do not consider themselves to be Christian, but they do believe in God. The remaining 11% did not answer or were not sure.

Table Eleven: Belief in God and Consider Themselves Christian Crosstabulation

		Do you consider yourself to be Christian?				Total
		No	Yes	No Answer	Not Sure	
Do you believe in God?	No	61	39	1	0	101
	Yes	129	688	41	5	863
	No Answer	17	23	28	0	68
	Not Sure	1	1	0	1	3
Total		208	751	70	6	1035

The following chart illustrates the contrast of the participants who consider themselves to be Christian and also believe in God and those participants who do not.

Table Twelve: Belief in God and Consider Themselves Christian Bar Chart



4.2.7. Those in Membership who Believe in God and also Consider Themselves to be Christian

The following dataset looks specifically at those who are in Membership, who believe in God, and who also consider themselves to be Christian. It also conversely shows those who are Attenders and whether they believe in God as well as consider themselves to be Christian.

69.7% of the 727 Members of the Religious Society of Friends said that they consider themselves to be Christian and also believe in God. However, only 4.3% of the Members replied that they do not consider themselves to be Christian and also do not believe in God.

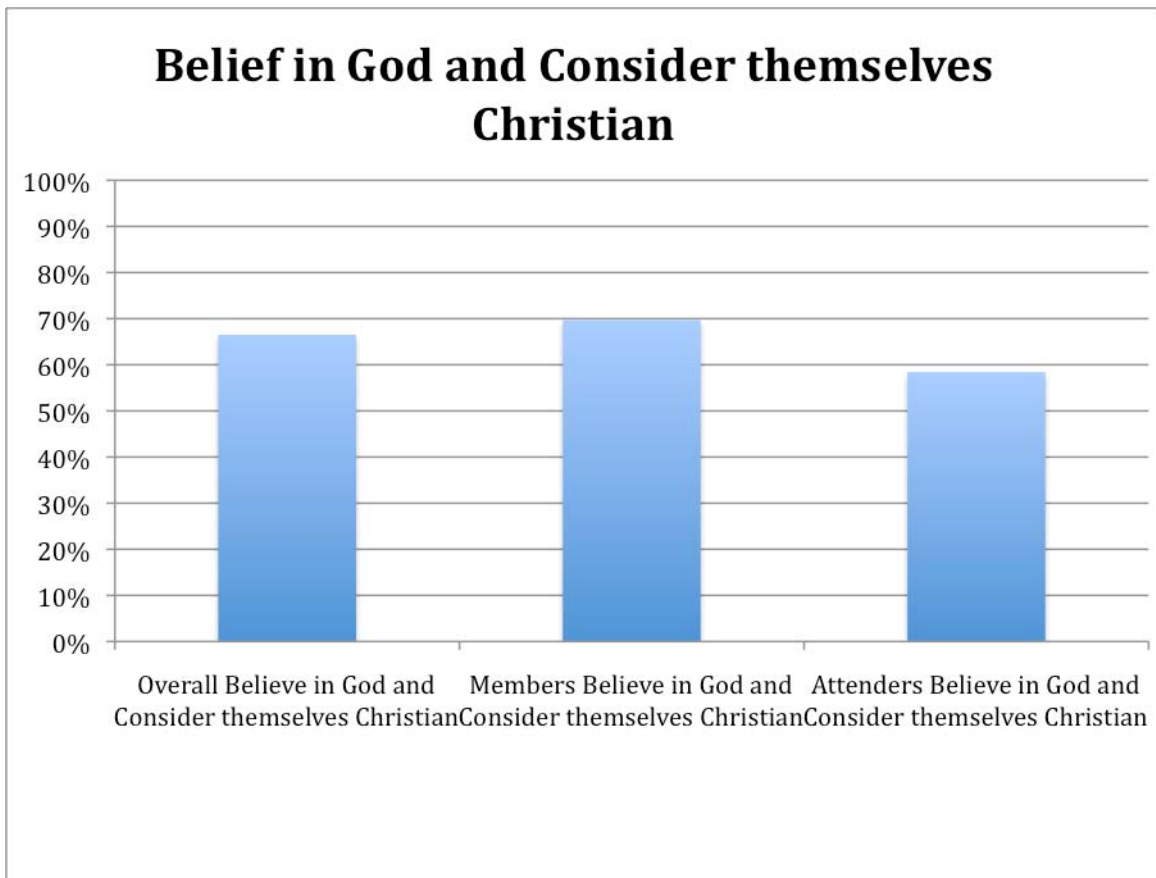
In contrast, 58.4% of the 308 Attenders who responded to the survey said that they consider themselves to be Christian and also believe in God. Whereas, 9.4% of the Attenders said that they do not consider themselves to be Christian and do not believe in God.

Table 13: Those in Membership who Believe in God and Consider Themselves Christian Crosstabulation

Do you consider yourself to be Christian?			Do you believe in God?				Total
			No	Yes	No Answer	Not Sure	
No	Are you a Member?	0	1	0	0	0	1
		No	29	40	9	1	79
		Yes	31	89	8	0	128
		Total	61	129	17	1	208
Yes	Are you a Member?	0	0	1	0	0	1
		No	13	180	11	0	204
		Yes	26	507	12	1	546
		Total	39	688	23	1	751
No Answer	Are you a Member?	No	1	8	8		17
		Yes	0	33	16		49
		No Answer	0	0	4		4
		Total	1	41	28		70
Not Sure	Are you a Member?	No		1		0	1
		Yes		3		1	4
		No Answer		1		0	1
		Total		5		1	6

The following bar chart illustrates those in the overall survey sample, who both believe in God and also consider themselves to be Christian contrasted with that of Members (69.7%) and Attenders (58.4%).

Table 14: Those in Membership who Believe in God and Consider Themselves Christian Crosstabulation



4.2.8. Friends Who Claim that they are Christian on a Census

The following dataset shows how many of sample replied that they would answer that they are Christian on a census.

833, or 80.5%, of the total sample replied that they would respond that they are Christian on a Census. Whereas, 142, or 13.7% of the total samples replied that they would not respond that they are Christian on a Census. 60 of the respondents, or 5.8% of the total sample either did not answer the question or circled both answers.

Looking at first at the Members, 605 of the 727 Members, or 83.2%, replied that that they would answer that they were Christian on a Census. 11.3% of the Members would not reply that they are Christian on a Census.

Of the Attendees, only 73% answered that they would answer that they are Christian on a Census question. Furthermore, 18.8% answered that they would not answer that they are

Christian on a Census.

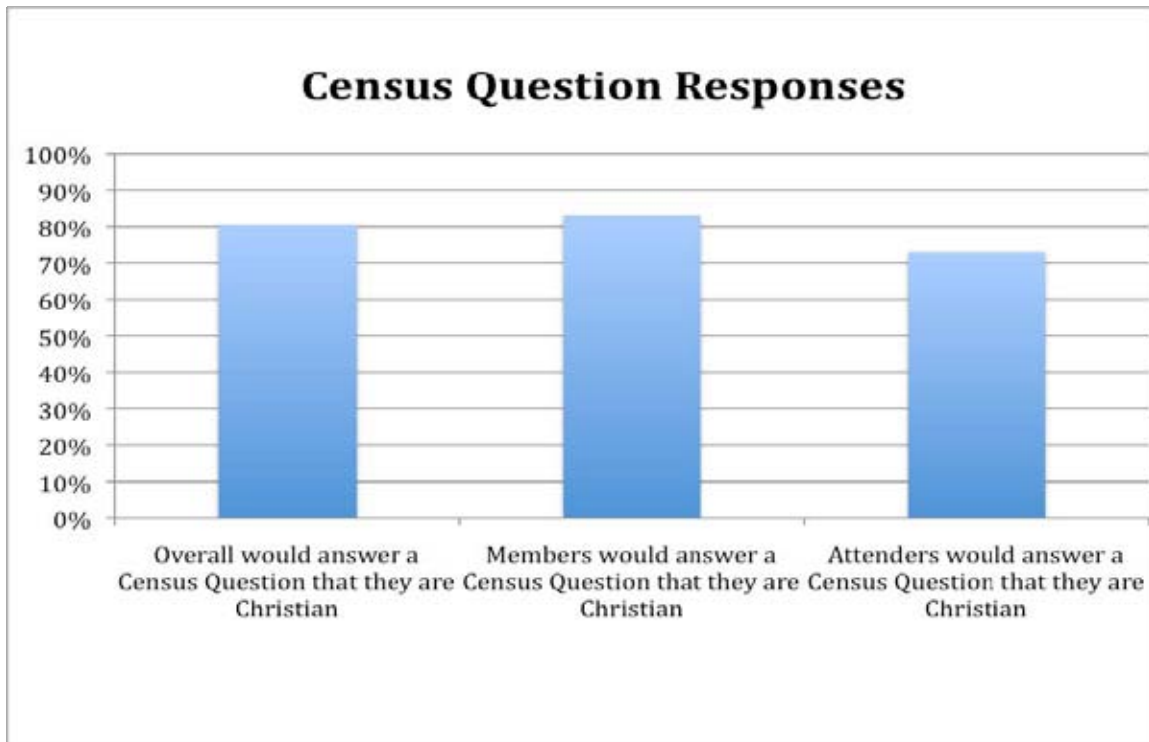
The number of Friends who would answer that they are Christian on a census, 80.5%, is higher than the number who consider themselves Christian, 72.6%. The differences between these percentages is examined further in the next two chapters.

Table 15: Members and Attenders Answers to the Census Question Crosstabulation

		If you had to answer a census question that asked whether you are Christian or another faith, but did not allow you to choose unsure, would you choose Christian? (if you had to choose something)				Total
		No	Yes	No Answer	Not Sure	
Are you a	0	0	2	0	0	2
Member?	No	58	225	18	0	301
	Yes	82	605	38	2	727
	No Answer	2	1	2	0	5
Total		142	833	58	2	1035

The dataset above is illustrated below as a bar chart that shows the total sample answers broken down by Members and Attenders.

Table 16: Members and Attenders Answers to the Census Question as a Bar Chart



4.3. Summary

My sample size of 1,035 out of a population of approximately 25,600 is large enough, I believe, to generate general predictions. My distribution methods show that I did not attempt to create a bias.

I received a higher incidence of self-identification as Christian and belief in God than Dandelion and Rutherford. This may have been due to many factors, including that I asked the questions directly and unambiguously. It may also be due to my definition of Christian, which is one that fits the general Quaker population.

The written answers that I received on the surveys are potentially even more interesting than the frequencies and they are the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

5.1. Introduction

I planned my research to be based primarily on the quantitative results of the questionnaire. My questions were Yes/No and there was no space on my questionnaire for notes. Despite the lack of provision for it, many respondents chose to clarify their answers with notes to me. Some changed the questions so that it fit their own meanings better and I could not then use these responses, and had to include them as 'no answer'. And, some respondents wrote a note about the whole survey so that they could expand on the questions I asked. Some participants told me in person about their experience of answering the survey. They also told me why they answered certain questions in the way that they did. Although I did not request it, I found the qualitative data very helpful in explaining the quantitative results.

In the following section, I explore some of the written results and attempt to explain the statistical answers. I also further explore the three classifications of Christian that I developed.

5.2. Explicit Christians, Implicit Christians and those Clearly Not Christian

Three distinct types of 'Christian' answers emerged from the questionnaires: 'Explicit Christians', 'Implicit Christians', and 'Christian Atheists'. Each of these designations is expanded below.

5.2.1. Explicit Christians

Those whom I call the 'Explicit Christians' are the group that answered my questionnaire by stating 'Yes' to the question 'Do you consider yourself to be Christian? (You

can use your own definition of Christian)', which was 72.6% of the total sample. Appendix 3 is a copy of a typical questionnaire received from an 'Explicit Christian'. This group comprised those whom I call 'Christian' for the purpose of this dissertation; 'Christian' and 'Explicit Christian' are synonymous.

One 'Explicit Christian' wrote a letter to me regarding my research that included the following:

I am a Christian Quaker and feel comfortable with many of the ideas of George Fox, who did use the Bible widely, but also came up with some very important new insights on the ways we explore faith and spirituality, as well as his contributions to the problems of Peacemaking (which for some Quakers is all we really stand for). I also find the life and teachings of Jesus to be central to my ability to face the problems of the World we live in. Your question is a very difficult one to answer, especially if you think that 16,000 people can be said to be one thing, such as Christian. I suspect that the Society (in the UK) is more likely to be a loose fellowship of people who share their uncertainties, and prefer to meet in silence more than agree what they do believe. My biggest concern is that the more vague Quakers become the less likely we are able to have any basis for the issues of social justice and conflict resolution which take up so much of the printed comments in Quaker News and other publications....
Yours in Christ, [REDACTED] (letter, 12.6.06).

Another Friend added in a letter,

'About fifteen years ago I took the step of resigning from [REDACTED] Yearly Meeting (as it was then) and becoming a member of [REDACTED] which is 'conservative'. Unlike [REDACTED] YM, it has the specifically Christian Quaker gospel to preach. Modern liberal Quakers have little to say that is of any use to me and it sometimes feels barely appropriate to refer to them as such. On the other hand, they are such a warm-hearted bunch that I find it hard to feel rejectful towards them.... [REDACTED] (letter, 15.5.06)

Most chose to write clarification notes to me in the margins of their questionnaire, rather than send separate sheets of paper. These comments show that the category of 'Explicit Christians' includes a wide range of views.

For example, Lymington 1¹³ wrote ‘I try to follow Christ’s Teaching’. Lymington 27 added ‘Jesus was a great person, one of several. Our cultural background (UK) is Christian.’ Bolton 2 wrote ‘Yes, Just!’, as did Muswell Hill 9. Crawshawbooth 3 added ‘Quaker, Society of Friends’. Crawshawbooth 13 wrote ‘But my definition may be completely different to someone else.’ Marsden 9 added ‘Yes, Loosely.’ Colchester 33 wrote ‘Yes, in values.’

Sudbury 10, an Attender, wrote ‘I have never thought of myself as a Quaker, “Christian” would probably be the most appropriate word.’ Friends House 15, a Member, added ‘I understand the reason for your questionnaire but I hope you will explore the subtleties of ‘Christian or not’, and not just record a vote’. Friends House 35 wrote, ‘My “Yes”es are highly qualified, so they cannot be statistically significant if you and I are being totally honest.’

Golders Green 24 wrote, ‘having originally been brought up in a Roman Catholic home, schooled in a convent, the language of the RC Church came easily. I have learned (and been asked) to take care about describing my spiritual experiences in language that other Quakers would find alien...But believe me we would be a stronger organisation with a greater commitment to the Christian Ethic.’

Hampstead 43 added, ‘One who tries to follow the teaching of Jesus’. Muswell Hill 32 wrote, ‘I am very concerned about what others would perceive about the word Christian and would never use it unless I knew there is an understanding.’

Malvern 39 wrote, ‘Yes, more than an adherent of any other religion.’ Shrewsbury 38 wrote, ‘I was born into a Quaker family, attended a Quaker boarding school (wonderful) and have based my life on my own reading of Quakerism.’ Worcester 21 added, ‘I follow the laws of God – try to live as a Christian.’

¹³ The questionnaires were anonymous. I labelled each questionnaire with the name of the Preparative Meeting and the order in which it was received. Lymington 1 means it came from Lymington PM and it was the first I

Bradford 9 wrote, 'Yes, as someone in the tradition only.' Halifax 3 added, 'Yes, Christian as in believing in the life and teachings of Jesus not in the virgin birth and physical resurrection.' Halifax 12 wrote, 'I've also chosen to be a Bahai = renewal of the Christian message updated for this day and age.' Huddersfield 29 added at the end, 'If there was a 'maybe' I would have used that but I've answered 'yes' rather than a definite 'no'.

Scholes 17 added, 'There [are] many similar aims in other religions (different leaders).'

5.2.2. Implicit Christians

Many of the respondents who replied that they were not Christian still fell into my original criteria for my definition of Christian, influenced by *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1957). It gives the following in its definition of Christian:

The name was orig. applied to followers of Christ by outsiders...As the name for which the martyrs suffered (cf. LK 21.12) and as containing the name of Christ, the term easily came to fill the proper name by which the Church could designate itself as distinct from Jews and Pagans (and later from Moslems, etc.)...

What is striking about this definition is that it does not suggest any creedal statement. Rather, it suggests that simply by following Christ and not another one can be considered to be Christian (although this is to assume that we all mean the same thing when we say 'following Christ'). Additionally, this definition is one that is *applied to* the individual, *not applied by* the individual. Therefore, it is a definition that I argue can be used to apply to those Quakers who identify that they follow Christ and at the same time do not describe themselves as following another faith or religious practice (such as Islam or Buddhism).

The 22% who make up the group of 'Implicit Christian' are nearly indistinguishable from the 'Explicit Christian' group. I am not going to label these individuals Christian, even considering the definition of Christian I have just presented, since that would be hypocritical on my part. But it is interesting to note that in most cases the questionnaires of the 'Implicit Christians' looked very similar to those 'Explicit Christians', with the one exception of the answer to the question 'Do you consider yourself to be Christian?' In other words, the 'Implicit Christian' group answered the questionnaires so similarly to those who were 'Explicit Christians' that without asking the question 'Do you consider yourself to be Christian' it would be difficult to know they were different.

There are many reasons why these people might appear to others to be Christian and yet consider themselves Christian. These possibilities are explored more fully in Chapter 5.

Some of the 'Implicit Christians' chose to add written comments in the margins of their questionnaires. Bournemouth 4, for example, added 'I follow Jesus, but do not like to say I am a Christian'. Lymington 33 wrote, 'I find I have reached age of 91 ½ without having any clear idea of what I believe! Will death provide an answer?' Hampstead 69 added, 'Depends who I'm speaking to'. Telford 6 wrote, "Follower of The Christ, but not a Christian.'

Telford 29, who wrote an answer to each question to accompany the questionnaire, wrote, 'Not in the conventional sense of mainstream Christianity e.g. believing in specific literal aspects of the life of Jesus. However, I would say that my Quakerism is becoming more Christ-centred.'

Hebden Bridge 40 wrote, 'Feel this is an excellent area for study as it seems the more younger people who are coming into Quakers often see themselves as Quakers first and Christianity 2nd – if at all.'

Huddersfield 40 wrote ‘This is so difficult. Quakerism allows me to make my own definitions – I believe and practice passionately equality of all, non violence, respect and love for people – all derived from my Quaker education but am not sure how much deeper than humanism this takes me.’

The comments that Implicit Christians wrote show a great deal of commitment to Christianity, but no commitment to the label. This confirms my application of the designation Implicit Christian.

5.2.3. Atheist and Christian

Thirty-eight Members and Attenders answered the questionnaire by choosing ‘No’ to the question ‘Do you believe in God?’ and ‘Yes’ to the question ‘Do you consider yourself to be Christian?’. The largest number of these Friends, thirteen, were in Worcestershire and Shropshire Monthly Meeting. Brighthouse Monthly Meeting had seven. Both Hampstead Monthly Meeting and Marsden Monthly Meeting had six. Bournemouth and Swanage Monthly Meeting and Colchester and Coggeshall Monthly Meeting had three each.

Although I have included this as a separate designation, this is only for the purpose of analysis, not additional counting. I have included these Friends in my statistics as Explicit Christian, since that was their self-designation.

Bewdley 19 added ‘I believe in Harmony’ after the God question. Malvern 45 wrote that she follows Gaia. Bradford 9 added ‘As a Being as a person’ after the God question and ‘As someone in the tradition only’ after the Christian question. Hebden Bridge 28 wrote ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’ after the God question. Muswell Hill added, ‘I have become anti-theist’. Lymington 18 wrote at the end, ‘“there is a loving spirit which speak to thy condition” is a better description of my position.’ And, finally, Bolton 29

wrote, 'Some of the questions are too simplistic on complex theological issues and therefore a simple Yes/No can be misleading'.

The answers on these questionnaires did not seem misleading or confusing. In all other respects they looked like the answers given by those who considered themselves both Christian and Theist.

5.3. Non-Christian Theism and Atheism

I was surprised at the size of the sample who answered my survey who were 'Clearly not Christian', 5.4%. Before I started this research I imagined it would be a larger group.

Of them, eight Members and eight Attenders answered that they believe in God, however tentatively, and yet are clearly not Christian. Of these, seven of the Members and two of the Attenders indicated that they are Universalist.

As an example, Lymington 27, a Member, circled the 'Yes' answer for 'Do you believe in God?' with dots and then added to the question about Jesus' ethical teachings '[Yes], but incomplete'. Lymington 27 answered 'Yes' to the question about Evangelical churches. In replying to the final three questions, this person added 'sounds soppy' the 'Humble Learner in Christ' question, 'not a lot' to the George Fox quote question, and 'Quakerism has its roots in Christianity' to the last question. Lymington 27 also wished me a cheery 'Good Luck!'.

Golders Green 17, a Member, added comments to the questions relating to Jesus spiritual and ethical teachings, including 'Yes, in part, not clear about the distinction between 'ethical' and 'spiritual', and 'sometimes' follows Jesus' example. This person believes that Jesus was 'no more [the son of God] than anyone else'. Golders Green 17 wrote in reply to

the question about whether Quakerism is a Christian Faith, ‘No, but rather a faith based in the Christian Tradition’.

Finchley 1, an Attender, circled ‘Yes’ and wrote ‘probably subconsciously’ to the question about using Jesus’ teaching or example as a guide. Next to the ‘No’ on the final question, on describing Quakerism as a Christian Faith, Finchley 1 added ‘but I always say it is Christian-based, but in a very “broad church”.’

Hebden Bridge 27, a Member, added to the two questions on Jesus’ ethical and spiritual teachings, to which this person answered ‘Yes’, ‘meaningful, yes, but not ‘the’ way’. Hebden Bridge 27 also wrote under the question about using Jesus’ teaching or example as a guide ‘culturally inevitable but not used on a day to day basis.’

After the question about using the title Christ, Hebden Bridge 27 wrote, ‘certainly not about Jesus...unless we talk of the Christ within us all)’. Hebden Bridge 27 wrote after the question on whether Jesus is the son of God, ‘metaphorically perhaps, but not literally’ and after the next question, ‘Are you a Universalist?’, ‘ Probably, yes....but not really sure what the term means any more.’ Finally, added to the question on whether Evangelical Churches hijacked the word Christian, Hebden Bridge 27 wrote, ‘but so have most of the established churches.’

Hebden Bridge 8, an Attender, was one of the few who gave an insight into their non-Christian belief model in the comments. This person wrote after the question ‘Do you follow another faith...?’, ‘Earth Based Spirituality and Interfaith.’ Hebden Bridge 8 answered so many of the questions ‘Yes’, that I would have been tempted to add this person to my ‘implicit Christians’ list. However, with the response above and a ‘No’ to the census Question, I did not.

A further ten Members answered that they do not believe in God and do not consider themselves to be Christian. Thirteen Attenders answered the same way. There are some written comments on these questionnaires, which help us better understand why they answered the questions the way they did.

When asked if they would describe Quakerism as a Christian faith, Telford 12 added 'sprung from but not of it'. Telford 13 wrote in large capitals, 'I AM A SPIRITUAL ATHEIST!' in reply to the question 'Are you Agnostic?'. Telford 13 also added 'No but it has resonance' to the question about the George Fox quote 'there is one, even Jesus Christ, who can speak to thy condition', which I found opaque.

Hebden Bridge 17, an Attender, wrote 'I'm Atheist' after the question 'Are you Agnostic' and added 'I'd...write on the form...' to the Census question. In reply to the final question, whether Quakerism is a Christian faith, Hebden Bridge 17 added, 'but based on Christian ethics originally.'

Earls Colne 7, another Attender, added 'The universe is far too complex to be reduced to a concept like 'God' that can be understood by humans.' to the question, 'Do you believe in God?' This person also answered 'Yes, Reluctantly' to the final question, 'would you describe Quakerism as a Christian faith?'

Bradford 17, a Member, wrote rather prolifically, representing an African position. This person did not answer many of the questions, but instead wrote comments. However, for the last two questions Bradford 17 replied 'Yes'. After the question 'Do you consider yourself to be Christian', Bradford 17 included 'I have no strong fundamentalism in Christianity nor other forms of Religion'. Included after the next question was 'I have no faith in how the bible was written, whose story is it anyway?'. After the question asking whether Jesus' ethical teachings are meaningful, Bradford 17 wrote, 'I believe in this story

told and used a sound control hence inversion and degradation of African beliefs'. The following question about Jesus' Spiritual teaching, elicited the following reply, 'Not to me as an African who sees this Religion used to invade and slave many Africans'. And, further after the question about using Jesus' teaching or example as a guide, Bradford 17 wrote 'My ancestors guide me they were there before Jesus came along'. In answering the question 'Do you believe Jesus was unique', Bradford 17 added 'The story of Jesus was told to me by people who wanted to oppress me. I do not associate him/her with things good.'

Continuing with the question about Christian Universalism, Bradford 17 replied 'I refuse indoctrination, so I cannot be either of these'. After the following question, about Agnosticism, Bradford 17 wrote, 'Neither yes/no because this is a European concept alien to me.'

Perhaps the most illuminating comment from Bradford 17 came after the question about Evangelical churches, 'Evangelists is a Black thing is it why you use the word hijack? I interpret it as negative (your question) I mean.' After the next question, 'Are you a 'Humble Learner in the School of Christ'? Bradford 17 wrote, 'I have difficulty with the word humble.'

Bradford 17 answered the last two questions completely differently. In reply to the question about the George Fox quote, Bradford 17 chose 'Yes' and added, 'if George said it, it must be right. He seemed like a good guy.' In reply to the final question, 'would you describe Quakerism as a Christian faith', Bradford 17 also replied 'Yes', and added 'Because Quakers think so.'

Friends House 19 included the following on the bottom of the survey, 'I strongly believe that [the] idea of a personal God who came to save the world and the sinful humanity

is one of the most obnoxious psychological virus[es] that destroys the human mind with devastating consequences for human history and culture at all times.’

Most of those who answered that they were Atheist and Non-Christian did not give comments. And, the comments I received add very little to a conclusive argument. This is not surprising, since I intended to explore with my survey whether many Quakers are actually Christian and Theist, rather than the opposite.

What these comments do show is that those Quakers who are ‘Clearly Not Christian’ and who express their beliefs are emphatic. The comments above demonstrate strong opinions held by their authors. It is outside the scope of this study, but it would be interesting to know how much personal vocal ministry these individuals give and whether it reflects these strongly held ‘Clearly Not Christian’ beliefs.

5.4. Those Who Returned the Questionnaires without Answering

Sixteen Friends returned questionnaires without filling them in or alternatively sent in letters instead of filling in the questionnaire.

One person from Bewdley, for example, sent back the questionnaire without answering any questions and with the comment ‘Sorry. I don’t like this and I am not going to answer.’

A Member from Huddersfield sent back the questionnaire with only the first question answered and this note on the bottom,

Can’t believe this questionnaire has been sent out!! The Society of Friends is in deep trouble if needs to ask such basic questions as “Do you believe in God?” and “Do you believe that Jesus existed.” – so typical of the wishy washy melting pot mentality that has put us off coming to Meeting in recent years.

A Friend from Clacton-on-Sea sent a note ‘Sorry, I couldn’t fill in the questionnaire.’ Colchester 76, a Member, wrote, ‘I am afraid that I have not answered many of your questions. You are, it seems to me, dealing with issues too complex for a yes/no split. If you wish to understand my views on these things you need open ended questions. If you wish to know how I might define myself you need space for my words. anon.’

I received another letter, this time from [REDACTED],

I received the enclosed questionnaire from [REDACTED] PM (I no longer attend a Friends’ MfW, but remain in membership). I’ve not been able to fill it in and therefore could simply have thrown it away. However, I would explain why it is that I’m unable to answer many of the questions and trust that I can do so without being blindingly honest as, alas, Friends in my experience can be.

A simple binary questionnaire of this sort seems hopelessly reductive when applied to areas such as faith and belief. For most of us, periods of doubt, dryness and scepticism are integral to faith and even an apparently straightforward question such as the last is made problematical by geography: if I were a Kenyan Friend, and one third of the membership, I believe, is in Kenya, I would answer unequivocally, “yes.” Okay, I realize that you are concerned only with the UK and specifically with the drift away from Christianity and towards universalism, but perhaps you take my point.... [REDACTED]

I received another letter from a Friend in [REDACTED] MM, which included the following,

I hope you will forgive me for not returning the [questionnaire] but most of the question seem to me to need further expansion to make their meaning clear to, even then, they are very few to which could answer a clear “yes” or “no” (“Yes” I am a member of the Quakers). By the time I have used my own definitions of both “Quaker” and “Christian”, without making either explicit, what will “yes” or “no” to the last question mean to anyone else? In any case, I would adapt my description to the person to whom I was giving it....

Please don’t hate me for these comments! I wish you every success in your MPhil and would love to help if I could. But I simply don’t feel able to give honest or meaningful answers to nearly all the questions as they’re presented.... [REDACTED]

These comments all show a very strong desire to tell the truth, rather than give a partial answer. I explore Quakerism and Truth later in this dissertation. These comments also

show a concern with my decision to only offer a binary option. This is explored in more detail in section 4.7.

5.5. Responses to my use of Unique

The question ‘Do you believe Jesus was unique?’ was the question most likely to be qualified by my respondents. Of those who answered, the split between Yes and No was nearly even. 51% replied ‘No’ and 49% replied ‘Yes’. These figures are similar to Dandelion’s overall analysis of Christianity within Quakerism, based on his claim that the uniqueness of Jesus needs to be definitional of Christianity.

Additionally, 7.3% of respondents wrote some message in the margins of this question. Their notes tended to be ‘We’re all unique,’ or ‘Each of us is unique,’ or ‘As we all are,’ or ‘Every human being is unique,’ or ‘I am not sure.’

Other comments included: ‘Exceptional yes in the Degree of Goodness but also possible for others.’ ‘This you shall do and more.’ ‘To some extent.’ ‘In a Greek tradition – follow on St. Paul teaching which has no connection to the Gospel tradition.’ ‘In what sense? Unhappy giving a pat answer.’ ‘But also the Buddha.’ ‘Each person is unique, precious, a child of God!’ ‘I found this exceptionally hard to answer. Unique to me, but many faiths may have their own ‘Jesus’ as a route to God.’ ‘Here I define ‘unique’ as ‘the one and only valid begotten of God.’

Other Friends wrote, ‘Everything is unique. This question has no meaning.’ ‘In his own historical context.’ ‘Special.’ ‘The best of All the Sons of God.’ ‘As portrayed, No.’ ‘Almost.’ ‘Yes, Jesus was unique in our eyes as Christians – as are Buddha, Mohammed etc. to their followers. As are we all in the eyes of God.’ ‘Each individual is unique: he is neither more nor less unique than I am, or you are.’ ‘But so are other religious leaders’

And, I include my favourite, ‘Are you trying to say he had an identical twin?’

These comments along with the survey results confirm my view that whether Jesus is ‘unique’ is too open to interpretation to be used as a minimum definition of Christian belief within the Quaker population.

5.6. Question Choice

Most Friends who quibbled with my question choice did so gently. They changed a word here and there or inserted a phrase into one of my questions to fashion it more their liking. Some went farther.

Worcester 38 suggested, at the bottom of the survey, ‘I suggest you ask this Q. as well – “Do you think other religions are equally valid then” * list.’

The Members and Attenders of Malvern PM suggested the greatest number of changes. Malvern 4 wrote, ‘It is unfortunate that you found the need to use the verb believe in so many of your questions. Quakerism as I understand it is a FAITH based on experience tested and shared.’ Malvern 19 wrote ‘The questionnaire appears to miss the most fundamental aspect of Quakerism – it is based on experience – not on formulae, creeds and clichés. Hence many of your questions make no sense...’

Experience was brought up by Malvern 23 as well.

Your questionnaire appears to have provided much food for thought. I have answered those questions, which are comparatively straightforward, but most do not have simple yes and no answers; they are at least worthy of a degree level essay, if not a library of learned thesis.

It seems helpful to go back to Q. basics – the introduction and first few of the Advices and Queries. I note that the concept of ‘belief’ is scarcely mentioned, the essence of the Quaker faith is experiential. E.g.! Friends maintain that expressions of faith must be related to personal experience’ (introduction)

‘Remember that Christianity is not a notion but a way (A&Q3).’

And, lastly, the beautifully comic answer from Malvern 10 to the question ‘Would you generally use the title Christ?’, ‘For What?’

As I explained earlier, I would have changed and/or excluded some questions if I had known from the beginning that this would be a national survey, so in some cases I am in agreement.

5.7. Question Phrasing and the Use of Yes/No Answers

Twenty-three Friends wrote substantial comments on my use of Yes/No answers. Many of them echoed the sentiments of Bournemouth 33, ‘Almost impossible to answer some of the questions with yes/no answers honestly without some qualification’ or Bournemouth 37, ‘These questions are far too profound for “yes” “no” answers.’

Bolton 39 added, ‘Some of the questions are too simplistic on complex theological issues and therefore a simple yes/no can be misleading.’ Crawshawbooth 13 wrote two dictionary meaning and relevant comments, wrote seven comments on the questions, and then this note, ‘it will be hard to draw conclusions from such unspecific answers.’

Bradford 9 came to a similar conclusion with, ‘I’m not sure about this questionnaire. Surely it is the reasons behind the questions and answers which are important not the number of yes/no answers. I have found it very easy to complete at one level, but I am concerned about the superficiality of the answers I have given.’ Bradford 18, added, ‘by restricting yourself to “closed” questions, you appear to be asking those responding to place themselves at one or other extreme of a range of belief, where many people may fall in the middle.’

Bewdley 13 wrote,

I think you are using a computer, which is defeating your own ends; as you see, I cannot answer all your questions with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’, and other Bewdley Friends say the same. I can’t really think that something as important as religion can be computerised! Perhaps as

M.C. Barnes remarked, “Is there a need for all these words about something which began in a manger and is as simple as love?”

Friends House 1 wrote, ‘Would really like to discuss context and intellectual basis for questions, so my answers are approximations at best.’ And, Friends House 21 added, ‘Gosh, aren’t questionnaires a weird way of talking to people? And then they are used to pretend to tell the truth!’

The biggest criticism of my ability to ‘tell the truth’ came from Muswell Hill 13, who wrote,

For a 21st Century M.Phil this Yes or No stuff is too crude and unsubtle. It does not acknowledge the biblical scholarship of 350 years since George Fox nor the biological, cosmological, or neurological understandings of the last 150 years. You have to CHALLENGE Ben P.D. not be SUBSUMED by his very antiquated attitudes and research methods.

I dread to think what you are going to do with the outcome of all this. It is not Truth. Are you a Friend of Truth yourself?

It would be misleading for me to only present the negative comments about the affect of my using a Yes/No style questionnaire. I also received many good wishes in the margins, and also several comments that echo Telford 29, ‘Thanks Kate once again for the questionnaire – its really made me challenge my ideas about Quakerism....I hope it is helpful. Wishing you all the very best for your studies as Woodbrooke.’

My analysis of these comments is that the people who wrote messages were trying too hard to predict what I might do with the data. I believe that they did not trust me to simply stick with the answers people gave me; and they clearly did not trust the Yes/No process. Even though I felt that my aims for the questionnaire were extremely clear, in hindsight I can see I was not clear enough for these individuals. My desire to see whether Quakers would self-identify as Christian or not is subsumed in this case into a larger debate about whether we can truly understand what another is saying.

5.8. Summary

My research revealed three distinct types of Christian belief amongst British Quakers: 'Explicit Christians', 'Implicit Christians', and those who are 'Clearly Not Christian'. The 'Explicit Christians', the largest group at 72.6%, all consider themselves to be Christian. Those who are 'Clearly Not Christian' represent just 5.4%. The 'Implicit Christians', who represent 22% of the group, are my designation. They are Quakers who for all intents and purposes probably appear to others to be Christian and/or whom others could call Christian. Why they would appear to some to be Christian and yet not consider themselves to be Christian is considered in the next part of this dissertation.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Introduction

There are many reasons why Quakers do not necessarily talk about or admit to their personal Christianity. One theory is that the very word Christian has taken on a 'toxic connotation', which prevents Friends from wanting to describe themselves as Christian.

Additionally, as Dandelion (1996) has argued, the nature of belief and believing within the Religious Society of Friends is unlike other Christian churches. In the Religious Society of Friends, Christianity matters and does not matter at the same time (Dandelion 1996, p.302).

The portrait of the group painted by this book is one in which belief content has been individualised whilst behavioural and organisational rules operate to maintain an outward conformity. This is not to say that the behavioural creed is more important to the participants than their Quaker belief but that it forms the definitional basis of the group.

Definition is also a problem for Friends. Some Friends may compare their set of personal beliefs with those of larger churches, such as the Church of England, and find that there are so many differences that they conclude they must not be Christian. Quaker Theologian Rex Ambler (2005/6) argues that Quakers must reclaim their own definition of Christian, an inclusive definition.

Lastly, Gay Pilgrim (2004) argues that modern Quakers exist in a kind of internal Heterotopia, which inverts otherness into a self-identity.

All of these theories are also affected by effect of Truth on the Religious Society of Friends. Honesty is extremely important in this group. *QF&P* (1999, p.20.45) offers the following explanation, 'The Quaker testimony to truthfulness is central to the practice of its faith by members of the Religious Society of Friends.' It is possible that some Friends, for

example, could not answer that they are Christian because they do not know the true definition.

These complexities are considered in turn in this chapter. They make the study of Quaker Christians all the more challenging and interesting, which in turn provides interesting opportunities for further research.

6.2. Toxic Language

Quakers are not necessarily comfortable with the use of Christian or Christ in talking about belief. In an email conversation, Dandelion (2006) explained this phenomenon, ‘some words can have toxic connotation, particularly where people have fled their past affiliations rather than having made peace with them’ and, ‘Tim [Ashworth] regularly conducts a ‘de-tox’ on certain key words before teaching his courses on Paul and I did the same in Florida when I wanted to talk to a Quaker group about God, sin, repentance, etc.’

In conducting my research, I approached this phenomenon in two ways. I asked Friends if they felt that Evangelical Churches had hijacked the word ‘Christian’. This was, I would now argue, an awkward and unintentionally accusatory question. I was trying to determine whether Friends felt that the word Christian is a ‘toxic’ word because of a popular image of a Christian as a strongly evangelical person with strong and perhaps different images of Christianity, God and belief than most Quakers. Of the 758 Friends who answered the question, 58% replied positively that they do believe that Evangelical Churches have hijacked the word Christian. 42% replied that they did not feel that way.

I also approached the phenomenon of ‘toxic’ language by asking Friends whether they would answer that they were Christian in a census. In asking this question, I was hoping to find out whether this ‘toxicity’ exists only within Quakerism insofar as Quakers might be

more sensitive in using words related to Christ and Christianity with each other than with non-Quakers. In my results, more Quakers were willing to choose Christian on a census that claim that they are Christian.

6.3. Nature of Belief and Believing within the Religious Society of Friends: Christianity Matters and Does Not Matter at the Same Time

Paradoxically whether Quakers are Christian or not both matters and does not matter within the Society of Friends in Britain.

It matters because The Religious Society of Friends is a member of the Christian Organisation *Churches Together in Britain and Ireland*. If Friends are not Christian, then this membership would be out of place. Churches Together (2007) describes membership as

a visible sign of the Churches' commitment as they seek a deepening of their communion with Christ and with one another, and proclaim the Gospel together by common witness and service. Its strength comes from people from different traditions finding new ways to work and worship together.

Whether Quakers are Christian or not also matters when Quakers try to define themselves to others. Chapter 19 of *QF&P* (1999, p.19.60) explains the connection with the origins of Quaker faith in the 17th Century with current Quaker faith in this way,

...the yearly meeting has changed from comprising mostly those born into the Society to being largely made up of newcomers. For all of us there is still a need to be 'convinced', to make the tradition our own, so that we may know the same transforming truth.

However, at the same time, whether British Quakers are Christian or not is unimportant because Quakers are on individual spiritual paths. In his book *The End of Words Issues in Contemporary Quaker Theology with Creed and the Search for Unity*, Rex Ambler (2004, p.52) explains the importance of the individual experience,

Quakerism carves out a space where people who are anxious about the truth or meaning of their lives can come together and meet, and where together they can explore, discover and hopefully reclaim their truth. The faith is simply that together, in the silence, things can happen that enable us, miraculously, to discover ourselves and the way we have to go.

Whether British Quakers are Christian or not is also unimportant because Quakerism is experiential. In general, Quakers validate their religious conviction with personal experience. There are many examples of this in *QF&P*; indeed most that book is about the experience of Friends. Relating that experience, as opposed to a creed, is part of the essence of Quakerism. Some of the quotes included in the book are,

I knew experientially I had been upheld in God's healing light and power and it is this experience which has made me so convinced of the healing ministry. (1999, p.21.71)

And,

Nor, it seems to me, can you live a Christian life unless, like Jesus, you believe in the power of goodness, of justice, of mercy and of love; unless you believe in these so strongly that you are prepared to put them to the acid test of experiment; unless these constitute the real meaning of life for you, more important than life itself, as they were for Jesus. (1999, p.20.26)

And,

Over the years many Friends have told me that they no longer need regular daily prayer. I don't want to suggest that I am a better man or that there is only one way but simply that this has not been my experience. (1999, p.20.09)

In his book *An Introduction to Quakerism*, Dandelion (2007, p.189) explains the corporate decision-making that results in the formation of a QF&P.

In Liberal Yearly Meetings, the focus is on orthopraxis, in Evangelical orthodoxy. Kathleen Thomas has suggested that Quakers are the only religious group where their 'sacred text' is written by a committee and replaced in each generation (1993). At the same time, no Yearly Meeting holds their book of discipline actually to be a sacred or inerrant text.

Consequently, the experience of the current generation even has an effect on the denomination's central text.

British Quakers often find insight in other religious and spiritual ways, not just Christianity. Christianity might even be considered limiting. There is a Universalist Group within Quakerism. My data shows that 46% of Quakers consider themselves to be Universalist. 53% consider themselves to be Christian and Universalistic.

There are other sub-groups within Quakers, including Quaker Jews (*The Friend*, 164:40, p.16) and Quaker Pagans (*The Friend* 165:36, p.14-15), which demonstrate the diversity of belief. Some of the respondents who were 'Clearly Not Christian' in my survey find it acceptable to be in one of these other subgroups, which they indicated on their questionnaires.

Since Quakers have no spoken or written creed and the worship is based on silence, individuals are able to have their own personal theology within Quakerism. Hence whether they are Christian or not can be seen as irrelevant. In his book *A Sociological Analysis of The Theology of Quakers*, Dandelion (1996, p.287-88) explains that,

The idea that theological beliefs are the primary variable between religious groups is common within the sociology of religion. Thompson talks about the promulgation and propagation, by religions, of an ideology (1973:293), and Hinings and Foster have constructed a causal model of church development which begins with 'charter goals and theology' (1973:102). Sociological analysis of religiosity has traditionally included a belief dimension (Lenski 1961, Faulkner and DeJong 1966, Stark and Clock 1968, Fukuyama 1973, Mueller 1980, for example)

A Quaker model based along these lines could be depicted in terms of the central core of belief informing: the establishment of structures; the basis of membership; the attitude of the group to the world etc. In other words, a model in which theological belief would entail all Quaker organisational life....

[A theology-driven] model is problematic. It is problematic because theological belief, within the Quaker group, is limited in its influence. This is because theology is both individualised within the group...and marginalised...

As a result, British Quakers have it both ways: whether they are Christian is both important, when considering their 'public face' and irrelevant when considering their private spiritual paths.

6.4. Rex Ambler's Theory 'The Quaker Way of Being Christian'

In May 2004 I participated in a workshop led by Rex Ambler entitled 'The Quaker Way of Being Christian'¹⁴. His opening question was 'In what sense, if any, are we Quakers Christian?'

During the workshop, Ambler concluded that it is not surprising that modern Quakers should 'feel ambivalent about their relationship to the Christian movement'. This was especially true, he explained, because many post-modern Christians are only now coming to conclusions about Christianity that Quakerism has had since its inception. Quakers are faced with a general definition of Christianity that shares some similarities with Quaker beliefs, but is actually a mainstream church definition.

According to Ambler, the original Quaker radical message proclaimed a new and different way of being Christian, 'It was a new Realisation'. They reversed the method of learning from 'Priest - Interpretation - Person' to 'Person - Light - Interpretation'. Quakers broke with the historical version of Christianity, broke with the prevailing concept of Church structures, and came up with a different idea.

In the context of this strong religious heritage, modern Quakers must use a different definition, which is one of 'Quaker Christianity', so that it is clearly distinguished from

¹⁴ The workshop was held at Woodbrooke Quaker Study College in Birmingham, UK.

mainstream, and Post-Modern, Christianity. This allows Quakers to be Christian and to continue to participate in the 'new Realisation' (2004).

The workshop themes are expanded in his essay on 'The Quaker Way of Being Christian' (2005/6, pp.26-49). Ambler points out that the disagreement has shifted from Quakers describing a new way of being Christian to the world to Quakers disagreeing amongst themselves about whether Quakers are Christian and, if so, how (2005/6, p.27).

....we *are* concerned about matters of faith, among other things. That allows us to recognise....an anxiety about a loss of direction in our Quaker movement, a loss of meaning in our Quaker faith and practice. We want to find a depth and power and beauty in our Quaker life which answer our deepest human needs, guide us clearly through life's tough choices, bind us together as a community where we know we can trust one another and support one another....

From this point of view we can see how Christianity can be seen by Quakers to be either a help or a hindrance. Christianity as it exists today is no less ambiguous than it was in the past:

Its *strengths* are that it is ancient, biblically grounded, historically continuous, intellectually articulate, morally upfront and specific, politically dominant (in the West) and conspicuous. Its *weaknesses* are the reverse side of those strengths: it is traditionalist, reactionary, argumentative and dogmatic, hung up about women and sexuality, confused about the modern world and social change, more committed to power and property than to the spiritual needs of the majority of people.

Consequently, Ambler explains, Quakers either choose to identify directly with Christianity, or reject it entirely. There is no middle ground for Quakers. This is however a 'false dilemma' in Ambler's opinion. 'We are assuming that the meaning of Christianity is defined by the dominant Christian group, that there can only be one, correct interpretation of what Christianity is, since the dominant group defines its own Christianity as the only one possible, so that others which deviate from the norm cannot be taken seriously.' (2005/6, p.28).

6.5. Gay Pilgrim's Theory of Heterotopia

Gay Pilgrim (2004, p.208) has proposed Heterotopia as a theory that links the first Quakers of the 17th century with modern British Quakerism. She uses a definition of Heterotopia suggested by Kevin Hetherington (1996, p.2).

Spaces of alternate ordering [which] organise a bit of the social world in a way different to that which surrounds them. That alternate ordering marks them out as Other and allows them to be seen as an example of an alternate way of doing things.

Pilgrim's definition is expanded to suggest that a Quaker Heterotopia exists only in a state of juxtaposition, in this case against the wider world. She (2004, p.209) explains that,

Providing a significant alternate ordering necessitates being simultaneously marginal and embedded in the prevailing social order, since heterotopia, or sites of Otherness, express their alternate ordering directly through the society whom they seek to be different from. They must be juxtaposed to something to be heterotopic.

Pilgrim contrasts this Quaker mindset with the modern Liberal tradition. She explains that in the latter part of the 20th Century 'the Religious Society of Friends reflected the pluralism, individualism and crisis of meaning common in the West [Flanagan & Jupp, 2001]'. As a consequence of their no longer having a heterotopic position within the general population and also the Quaker drift to increased diversity of belief, Quakers cling to an exaggerated sense of heterotopia. This is evident, according to Pilgrim, in situations such as the 1999 Britain Yearly Meeting, where 'Time and again Friends spoke of the unique contribution of Quakers and the importance of this.'

Pilgrim (2004, p.217) expands her theory by explaining that,

It can no longer be assumed that those attending Meeting for Worship or applying for membership of the Religious Society of Friends are necessarily 'Christian', even in the very loose Quaker interpretation of the label. There is no longer a commonly shared religious belief, and this breakdown of an overarching religious paradigm has led to Friends' sense of identity and unity resting on their heterotopic stance

itself: their sense of themselves as being Other and offering an alternate ordering to the rest of society (Dale, 1996; Wildwood, 1999).

Whilst I cannot completely agree with Pilgrim's expanded version of her theory because she implies that it would be the majority view that most Quakers are no longer Christian, I do find that heterotopia may explain some of the differences in the responses I received. For example, Pilgrim (2004, p.221) offers the theory that a group of Quakers whom she calls 'Syncretists', who

Are attracted by Friends' heterotopic stance the utopic space it offers, rather than an explicit religious enterprise. It provides a space in which differing ideas, alternative forms of expression, alternate ordering and emerging theological concepts can be expressed without hindrance....The heterotopic stance sought by this group is not so much to do with an alternate ordering as with alternate *orderings*, and it reflects the spiritual marketplace attitude of the wider society.

There may be a link between those whom she refers to as 'Syncretists' and the group whom I found to be 'Clearly Not Christian'. Others who expressed reservations or qualifications in their 'yes/no' answers may also have been those whom she would refer to as 'Syncretists'.

However, where Pilgrim in *The Quaker Condition: The Sociology of a Liberal Religion* (2008) refers to the breakdown of an overarching religious paradigm, I believe that Ambler has found a way through to a more workable paradigm for Quakers, thus negating her claim. I do not believe that the paradigm has broken down.

6.6. The Importance of Honesty and Truth

Honesty and truth are vastly important to modern British Quakers. The pamphlet *The Quaker Testimonies*' (The Testimony Committee of Quaker Peace and Social Witness 2003) offers Truth and Integrity as its first Testimony and explains:

Friends have long tried to live out the importance of truth in every aspect of life. Truth is an integral part of our testimony to the Light that is within us all. We can only be true to our innermost sense of spiritual harmony if we are faithful to the truth and honest in our dealings. This is all the more important in today's complex social, political and economic system, where these values can so easily be lost to sight. Truth and integrity are therefore something that Quakers regard as fundamental guiding principles not just in their own lives but also in public affairs

I argue that a desire to be honest is a key reason why British Friends may describe themselves as non-Christian. The group I classify as 'Implicit Christian' is the keystone of this argument. Their answers are very similar to those of the 'Explicit Christians' and yet they could not self-identify as Christian. I speculate that some may have answered 'no' to this question because they perceived that such a self-definition would not be an honest one for a variety of factors, including that their definition of Christian did not fit themselves, or their perception that my definition of Christian would not fit them, etc. It would be interesting to know if the answers would have been different if I had clarified my question about Christianity to give a 'Quaker Christian' definition as suggested by Ambler.

Modern British Friends, like the 1650s Friends, cannot and do not want to conform to the beliefs of other Christian Faith Groups. In many conversations I had with members of Poole Meeting, I learned that they are not uniformly comfortable with definitions of Christianity that include the following assertions:

- That Jesus is the exclusive son of God
- That Jesus died for Atonement

- That Jesus was resurrected
- That Jesus was unique
- That Jesus was born in the ‘Virgin Birth’
- That God is represented by the Trinity

These conversations were echoed in the written comments on my questionnaires, as described chapter four.

Members of Poole Meeting could not truthfully say that they were Christians if the definition of Christian was a mainstream definition.

The fear of being misunderstood reflects a ‘sensitivity’ that Ambler (2004, p.59) refers to as ‘The trouble with words’. In the same chapter of *Creeds and the Search for Unity*, he (2004, p.60) also explains,

We also recognise a particular danger in written words as such which, like ritual practices or sacramental objects, take on a life of their own. When words are uttered they are a part of the life they express; when they are written down or printed they are detached from that life and assume an ethereal reality in their own right, expressing a meaning which may have little or no relation to the life of those who read them. Words handed down on paper (or parchment) from the distant and idealised past can exercise an uncanny authority of our lives, either for good or for ill.

I believe I achieved my result of a high Christian response in part because my question about Christianity was open-ended. Taking my cue from Ambler's theory about Quaker Christianity, I allowed each individual to use his or her own definition of Christian. This allowed the respondents to use a Quaker based definition of Christian that they could consider truthful.

6.7. Areas of Further Research

The responses I received to my national survey provide evidence to challenge the idea that modern British Quakers are post-Christian. However, it is clear that the whole story has not been told.

It would be very interesting give both Dandelion's survey and my survey to the same sample at the same time, to see if the answers would be similar to our original answers. If that were so, then it would point to the nature of the questionnaire design (the placement of the questions and surrounding questions or the style of the questions), rather than deeply held beliefs.

I also believe that the concept of 'permission' should be tested in line with Ambler's theory. In order to do this one would have to explain Ambler's theory and then ask whether knowing that such a definition existed gave Friends' *de facto* permission to say that they consider themselves Christian.

Additionally, the influence of 'individual ministry' (the practice of individuals speaking in Meeting for Worship in the manner of paid clergy) whether in Meeting for Worship or other contexts within Meeting life, should be tested to see if individuals' ministry can influence the set of answers in a Meeting. In my original data, based in Excel, I noticed that there were differences between how individual Preparative Meetings responded and it would interesting to learn more about why this is so.

It would also be very interesting to re-survey those who answered that they are Christian to find out what their minimum definition of Christian is.

The question of trust should also be more fully explored. Were Friends more willing to confirm that they are Christian because they thought I might understand the context in which they said it?

And, lastly, it would be very interesting to know how much people would be affected by knowing that the majority of Quakers in Britain said they consider themselves Christian. Would that influence other Friends to answer the same way? Conversely, were some Friends trying to ‘wave a Christian banner’ and therefore decide to answer that they are not actually Christian, and just said so for the survey to boost the numbers? The effect on the population, of knowing my results, could be examined as well.

Finally, I have not exhausted the information in the questionnaires I collected. Another researcher could certainly glean more interesting information from them.

6.8. Conclusion: British Quakers are not post-Christian

Dandelion’s and Rutherfords’ research aims were different than mine. I believe Dandelion sought to provocatively determine how broad the ‘broad’ church of Quakerism is in Britain and he received answers that confirmed his suspicions. Rutherford’s aim was to check Dandelion’s answers. Her answers showed a similarly broad church.

Contrary to their aims, I did not seek to determine how broad a Church Quakerism in Britain represents. Rather, my transparent aim was to determine whether Quakers do consider themselves to be Christian.

Having shown that Quakers may not be post-Christian, I suggest that further research into the nature of Quaker Christianity and whether the definition is different for internal and external conversations would be very interesting.

I hope that others decide to try to understand more about the nature of belief and believing within Quakerism. In doing so, they will need to take into account this new element to the debate, that Quakerism in Britain may not be post-Christian in the sense that Dandelion suggests.

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2006 Questionnaire for Bradford PM

I am a member of Bournemouth and Swanage Monthly Meeting and Poole PM. I am conducting research for a paper I am writing for the MPhil in Quaker Studies Course at Woodbrooke/University of Birmingham. I am writing to ask you to complete this questionnaire.

I was granted permission to contact all Members and Attenders of the Monthly Meeting at Brighouse MM on 11th March 2006.

The answers I receive need to be entirely confidential. Please do not write your name on this questionnaire. I will not and do not have a copy of the MM database.

When answering the questionnaire, if you don't understand a question, please skip it. If you can't answer a question, please skip it. Otherwise, please answer all the questions.

Please return the questionnaire by **5th April** in the envelope provided.

Are you a Member?	Yes	No
Are you an Attender?	Yes	No
Do you believe in God? (You can use your own definition)	Yes	No
Do you consider yourself to be Christian? (You can use your own definition of Christian)	Yes	No
Do you believe that Jesus existed, as a historical figure?	Yes	No
Do you believe that Jesus "existed", but maybe not as a historical figure?	Yes	No
Do you believe that Jesus' ethical teachings, as you understand them, are meaningful to you?	Yes	No
Do you believe that Jesus' spiritual teachings, as you understand them, are meaningful to you?	Yes	No
Do you use Jesus' teaching or example to help guide the way you live your life?	Yes	No
Do you believe Jesus was unique?	Yes	No

Would you generally use the title Christ?	Yes	No
Do you believe Jesus died for Atonement (in other words to save your soul)?	Yes	No
Do you believe Jesus was or is the Son of God?	Yes	No
Are you a Universalist?	Yes	No
Are you a Christian who might also be Universalistic?	Yes	No
Are you Agnostic?	Yes	No
Do you follow another faith, such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Zen, etc.?	Yes	No
If you had to answer a census question that asked whether you are Christian or another faith, but did not allow you to choose unsure, would you choose Christian? (if you had to choose something)	Yes	No
Do you think that the Evangelist churches have hijacked the word Christian?	Yes	No
Are you a 'Humble Learner in the School of Christ'?	Yes	No
Does George Fox's (the 'founder' of Quakerism) famous quote 'There is one, even Jesus Christ, who can speak to thy condition' ring true for you?	Yes	No
If you were describing Quakerism to someone who knew nothing about it, would you describe Quakerism as a Christian faith (as you define Quakerism)?	Yes	No


Thank you very much for answering these questions. You've been a great help to me!

Kate Mellor

BRITAIN YEARLY MEETING GENERAL AND MONTHLY MEETINGS

General Meetings **DURHAM**

Monthly Meetings **Northumbria**

County boundaries (England & Wales) 

Page numbers in Book of Meetings **(51)**



2006 Questionnaire for Shrewsbury PM

I am conducting research on behalf of Worcestershire and Shropshire Monthly Meeting, which will also inform a paper I am writing for the MPhil Course in Quaker Studies at Woodbrooke/The University of Birmingham. I am a member of Bournemouth and Swanage Monthly Meeting.

I am writing to ask you to complete this questionnaire. Worcestershire and Shropshire agreed that it would undertake this research by minute 16/2006.

The Monthly Meeting is sending out these letters. I need your answers to remain anonymous. I have no access to the names and addresses held by your Monthly Meeting. Please do not write your name on this questionnaire. When answering, if you do not understand a question, please skip it. If you cannot answer a question, please skip it. Otherwise, please answer all the questions.

Please return the questionnaire by 5th April in the envelope provided.

Are you a Member?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Are you an Attender?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you believe in God? (You can use your own definition of God)	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you consider yourself to be Christian? (You can use your own definition of Christian)	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you believe that Jesus existed, as a historical figure?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you believe that Jesus "existed", but maybe not as a historical figure?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you believe that Jesus' ethical teachings, as you understand them, are meaningful to you?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you believe that Jesus' spiritual teachings, as you understand them, are meaningful to you?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you use Jesus' teaching or example to help guide the way you live your life?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you believe Jesus was unique?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No

Would you generally use the title Christ?	Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you believe Jesus died for Atonement (in other words to save your soul)?	Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you believe Jesus was or is the Son of God?	Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Are you a Universalist?	Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Are you a Christian who might also be Universalistic?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	No
Are you Agnostic?	Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you follow another faith, such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Zen, etc.?	Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
If you had to answer a census question that asked whether you are Christian or another faith, but did not allow you to choose unsure, would you choose Christian? (if you had to choose something)	<input type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you think that the Evangelist churches have hijacked the word Christian?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	No
Are you a 'Humble Learner in the School of Christ'?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	No
Does George Fox's (the 'founder' of Quakerism) famous quote 'There is one, even Jesus Christ, who can speak to thy condition' ring true for you?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	No
If you were describing Quakerism to someone who knew nothing about it, would you describe Quakerism as a Christian faith (as you define Quakerism)?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	No

Thank you very much for answering these questions. You've been a great help to me!

Kate Mellor

2006 Questionnaire for Bolton PM

I am a member of Bournemouth and Swanage Monthly Meeting and Poole PM. I am conducting research for a paper I am writing for the MPhil in Quaker Studies Course at Woodbrooke/University of Birmingham. I am writing to ask you to complete this questionnaire.

I was granted permission to contact all Members and Attenders of the Monthly Meeting at Marsden MM on 12th March 2006.

The answers I receive need to be entirely confidential. Please do not write your name on this questionnaire. I will not and do not have a copy of the MM database.

When answering the questionnaire, if you don't understand a question, please skip it. If you can't answer a question, please skip it. Otherwise, please answer all the questions.

Please return the questionnaire by **24th April** in the envelope provided.

Are you a Member?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Are you an Attender?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you believe in God? (You can use your own definition) <i>Goddess.</i>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you consider yourself to be Christian? (You can use your own definition of Christian)	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you believe that Jesus existed, as a historical figure?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you believe that Jesus "existed", but maybe not as a historical figure?	Yes	No
Do you believe that Jesus' ethical teachings, as you understand them, are meaningful to you?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you believe that Jesus' spiritual teachings, as you understand them, are meaningful to you?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you use Jesus' teaching or example to help guide the way you live your life?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No
Do you believe Jesus was unique?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	No

Would you generally use the title Christ?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you believe Jesus died for Atonement (in other words to save your soul)?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you believe Jesus was or is the Son of God?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Are you a Universalist?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Are you a Christian who might also be Universalistic?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Are you Agnostic?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you follow another faith, such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Zen, etc.? <i>Pagan / Goddess</i>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
If you had to answer a census question that asked whether you are Christian or another faith, but did not allow you to choose unsure, would you choose Christian? (if you had to choose something)	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you think that the Evangelist churches have hijacked the word Christian?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Are you a 'Humble Learner in the School of Christ'?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Does George Fox's (the 'founder' of Quakerism) famous quote 'There is one, even Jesus Christ, who can speak to thy condition' ring true for you?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
If you were describing Quakerism to someone who knew nothing about it, would you describe Quakerism as a Christian faith (as you define Quakerism)?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No

Thank you very much for answering these questions. You've been a great help to me!

Kate Mellor

2005 Questionnaire for Poole PM (Members and Regular Attenders)

I am a member of Bournemouth and Swanage Monthly Meeting and Poole PM. I am conducting research for a paper I am writing for the MPhil Course at Woodbrooke/University of Birmingham. I am writing to ask you to complete this questionnaire. I was granted permission to contact all Members and Attenders of the Meeting at PM on 13th February 2005.

The answers I receive will be entirely confidential. Please do not write your name on this questionnaire.

When answering the questionnaire, if you don't understand a question, please skip it. If you can't answer a question, please skip it. Otherwise, please answer all the questions.

Please return the questionnaire by 28th February in the envelope provided.

Are you a Member?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Are you an Attender?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you believe in God? (You can use your own definition)	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you consider yourself to be Christian? (You can use your own definition of Christian)	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you believe that Jesus existed, as a historical figure?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you believe that Jesus "existed", but maybe not as a historical figure?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you believe that Jesus' ethical teachings, as you understand them, are meaningful to you?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you believe that Jesus' spiritual teachings, as you understand them, are meaningful to you?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you use Jesus' teaching or example to help guide the way you live your life?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you believe Jesus was unique?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No

Would you generally use the title Christ?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you believe Jesus died for Atonement (in other words to save your soul)?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you believe Jesus was or is the Son of God?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Are you a Universalist?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Are you a Christian who might also be Universalistic?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Are you Agnostic?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you follow another faith, such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Zen, etc.?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
If you had to answer a census question that asked whether you are Christian or another faith, but did not allow you to choose unsure, would you choose Christian? (if you had to choose something)	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you think that the Evangelist churches have hijacked the word Christian?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Are you a 'Humble Follower of the School of Christ'?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Does George Fox's (the "founder" of Quakerism) famous quote "There is one, even Jesus Christ, who can speak to thy condition" ring true for you?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
If you were describing Quakerism to someone who nothing about it, would you describe Quakerism as a Christian faith (as you define Quakerism)?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No

Thank you very much for answering these questions. You've been a great help to me!

Kate Mellor



2006 Questionnaire for Bewdley PM

I am conducting research on behalf of Worcestershire and Shropshire Monthly Meeting, which will also inform a paper I am writing for the MPhil Course in Quaker Studies at Woodbrooke/The University of Birmingham. I am a member of Bournemouth and Swanage Monthly Meeting.

I am writing to ask you to complete this questionnaire. Worcestershire and Shropshire agreed that it would undertake this research by minute 16/2006.

The Monthly Meeting is sending out these letters. I need your answers to remain anonymous. I have no access to the names and addresses held by your Monthly Meeting. Please do not write your name on this questionnaire. When answering, if you do not understand a question, please skip it. If you cannot answer a question, please skip it. Otherwise, please answer all the questions.

Please return the questionnaire by 5th April in the envelope provided.

Are you a Member?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Are you an Attender?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you believe in God? (You can use your own definition of God)	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you consider yourself to be Christian? (You can use your own definition of Christian)	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you believe that Jesus existed, as a historical figure?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you believe that Jesus "existed", but maybe not as a historical figure?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you believe that Jesus' ethical teachings, as you understand them, are meaningful to you?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
Do you believe that Jesus' spiritual teachings, as you understand them, are meaningful to you?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you use Jesus' teaching or example to help guide the way you live your life?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you believe Jesus was unique?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No

Would you generally use the title Christ?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you believe Jesus died for Atonement (in other words to save your soul)?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you believe Jesus was or is the Son of God?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Are you a Universalist?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Are you a Christian who might also be Universalistic?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Are you Agnostic?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you follow another faith, such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Zen, etc.?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
If you had to answer a census question that asked whether you are Christian or another faith, but did not allow you to choose unsure, would you choose Christian? (if you had to choose something)	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Do you think that the Evangelist churches have hijacked the word Christian?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Are you a 'Humble Learner in the School of Christ'?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Does George Fox's (the 'founder' of Quakerism) famous quote 'There is one, even Jesus Christ, who can speak to thy condition' ring true for you?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
If you were describing Quakerism to someone who knew nothing about it, would you describe Quakerism as a Christian faith (as you define Quakerism)?	Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No

Thank you very much for answering these questions. You've been a great help to me!

Kate Mellor

2006 Questionnaire
All Answers

90% Theist	85%
80% Percentage Christian	74.4%
20% Percentage Not Christian	18.83%
0% Percentage No Answer	6.78%

Yes	No	No Answer	Members	Possible Answers
697			Attenders	972
273	90	54	Believe in God	1578
828	183	66	Consider him/herself to be Christian	972
723	35	56	Jesus as a Historical Figure	972
881	371	460	Jesus not a Historical Figure	972
141	29	18	Jesus' Ethical Teachings are Meaningful	972
925	88	75	Jesus' Spiritual Teachings are Meaningful	972
809	91	56	Use Teachings/Example as a Guide	972
825	437	109	Jesus was Unique	972
426	579	85	Use the Title Christ	972
308	640	163	Jesus Died for Atonement	972
169	445	219	Jesus as Son of God	972
308	333	353	Universalist	972
286	289	361	Christian and Universalistic	972
322	682	139	Agnostic	972
151	809	57	Another Faith	972
106	124	48	Census Christian	972
800	321	214	Evangelicals have hijacked the word Christian	972
437	242	249	Humble Follower of the School of Christ	972
481	214	154	Fox Quote rings true	972
604	190	80	Quakerism is a Christian Faith	972
702				972

63%
1001 received
including unusables